

Reader and Reading in Context: Narrative Inquiry into a Senior L2 English Reader in Taiwan

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Recently, calls have been made to move research away from the tradition that defines reading narrowly as psycholinguistic skill. In response to these appeals, this study aims to understand how an EFL learner has developed reading English texts within temporal and social contexts. The main conceptual framework of the study is Gee's (2001) sociocognitive perspective on reading, which views reading as a social practice in a Discourse. An experienced L2 reader in Taiwan at the age of 60 participated in the study. The senior reader participated in three life story interviews; the audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and served as the main data source. The life story interviews showed that (1) the reader's social context supported reading and school-based secondary Discourse socialization; (2) the learner could avail himself to strategies to overcome challenges while socializing in Discourse involving L2 reading/learning; (3) globalization, an external Discourse, had remote influences on the local reader's literacy practices. In sum, the interviewee's long-term reading history revealed his interplay with his context in an intensive, complex, and dynamic way.

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have supported a socially informed framework for exploring language-related puzzles in the real world, considering that “methodologies, theories, and foci within SLA reflect an imbalance between cognitive and mentalistic orientations, and social and contextual orientations to language” (Firth & Wagner, 1997, p. 285). For instance, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) propose the “participation