REVIEWS/RESENHAS

Davies, Florence (1995). *Introducing Reading*. **UK: Penguin Books, xii + 200.**

by Sônia Maria Gomes Ferreira

Arising at a time of unprecedented growth of interest in fostering critical thinking, *Introducing Reading* offers a clear introduction and thorough account of contemporary developments in the field of reading. While overtly focusing on the special demands of social and human aspects of the reading practice, the issues raised have crucial resonance in the sphere of critical reading.

Explicitly addressed to teachers of mother tongue and foreign language contexts, the book claims to elaborate on aspects of reading which have received meager attention to date: individual readers engaged in different real-world reading tasks, the social contexts where such readers engage and interact with texts, and the nature and variety of texts, here regarded as "participants" in the interaction between reader and writer. To this extent, the book successfully reaches the ambitious aim of "socializing and humanizing reading and the teaching of reading" (p. xi).

Supported by pertinent research evidence and exemplified illustrations, the text bears a rather straightforward style and equips the reader with a wide range of findings from research on methods and criteria for studying reading behavior, for evaluating current models of reading, for describing and analyzing different types of text and, finally, for designing a reading program in different classroom contexts, these being the four dimensions of reading covered in the four chapters of the book, respectively. Specially devised for practical use, the projects and activities at the end of each chapter instigate the reader to test or reflect on linguistic matters for themselves. The book also provides questions as incentives for further study, a glossary, and an extended bibliography for further reading.

Chapter 1 presents different procedures for "Studying Reading Behavior". It first focuses on informal methods for investigating personal reading outside the classroom and then outlines a series of more formal methods for studying reading in the more public context of the classroom. Traditional measures of reading performance and comprehension are discussed, and whereby necessary for monitoring individual and group progress, they are seen to have limited potential as a means of encouraging teaching and learning, since they do not provide teachers with

information on *how* learners are improving their reading abilities. Davies then suggests observation and interviews with readers as alternative procedures to study the development of individual readers, believing that this dialogue *about* reading will raise student awareness and promote self-monitoring reading abilities. Analysis of oral reading miscues, as well as the recording of readers talking and thinking-aloud in problem-solving reading tasks are recommended tools for both formal and informal analysis of students engaged in classroom reading activities. Although a number of taxonomies for analyzing strategies are displayed, there seems to be no consensus as to the categorization of reading strategies as facilitators of comprehension. Nevertheless, evidence does hint that teachers should explicitly inform students of the benefits strategies might yield, thus making them increasingly aware of their capacity to monitor their own reading behavior.

In Chapter 2, "Studying the Reading Process: Models of Reading", the reader is invited to join the author in her search for an answer to the basic question, "What goes on in the visual system and the brain during the process of reading?". Moving relatively rapidly, he is exposed to a clear and brief summary synthesizing the research on models of the reading process. As such models have always been paramount in shaping teaching methods, teachers are urged to gain some understanding of different models and of their pedagogical

implications. The following models are reviewed: the bottom-up (Gough, 1972), the top-down (Goodman, 1969, 1970, 1975 and 1988), the interactive (Rumelhart, 1977), Schema theory (Rumelhart, 1984), the bottom-up interactive (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989), and finally, Mathewson's (1985) model which innovates by incorporating "affective factors" (attitude, motivation, affect and physical feeling). Trying to go towards an integration of models, Davies remarks that what differentiates them is the emphasis each model places on different sources of information.

From the development of reading models, Davies leads us to "modes" of reading. She reports on Hedge's (1991) study, which does not offer a model, but "an alternative taxonomy of reading behaviors called *modes*, knowledge sources utilized in reading called *anchors*, and reading purposes called *drivers*" (p. 75). She acknowledges the validity of the taxonomy as a framework for studying reading behavior in the classroom, and also takes into consideration the potential of the "models" cited above, for developing reading in different contexts such as beginning mother tongue readers, skilled readers in L1 schooling, EAP/ESP adult reading in a foreign language, and L2 learners reading in a secondary school. Although she finds no conclusive answer to the question proposed at the very beginning of the chapter, it would seem from the above that none of the reading models described can solely account for

the varied reading behaviors detectable in different contexts. Instead, each of them can somehow add something to our understanding of reading behavior and how it may vary in different circumstances.

Chapter 3 moves, rather smoothly, "Towards a Practical Framework for Describing and Analyzing Texts." Davies maintains that, even though the text is regarded as the basic source of reading, there seems to be no accepted framework for describing the various types of texts. Furthermore, the text as a variable has not been accounted for in most studies of the reading process, a mission she bravely embraces here. In her view, the task is the variable that, together with text, "will most strongly influence the motivation to read, the approach to reading and the type of reading adopted"(p. 84). The first part of the chapter deals with definitions of text and examines ways of describing different texts, classes of text, and constituents of text. It also outlines different approaches to the analysis of the structure, function and language of texts. Part two provides different procedures for analyzing texts as the basis for course design and for devising reading activities as well.

Descriptions of texts have traditionally placed emphasis on readability, content and rhetorical function. Conversely, this study devotes special attention to more "socially" oriented ways of describing texts, and recommends "affective" response to text at informal levels,

whereas more formal descriptions of text, based on the concepts of genre and register (as developed by Hallidayan linguists), are viewed as potentially valid for "illustrating the importance of the social contexts in which texts are produced and read" (p. 116). Due to the great variety of definitions of text, text type and genre, Davies organizes a hierarchy of five levels of discourse in order to integrate different perspectives: discourse type, genre, text, textual units and rhetorical patterns. She believes this hierarchy serves as a basis for selecting classroom reading materials and also for describing texts used in reading research studies. Additionally, the potential of different methods for analyzing the structure of different types of text is highlighted. Analysis of author moves, information structures, problem-solution patterns and narrative structure are considered vital for designing active reading tasks.

The fourth and last chapter tackles the harsh albeit practical task of "Designing a Reading Program and Reading Activities" for the classroom. It centers around six main topics: setting possible course objectives for different teaching contexts; investigating students needs and perceptions (areas of investigation, selecting a methodology for investigation); selecting texts (identifying criteria for the selection of genres, texts and textual units); identifying reading purposes (for pleasure, general impression, organizing reading and study, learning content or procedures, and for learning language); identifying

different types of reading (scanning, skimming, skipping, receptive and reflective reading, smooth read, item read, search read, listen read, and practice read); designing reading activities (contextualizing reading, active reading, activities to encourage different types of reading, selecting tasks for different texts and textual units).

Three tables are particularly worth remarking: one dealing with a classification of genres with reference to primary social function and reader purpose (pp.130-131); another one referring to the directed activities related to texts – **DART**s (reconstruction activities using text modified by teacher and analysis activities using straight text (p. 154); and a third one showing selected tasks for different text-types (p. 166). The tables are highly enlightening and constitute valuable guides for the teacher when selecting text types for designing reading activities. Still noteworthy is the framework Davies sketches for comparing passive and active reading tasks. On the one hand, "passive" tasks include multiple-choice exercises, comprehension questions, gap completion exercises, true/false questions, find synonyms/antonyms, etc., which are considered fairly questionable as measures of comprehension, thus having little potential as learning activities. On the other hand, she builds a contrasting set of "active" reading tasks, which poses a radical alternative to "traditional"

comprehension exercises. "Active" tasks comprise: marking/ highlighting of text targets, modified cloze, diagram completion/construction, table completion/ construction, labeling of text and/or diagram, sequencing of cut up units of text, prediction, review of book, précis/summary, recall, and note-making. By contrast with passive tasks, active reading tasks "involve readers in an interactive "dialogue" with the text, and hence in critical directed analysis of a text or in the reconstruction of a text that is incomplete in some way". (p.169).

In a nutshell, what Davies suggests is that, when designing a reading course and reading activities, teachers should undertake a systematic analysis of students needs, perceptions and background, since every learner carries his/her personal "baggage" to the reading classroom. She argues that it is the background of the specific groups of students being taught that should determine the methods, purposes, strategies, types of reading, texts and tasks to be introduced in the reading program.

The author points out in the introduction that if readers make "discoveries" during the course of reading the book, these will surely not equal those which she has made herself (p. xi). Bearing this in mind, I dare say that I have discovered a "sleeping giant" in her text. Having clearly expressed her central aim to be the "socializing and humanizing of reading and the teaching of reading" (p. xi), Davies has apparently failed to

realize the power of the "sleeping giant" she herself gave birth to. I refer to her "framework" for passive versus active reading tasks mentioned above. She may not have realized the full potential of her "offspring", otherwise she would have included it among the targets she set up to pursue in the introduction. Even though she addresses active tasks as promoting reflective reading, this issue seems to somehow recede into the background when compared to her main concerns. Yet the book has everything to do with developing a more critical reading behavior.

As a matter of fact, her framework is rather revolutionary in that it challenges old beliefs regarding the nature of reading activities. Indeed, it portrays a critical reaction against earlier dominant paradigms in reading instruction. By acknowledging that traditional comprehension exercises function as "tests" rather than learning activities, she empowers active tasks with attributes capable of changing the entire concept of reading activities. More, or at least better than anyone else before (pp.48-49), Davies has gone far in her analysis of the nature of texts and tasks, supplying the reading terrain with a principled basis on which to select or design reading activities. Translated into classroom practice, active tasks constitute the very tools which are responsible for encouraging active/critical reading behavior. Her framework thus fell on fertile ground and seems to be powerful enough to ensure such a

change of paradigm as we near the 21st century.

Let us then try to bring this "giant" back from its slumber, and see what wonders it can help us envision right ahead in the new horizons of the 2000s.

Marton, Ference & Booth, Shirley. (1997). *Learning and awareness.* **New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. xii + 224.**

by Mailce Borges Mota Fortkamp

This book makes an important contribution to the area of education by offering an alternative approach to mainstream theories of learning. Focusing on the question "How do we gain knowledge about the world?", the authors present a model of learning that has its roots in the principles of phenomenography, a field of research that seeks to investigate how people experience and interpret the world around them. The view of learning proposed is based on empirical findings obtained through more than 25 years of qualitative research on the differences between more and less successful learners.

Chapter 1—"What Does It Take to Learn?"—presents, in a rather superficial way and throughout time, an account of major theories of acquisition—behaviorism, universal grammar, individual cognitivism, information-

processing cognitivism, and social cognitivism, pointing out the paradoxes inherent to these views. Beginning with Plato's dialogues on how we learn and bringing the reader to the present times of information processing cognitivism, Marton and Booth argue that mainstream theories of learning establish a line separating the individual and the world, the "inner" and the "outer". In the author's view the world and the learner are not separate entities—there are no such things as mental or social structures to explain the learner-world relationship. One is not supposed to explain the other. What there is, Marton and Booth claim, is a relationship between learner and the world, in which the latter is but the way the learner experiences reality. Learning, then, is equated with experiencing and the theoretical heart of the book is the authors' conception of how learners view the world and how this influences the acquisition of knowledge in educational settings.

Chapter 2—"Qualitative Differences in learning"—is centred around the question "Why do some people learn better than others?". This, in fact, was the question that triggered Marton's research programme on qualitative differences in learning in Sweden in the early 1970s. To answer it, the authors present a number of studies of learners performing reading, writing, and problem solving tasks. The methodology adopted consisted of explicitly asking learners what their experience of learning was like and analysing their protocols.

One of the most interesting studies mentioned focused on the different ways a text appeared to 40 university students (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Säljö, 1975). After completing the reading task, learners were interviewed on the content of the text and how they had gone about the reading task.

The authors were able to identify four different ways of understanding the main ideas of the text and to show that these could be organised in a hierarchy representing different degrees of partial understanding of the whole text. In order to account for the variation in comprehension, Marton and her team suggest that learners have two main ways of approaching a learning-from-text task: a surface approach to learning and a deep approach to learning. The most important difference between the two approaches is that when adopting a surface approach, the learner focuses on the formal aspects of the text only, performing the task for its own sake, whereas when he/she adopts a deep approach the focus is on the meaning of the text, on relating its parts to a general meaning, on relating this meaning to other types of knowledge the individual has. With basis on this study, Marton and Booth claim, then, that the way learners approach learning tasks influences outcomes of learning, and it is precisely in this relationship that lie qualitative differences in how we learn.

In order to further pursue their belief that qualitative differences in how people learn spring from the way they experience the world, in Chapter 3—"The

Experience of Learning"—the authors report on two studies aimed at describing cultural differences in students' understanding of learning. Again, the methodology adopted in both studies consisted of asking learners to talk about their views on learning. The first study was longitudinal and verified how 29 university students in England viewed their own learning and their learning progress throughout college (Marton, Beaty, & Dall'Alba, 1993). The second study consisted of analysing the ways Chinese school children aged 12 to 18 understood learning. With these two studies Marton and Booth are able to show that in spite of differences in time and space, there seems to be a blueprint for the ways learners approach learning tasks and for the outcomes of these approaches. Furthermore, this blueprint can be formalised in terms of a framework deriving from the research field known as phenomenography— dealt with extensively only much later in the book. Their framework conceptualises learning as experiencing the world and has as main tenet that there is much variation in the ways people experience the world. This variation reveals differences in what individuals choose to be under focal awareness and in what is discerned in a given situation. It is precisely this variation in choice that explains why some individuals are better learners than others.

The next chapter—"Revealing Educationally Critical Differences in Our Understanding of the World Around Us"—the authors report on four studies of children and adults learning arithmetic skills, programming languages, principles of mechanics, and principles of physics. The studies allow the authors to claim that performing a given learning task reflects, to a certain extent, the individual's understanding of the phenomena involved in the task, and at the same time modifies this individual's understanding of the phenomena involved. In the authors' view, there is a relationship between how learners view the learning task and how they understand the phenomena necessary to perform the task. This relationship can be best explained in terms of awareness, which is the focus of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5—"The Anatomy of Awareness"—presents fundamental concepts of the theory that underlies Marton and Booth's model of learning. Stating that situations cannot be separated from the phenomena involved, they suggest that in order to experience something—and in their view, to experience something means to learn—we have to be able to *discern* it from its context. However, to be able to discern it from its context we have first to be able to give it a meaning. What Marton and Booth are doing here is to elaborate on the interdependence of structure and meaning. In their view, every experience has both a structural and a meaning aspect to it, and it is the awareness or consciousness that these two aspects are intertwined that

generate variations in the way people experience the world.

The structure of awareness is dichotomous: at any given moment certain things are to the fore—or are the object of focal awareness—whereas other things are to the ground. Learning or experiencing something is, thus, "the structure or organisation of awareness at a particular moment" (p.100). It follows from this reasoning that qualitative differences in the ways we experience something can be described in relation to differences in the organisation of the structure of our awareness at a given moment. Being aware that certain things have to be at the core of our awareness at certain moments while other things have to remain in the background is the crux of learning. For Marton and Booth the notion of learning is related to a simultaneous awareness that what is being learned both stays the same and changes (p. 104).

Thus, structure and meaning are fundamental aspects of a situation and a phenomenon. These aspects are dialectically interdependent and occur simultaneously. Structure refers to being able to discern the whole from the context, the parts that constitute the whole, and the relationship between the parts and the whole. Every situation and phenomenon have a degree of organisation and regularity to them and being able to *discern* means being able to perceive this organisation and regularity. However, at the same time, we have to assign meaning to what is being discerned from the context, and meaning, in Marton and Booth's view, consists of establishing a relationship among the parts, the whole, and the context. Finding the structure and finding the meaning of a situation or phenomenon in an act of experiencing the world occur simultaneously.

Another concept is important to our understanding of awareness in experiencing the world: *appresentation*. In phenomenological research, this is the term used to refer to the fact that, although when exposed to a phenomenon we are exposed only to certain parts of this phenomenon—that is, we can see, hear, smell only partially— we do not experience the parts as detached from the whole, but experience the whole related to the parts that are present in that particular phenomenon. The wholes are not there, but it is possible to experience them through their parts. The idea of awareness, then, comprises finding structure and meaning, knowing that only certain things can be under focal awareness at a given moment, and that other things are in the background, and that what is under focal awareness and what is in the background have an internal relationship and relate to each other—all simultaneously. The overriding question of the book—"How do we gain knowledge of the world?"— is thus answered: by being aware.

Chapter 6—"The Idea of Phenomenography"—presents the concept of phenomenography, its object

of research—the variation in the ways people experience something—as well as the research methods most commonly used. It is a highly readable chapter that, unfortunately, comes almost at the end of the book, after the reader has gone to great pains to make sense of many of the concepts the authors use that stem from phenomenography. Chapter 7— "Learning to Experience"—describes a number of studies aimed at verifying changes in the ways an individual experiences something across time. Another (complementary) definition of learning is provided here: learning is basically changes in the person-world relationship as time passes or a reconstitution of the "already constituted world" (p. 139).

"A Pedagogy of Awareness" constitutes the last chapter of this text. Claiming that our species can be best described as Homo Docens, Marton and Booth conceptualise pedagogy—"the distinguishing feature of human race" (p. 199)—as the act of inducing learning. A pedagogy of awareness can be put into practice if teachers follow two principles: (1) building a relevance structure in every learning situation, that is, making sure that in a given learning situation, aspects that indicate what the objectives are, what the task demands, and where the task will lead are present and clear; (2) designing learning situations that make use of the natural human behaviour of varying in the way we experience things—learners have to be aware of, and profit from, the various ways of experiencing the contents of a learning situation.

Learning and Awareness invites the reader to reflect on the origins of individual differences in learning through a philosophical perspective and requires a certain degree of familiarity with terms and concepts of the field of phenomenography and phenomenology. The authors' theory of learning is constructed through concepts only fully explained in the chapters on awareness and phenomenography, after their main claims have been made. In addition, although examples are given of teachers promoting learning situations in which the two principles of a pedagogy of awareness are used, the reader is left wondering whether *better* learning was in fact achieved; that is, the actual results of this approach are not clearly stated. The very notion of what is *better* in the authors' view is only vaguely defined as having a deep approach to learning—at its best, an approach in which the learner "focuses on the meaning of the task and the phenomena embodied in it" (p. 168). Nevertheless, the book is a good opportunity for those concerned with the educational aspect of their pedagogical practice to discover other (critical) ways of viewing and understanding learning, the individual, and individual differences in learning.

References

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