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НАВЫКИ ЧТЕНИЯ В АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОМ ЧТЕНИИ

READING SKILLS IN ACADEMIC READING

The Importance of Teaching Academic Reading Skills in First-Year University Courses. Success at the university level mainly depends on existing pre-entry college attributes, including the mastery of some fundamental academic skills. These include – reading, writing, critical thinking, oral presentation, and media literacy. Despite the importance of these skills for academic success, professors seldom teach them. They generally take them for granted, as they tend to presuppose that all students already acquired these skills either as part of their secondary education or elsewhere in college.

The reality is that most first-year students lack academic reading skills, especially because University-level reading greatly differs from High School reading. Thus, most students employ non-university strategies to read academic texts, which results in students taking a surface approach to reading. [1,15] The objective of this paper is to discuss some strategies, examples, and resources aimed at promoting students to take a deep approach to reading.

The major tenet of this article is that if teachers explicitly teach students how to read academic texts in aligned courses where students have ample opportunities to engage in reading activities throughout the term, students are more likely to adopt a deep approach to reading.

Surface and deep approaches to reading. Learning a discipline involves developing familiarity with the ways of being, thinking, writing, and seeing the world of those experts in the discipline. Reading academic texts published by those disciplinary experts permits students to immerse in the culture of the discipline and facilitates learning its conventions, discourse, skills, and knowledge.

But, this is only possible if students take a deep approach to reading. A surface approach to reading is the tacit acceptance of information contained in the text. Students taking a surface approach to reading usually consider this information as isolated and unlinked facts. This leads to superficial retention of material for examinations and does not promote understanding or long-term retention of knowledge and information. In contrast, a deep approach to reading is an approach where the reader uses higher-order cognitive skills such as the ability to analyze, synthesize, solve problems, and thinks meta-cognitively in order to negotiate meanings with the author and to construct new meaning from the text.

The deep reader focuses on the author's message, on the ideas he is trying to convey, the line of argument, and the structure of the argument. The reader makes connections to already known concepts and principles and uses this understanding for problem solving in new contexts. Simply put, surface readers focus on the sign, i.e., the text itself, while deep readers focus on what is signified, i.e., the meaning of the text. [1, 56]

Different reading techniques and their usage. One of the first things you learn about teaching is that there are different reading techniques and the students should be aware of which technique is most suited, depending on the reading task required by the text or by their teacher.

Training students to know their reading techniques and deduce when best to apply them is indeed important, especially under exam conditions when time constraints come into play and decisions need to be made depending on time availability and the importance of the task at hand.[2, 78]

The four main types of reading techniques are the following:

Skimming. Skimming is sometimes referred to as gist reading. Skimming may help in order to know what the text is about at its most basic level. You might typically do this with a magazine or newspaper and would help you mentally and quickly shortlist those articles which you might consider for a deeper read. You might typically skim to search for a name in a telephone directory. You can reach a speed count of even 700 words per minute if you train yourself well in this particular method. Comprehension is of course very low and understanding of overall content very superficial.

Scanning. Picture yourself visiting a historical city, guide book in hand. You would most probably just scan the guide book to see which site you might want to visit. Scanning involves getting your eyes to quickly scuttle across sentence and is used to get just a simple piece of information. Interestingly, research has concluded that reading off a computer screen actually inhibits the pathways to effective scanning and thus, reading of paper is far more conducive to speedy comprehension of texts. Something students sometimes do not give enough importance to is illustrations. These should be included in your scanning. Special attention to the introduction and the conclusion should also be paid.[2,95]

Pre-reading activities are a crucial and often-neglected step in the reading process. Preparing students to read can build their interest, confidence, and motivation for reading the text and can facilitate comprehension when the text is later closely read. Not only do pre-reading exercises help students enjoy and better cope with the task at hand (i.e., reading an assigned selection), but they also provide an excellent opportunity for the teacher to introduce reading strategies that can be extremely helpful for various types of reading students may do in the future. Most pre-reading activities can be accomplished in a relatively small amount of class time (or for homework prior to class), yet they truly provide a large return on the time and effort invested.

Pre-reading: Summary. As noted earlier, teachers and students often overlook the pre-reading phase. For intensive reading, however, it is critical: Pre-reading can affect not only students' comprehension when they read but also their attitudes and

confidence as they approach careful, analytic reading. Newer teachers may wonder how many of the goals and activities discussed in this section are necessary and practical for a given lesson. Clearly, we do not want to spend several weeks on pre-reading, fall into repetitive, mechanical patterns in our lesson design, or tax students' patience. Nonetheless, a judicious combination of pre-reading tasks is vital to the success of an intensive reading lesson. Decisions about these tasks depend on our knowledge of the target text, learners' background knowledge, the time available in and out of class to cover the selection, and the overall goals of the intensive reading lesson sequence.

During reading. Although reading textbooks and teachers have for decades included post-reading comprehension, discussion, and writing activities as key instructional components, it is only over the past two decades or so that reading specialists have focused more intentionally on what students do (or should do) during reading. [4, 25]

As teachers have become more aware of the need to assist students with bottom-up, text-based reading strategies, activities focused on text processing have revolved around the reading and postreading stages, while top-down strategies tend to receive more attention at the pre-reading stage. As secondary and postsecondary institutions have identified and acted on the need to teach study skills, the intentional development of during-reading strategies such as highlighting, annotating, questioning, and reacting has become more common.

After reading. After students have read a text several times for main ideas, have comprehended its essential content, and have spent time considering the text's language and structure, the final stage of intensive reading is to help students *evaluate* and *extend* what they have learned about the text and the reading process. The nature and extent of the post-reading phase may vary depending on the type of course and its goals. For example, a reading and composition course may quite intentionally extend the reading process by asking students to write papers about what they have read; a course solely focused on reading may spend less time on writing. [5, 33]

We nonetheless encourage all teachers to build substantive post-reading work into their intensive reading lessons rather than simply moving on to the next topic and text. Although it may be tempting to do so—teacher and students may be tired of the text once it has been carefully read and thoroughly understood—students will benefit more from their reading if they are required to evaluate it critically and work with the text in their own language-production activities. Postreading activities also offer the best opportunities for teacher assessment of student progress, as they make the internal reading process and its outcomes more transparent.

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