

Reading Strategies as a Tool for Studying Texts

Introduction

Reading is “the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately.” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 3). Such definition suggest that the attainment of reading skills is a prerequisite condition before any attempt to study, analyze or interpret any form of texts. Therefore, in the current lesson, we attempt to introduce the most relevant reading strategies that will enable the learners to interact with texts in the coming courses.

Reading strategies:

Dubin (2000) asserts that “Good readers report using a wide variety of coping strategies, from the often-mentioned skimming and scanning, guessing and predicting, to using internal and external context clues to derive meaning from texts” (p. 148). Accordingly, in this lesson, three models for reading strategies will be introduced:

SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, and Review. (Robinson, 1961)

CR: Critical Reading. (Wallace, 1990)

USSR: Uninterrupted, Sustained, Silent, Reading. (McCraken, 1971)

1. SQ3R Reading Comprehension Strategy

SQ3R strategy which stands for Survey Question, Read, Recite, and Review was developed by Robinson in 1961 to provide techniques for students when studying content material. It helps students develop effective study habits by engaging in its pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading steps. Also, it fosters reading comprehension and retention of information.

This strategy is used when the text is fairly structured and has some basic text book aids for the reading such as **bold face, heading, italics, study questions, conclusions, etc.** Also, when a detailed understanding of the information is required and, must be retained over long periods of time.

SQ3R stages:

- **Survey:**

Gives the reader a quick preview of what he will be reading. For a book, look over the title page, table of content, introduction, summaries, and bibliography, chapters or articles, look at the headings, first introductory paragraphs, key words, photos, graphs, and exercises. In surveying a text, the reader may opt for skimming and scanning skills in order to avoid reading in detail.

- **Questions:**

Questions can be raised from one's survey based on previous knowledge of the content of the reading text or by turning each heading into a question.

- **Read:**

Read one section of text book generally for the answers to the questions proposed by the heading. It also involves looking for main ideas, relationships, links and extracting meanings.

- **Recite:**

Recite is to talk out loud or write out the ideas and supporting details. This implies writing in one's own words key phrases that sum up the major points of a section and the answers of its questions.

- **Review:**

Check that one has understood what has been read and that information on the subject is complete. Check that one can remember facts and figures and that facts and figures are consistent with each other. Some readers combine the recite and review steps or add a re-reading step between recall and review. In all cases, it seems that the SQ3R's stages are flexible and overlapped.

A technical design for SQ3R strategy

Below is a technical design for SQ3R adapted from Robinson (1970). The design consists of three stages: pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading activities:

Before Reading	
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The title, heading, subheading, first sentences. • Pictures, graphs, maps, italics, bold faced. • Read introductory and concluding paragraphs. • Read summary.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the title, heading or subheading into questions. • Read questions at the end. • Consider what the instructor said about the reading passage or chapter. • Consider what you already know about the subject.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the title, headings, or subheadings into questions with “What, Why or How”. • Read questions at the end of the chapter of the text. • Reconsider what you already know about the subject “what do I already know” about? • Reconsider what the instructor said about the subject” what did my instructor say? • NB: it is helpful to write out these questions in the margin or a note card.

Design1: before-reading stage

While reading	
Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for answers to questions you first raised. • Answer questions at the beginning or end of chapters or study guides. • Re-read captions under pictures, graphs, etc. • Note all the underlined, italicized, bold printed words or phrases. • Study graphic aids. • Reduce the speed for difficult passages. • Stop and read parts which are not clear. • Read only a section at a time and recite after each section.

Design 2: while-reading stage

	After-reading
Recite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orally ask yourself questions about what you have just read and summarize, in your own words, what you have read. • Take notes from the text in your own words. • Underline and highlight important points you have read. • Use a method of recitation which best suits you. Bear in mind that the more senses you use the more likely you are to remember. • Strengthen your learning through, seeing, hearing and writing.
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading the entire chapter, cover main answers on your note card and recite answers. • Write questions for the notes you have taken. • Reread the corresponding section in the text to find the answer to any question you cannot answer. • List all the topics and sub-topics you need to know from the chapter. • Recite the information orally and in your own words. • Write a summary which is inclusive of most of your questions. • Summarize key points in the chapter. • Space reviews periods over several days or weeks and keep reviewing on a weekly basis until the exam. • Predict test questions based on your reviewing and answer them.

Design3: after-reading stage

As presented above, SQ3R reading strategy is built around the idea that what you do before and after you read is as important as the reading itself.

Survey a text aims at getting an overview of the text content, questions provide a purpose for reading and focus attention on specific points, recite is to evaluate the answers and to increase memory, review allows to check comprehension and gives an overview of the entire chapter (text). Reading, therefore, becomes a thinking process through which the reader tries to extract meanings from text and answer questions raised before reading.

2. Critical Reading Strategies (CRS)

Harris (1981) defines critical reading as the process of making judgments in reading.

In critical reading, readers should read a text to evaluate what they read and then make a decision. Evaluation of a text implies to accept what has been presented in the text, to disagree with it or to assert that additional information is necessary to make a definite decision.

On the whole, the purpose of critical reading is to get the students involved in a dialogue with the ideas in a text. This entails a close reading with the attention to evaluate, draw inferences, and arrive at conclusions based on arguments and evidence.

Different types of activities and tasks have been designed for developing critical reading strategies. This involves pre-reading stage, while-reading stage and post-reading stage.

- **Pre-reading stage:**

In pre-reading stage students are required to provide answers to questions that are not text-based but around text-based. Their questions can be modelled by teachers or students themselves, since self-generated questions make the students more involved and responsible. The following could be very helpful.

- What is the topic /title of the text? What does it suggest?
- What is the purpose for writing the text?
- How is the topic written? Formal or informal style?
- What is the genre of the text?
- Who is the writer?

Students are asked at this stage to scan any notes or information that might precede the text or at the end of the text. This includes:

- The author's life and achievements.
- The occasion of writing the text.
- The intended audience.

- Any graphic illustrations, folds and Italics.
- Gist information from the opening paragraphs.

N.B:

The answers to these questions serve to gather background information about the context in which a text was written and about the writer to help students understand the text's social, political, historical and cultural context.

- **While-Reading Stage:**

At this stage, students are expected to read and to react to content and language of the text through two major techniques: 1) **annotating** and 2) **analyzing**.

Annotating is essential to critical reading since it centers the readers' attention on content and language. In annotating students need to use three ways, **underlining**, **questioning** and **outlining**.

- **Annotating:**

- ❖ **Underlining:**

- -Students underline difficult words and phrases.
- -Students are asked to construct meaning of the underlined words from context.
- -Students can use a dictionary or encyclopedia to help them restrict the meanings.

- ❖ **Questioning:**

- Students are asked to read a passage and express their doubts in the form of questions in the margin.
- Questions should reflect the students' lack of knowledge, confusion or comments.
- Questions could be asked about the use of certain words, expressions, figures, images, informal words, archaic words, etc.

- ❖ **Outlining:**

Outlining helps the students to figure out the chief ideas of a text and allowing them separating what is central from what is peripheral.

- Students are asked to identify the main ideas in each paragraph, stanza, or extract.
- Students go through the passage to find out main ideas and arguments considering connectors such as a result, consequently, colon, etc.

➤ **Analyzing:**

When students figure out the thrust of the writer's arguments from outlining, they then analyze 1) **arguments** and 2) **language**.

❖ **Arguments:**

An argument is a group of statements that have a special relationship to one another. One statement is asserted as true on the basis of the other statements considering reason, evidence or assumptions. Here are some basic questions to deal with arguments.

- What point(s) is the writer attempting to establish?
- What has been asserted as true?
- Why should I accept this claim as true?
- On what basis should I accept this claim?
- What reasons or evidence does the writer give for this claim?

❖ **Language:**

Analysis of language involves looking for patterns of repetitions, the use of specific words and phrases (diction), the use of connotations, and figurative language.

- The use of pronouns to represent characters.
- The way nouns function and reasons for their selection.
- The kind of verbs used: action verbs, mental process verbs...
- Why the writer uses certain nouns, verbs, sayings, proverbs and the purpose they serve and the meaning they convey.
- The use of modal verbs, what they convey about the writer's attitude and mood.

- The use of negative, affirmative, imperative and interrogative and the functions or purposes they serve in the text.
- The use of connectors to convey the writer's ideas and position or reasoning.
- The use of figurative language and imagery, symbolism and the purposes they convey.
- Evaluation and comments on all the mentioned uses to realize whether they are used appropriately to serve the writer's topic, themes, morals and ideological beliefs and convictions.

❖ **Post-reading stage:**

At the post-reading stage, the reader is expected to extend the understanding obtained from the text at the pre-reading and while-reading into writing tasks. This implies summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting and reflecting.

- Students summarize what has been developed through their reading.
- Students give their judgements based on their analysis and understanding of the text.

On the whole, the overall objective of critical reading is developing critical reading awareness in students by questioning and thinking through a text and extending this awareness and understanding into writing activities.

3. Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR):

USSR is a very common reading strategy. It is a time set aside and devoted solely to the activity of reading. USSR is a devoted period of time usually anywhere in the school from ten to thirty minutes for quiet continuous reading Seow (1999 et al), McCracken (1971), Hopkins (2003).

In USSR students read just short articles, or extracts which interests them.

In USSR, any material read is to be completed within the time given for the session.

• **Purposes of USSR:**

Hopkins (2003), Anderson (1985), Seow (1999) and Gambrell (1978) set the following major purposes for USSR.

- To help students familiarize themselves with the reading process itself.

- To help students continually acquire new vocabulary as they read.
- To help students familiarize themselves with different genres as well as with their particular features.
- To increase student's desire to read on their own during their free time.
- To help pupils form good reading habits for extensive reading.
- To demonstrate and raise student understanding of the value of reading.
- To develop in students a life-long love of reading.
- USSR can build students' confidence in their reading abilities.

USSR Stages:

- **Before-reading stage:**

The teacher asks students to guess what the passage will be about just by looking at the title.

- **While- reading stage:**

- Students read silently and continually.
- Students must read for the entire allotted reading period.
- Students preferably read books that tell a story, rather than factual books in order to grow a love for good stories.
- Students should not talk with each other.

- **Post-reading stage:**

The teacher may ask the students the following questions

- In one sentence, or briefly, say what the passage is about?
- Why did the author write this passage?
- What's the author's feeling towards the topic?
- Is the author's point of view objective, subjective or neutral?

- Is the author, amusing, critical, sarcastic humorous in his treatment of the subject matter?