Review: Navigating to Read – Reading to Navigate

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Murray, D. E. & McPherson, P. (Eds.) (2005). *Navigating to read – reading to navigate*. Sydney: The National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.

Navigating to read – reading to navigate is an edited collection comprising of research papers on theoretical perspectives and practical aspects of using the Web to support language learning. This book is part of the Teaching in Action series; each volume focuses on a specific area of teaching and learning English as a second language. The researchers explored this contemporary issue of the worldwide web by examining the literature on the structure of WebPages to devise recommendations and principles for teachers on how to select WebPages for their learners and for teaching WebPage reading. The teachers then used the recommendations and their own observations to develop and improve teaching strategies, which were then reported as findings of the project.

The book is divided into two distinct parts: section 1 focuses on the theoretical background of reading the web, while section 2 focuses on the classroom perspectives and presents the teachers' findings on the use of the Web in their classrooms.

Section 1 (Chapters 1-3) surveys the literature on electronic and print texts in a more scientific setting without specific

reference to teaching and learning English as a second language. Chapter 1 compares the process of reading electronic and print texts as a cognitive process and a socio-cultural practice. It points out that while the basic strategies used by readers in both print and electronic texts are the same, there are more elements to reading electronic texts such as WebPage design and familiarity with reading hypertext that influence the speed and type of reading.

Chapter 2 also compares and contrasts electric and print texts, but from the angle of features that can affect readability. The main categories of features identified are typography (e.g. size and color of fonts), organization (e.g. structure of texts), multimodality (e.g. images and colour of design), and linearlity (e.g. links and references). This chapter is useful for teachers who use WebPages in that it helps them to choose pages of an appropriate degree of difficulty for their learners.

Chapter 3 looks specifically at electronic texts and focuses on search engines, web searches, and homepages. The author presents the result of a literature review and identifies key issues, such as common problems that occur when searching, characteristics of WebPages, and examine how readers read websites. At the end, the author summarizes the findings and explains implications of the results for teachers and learners.

Section 2 (Chapters 4-8) turns to the practical aspect of this project, reporting the classroom activities of teachers who used the recommendations outlined in Section 1. Teachers take notes of their learners' performance over three terms to provide composite snapshots of information for the reader to develop strategies for using WebPages to support learning. The organization structure of each chapter is similar and identifies the rationale, methodology, issues encountered during the course, and sample teaching materials. The teachers look at strategies for efficiently navigating through and extracting information from websites, as well as locating information from the Internet and applying the skills to everyday usage.

The final section summarizes the results of the project and enumerates the questions and issues that are still left unanswered by the study.

Overall, *Navigating to read-reading to navigate* is a fine piece of research looking at the theoretical aspects of electronic texts, and how best to teach learners of English as a second language to familiarize themselves with steering through the Internet for everyday usage. Undoubtedly, the issue of Internet literacy has now become almost indispensable to life in the 21st century. Nevertheless, this book is not light reading, and casual readers may find this book quite heavy. The book is probably most suited to academics and post-graduate applied linguistics students with an interest in the nuts and bolts of the English of the Internet.

The Author

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