



*The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*  
 Volume 16, Number 1, April 2016

***Researching and Teaching Reading:  
 Developing Pedagogy through Critical Enquiry (2015)***  
 Gabrielle Cliff-Hodges  
 National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) Series  
 Pages 212  
 ISBN: 978-1138816558  
 Cost: \$53.95

*Reviewed by Ramona Kreis*  
 University of South Florida at Tampa [rkreis@mail.usf.edu](mailto:rkreis@mail.usf.edu)



Reading is one of the central skills language students need to acquire. The aim of *Researching and Teaching Reading: Developing Pedagogy through Critical Enquiry* by Gabrielle Cliff Hodges is to deepen our understanding of the processes of researching and teaching reading and to illustrate the potential benefits of research on teaching and learning for both teachers and learners. Gabrielle Cliff-Hodges, who has extensive experience as an English teacher in secondary schools and as a language teacher educator, emphasizes that teaching and researching are inextricably intertwined, thus “twin processes,” and illustrates the pedagogical benefits that research has to offer for teaching. The relationship between teaching and research is compared to an ecological system where one cannot ignore either part but rather need to embrace both. Specifically, the author encourages readers to reflect on their own critical approaches to research and pedagogy and highlights areas where research and teaching intertwine.

This book is particularly interesting for students pursuing a degree in teaching English at the secondary level with a particular interest in reading, albeit not aimed at teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), but the thorough description and analysis of different theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and teaching activities makes this book also valuable for other readers.

The book is organized in seven chapters. The first three chapters give insight into the interconnectedness of pedagogy and research on the topic of reading with a focus on studying, researching, and teaching reading. In Chapter 1, “Studying Reading,” the author defines reading as an active process and illustrates the complexity of the concept of reading, which is not only a simple decoding activity but rather the process of “responsive textual meaning-making” (p. 10). The author advocates the active involvement of teachers in research to promote a more profound understanding of the pedagogical implications related to reading. Students’ perceptions related to studying reading and critical evaluations of literacy and English as a discipline are presented.

Chapter 2, “Reading Research,” focuses on factors that influence teachers’ choices to pursue research in their own classroom and affect teachers’ perception of research and teaching. Furthermore, using a critical case-study approach, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and

data collection and analysis techniques are discussed. This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological framework (case study) for the author's research project.

For Chapter 3, "Reading and Pedagogy," Cliff Hodges uses an autobiographic approach to explore the connections between teachers' own schooling experience, subject knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs and their teaching practices.

In the second part of the book, in Chapters 4 to 7, the author describes four research perspectives on reading: social, cultural, historical, and spatial. She links the theoretical framework to her own research pursued for this research project, exemplifying data collection methods. Chapter 4 takes a sociological approach and is concerned with "Reading as a Social Practice" in and outside the school setting and includes the roles of parents and friends. Informed by Rosenblatt's (1938/1995, 1978/1994) and Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) work, the emphasis of this chapter lies on the social and ecological understanding of reading.

Chapter 5, "Reading as a Cultural Practice," explores cultural issues of reading through a discourse analytical lens informed by Gee (2011). Multiple teaching methods, which proved useful in reading research, are suggested and illustrated with examples. In chapter 6, "Reading Histories," the author takes a historical approach to analyze research and teaching related to reading. Finally, Chapter 7, "Reading Spaces," considers the importance of physicality of reading and explains the relationship between readers and writers. This chapter is informed by Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia, the multiplicity of voices.

This book convincingly provides insight into the study and research of reading. The critical analysis of literacy, English as a discipline, and the reproduction of ideologies as found when solely canonical texts are promoted; the inclusion of students' and teachers' perceptions; the incorporation of four theoretical perspectives (social, cultural, historical, and spatial) previously not brought together; and the pedagogical implications that arise from the case study research undertaken by the researcher make this book a valuable resource for both teachers and researchers.

The author certainly achieves her goal to deepen the reader's understanding of the intertwined processes of research and teaching. The book is well organized and easy to read owing to the contextualization and operationalization of the pedagogy and research presented. Useful is also the index, which includes both authors and key terms and concepts mentioned in this book. The inclusion of students' perceptions related to studying reading is particularly interesting given the importance of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions in qualitative research and action research.

Undoubtedly, the topic of this book is relevant to all language teachers, but it is especially useful for readers who are involved in teaching and researching reading with the focus on English at the secondary level interested in doing case study research; however, it still needs further research to truly cover reading holistically, for example, different content-areas given the increasing focus on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Europe, primary education as well as higher education, embracing more empirical work, and the expansion to contexts outside of the UK. Nonetheless, the author offers a well-rounded framework on which further research can be based.

In sum, I recommend this book to anyone interested in studying and researching reading and different theoretical approaches to reading. Readers will reflect on their own critical inquiries as regards the study and pedagogy of reading and be introduced to different theoretical approaches to reading as well as action research with the focus on reading.

## REFERENCES

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1938/1995). *Literature as exploration* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978/1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press Books.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Request PDF | Researching and teaching reading: Developing pedagogy through critical enquiry | Many agree that engaging in research is what makes a teacher's professional development sustainable, and Researching and Teaching Reading studies | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. The author explores how teachers' research and critical reading can further develop their understanding of their students' reading practices and argues that innovative approaches to teaching integrated with research enable English teachers to re-construct ideas and change how reading is taught. Personal digital inquiry Critical literacy Critical evaluation Motivation Argumentation New literacies Digital literacy Online inquiry Reading engagement. This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. Developing online reading comprehension: Changes, challenges, and consequences. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber, & L. Moll (Eds.), *International handbook of research in children's literacy, learning, and culture*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell. Google Scholar. New learning: Transformational designs for pedagogy and assessment. Available at <http://newlearningonline.com/home>. Kiili, C., Coiro, J., & Hämmäläinen, J. (2016, in press).