

CHAPTER FOUR: DEVELOPING READING STRATEGIES FOR LITERARY TEXT

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DEVELOPING READING STRATEGIES FOR LITERARY TEXT:

1. Introduction

The term strategy came into usage just in the early 1980's. Before this date, most theorists in the field used the term skill or skill teaching. Bosma (et al: 1992) affirms that the difference between strategy and skill lies in control factor. This means that in skill instruction, the teacher exercises an immense control over learners. Yet, strategy instruction implies an active learner with a showing-how teacher. Thus, within strategic instruction, the teacher encourages students to monitor their comprehension and provides them with the necessary help to make use of the internalized reading skills in order to process and comprehend what they read.

2. Reading strategies:

Recent approaches to the teaching of reading have stressed the great importance of reading strategies for coping with texts. For many applied linguists, good readers are those who are flexible enough in using appropriate strategies. Dubin (2000:148) 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.”

Good readers, thus have the ability to use reading strategies to adjust to the text in hand in order to achieve their objectives for reading. Thompson (1982) lists seven reading strategies that could lead to efficient L2 reading.

- A- Identifying text structure via a brief summary.
- B- Providing titles to texts before reading.
- C- Using embedded heading as advanced organizers.
- D- Pre-reading questions.
- E- Generating of story-specific schema: readers ask themselves questions.
- F- Use of visual imagery and illustrations.
- G- Reading a story from the perspective of different people or participants.

Dubin (2000) on the other hand added good readers use the following strategies for a successful reader:

- A- Keep the meaning of a passage in mind while reading and use it to predict overall meaning.
- B- Skip unfamiliar words and guess their meaning from later sentences.
- C- Identify the grammatical function of an unfamiliar word before guessing its meaning.
- D- Refer to any side glossary.
- E- Skip words that may add relatively little to total meaning.

In essence, successful readers seem to use appropriate strategies in order to foster their reading abilities the thing which would make them proficient readers.

In view of the substantial number of strategies developed for successful reading, some theorists grouped some of them in categories and associated them according to the reader's purposes of reading. Thus, Robinson (1961) devised the SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, and Review; McCracken (1971) the USSR: Uninterrupted, Sustained, Silent, Reading, and Wallace (1990) the CR: Critical Reading.

For all that, SQ3 R, USSR, and CR come to be the most renowned and efficient reading strategies, for either study or pleasurable reading purposes, recognised and wildly used by educationists all over the world.

3. Reading strategies and literary genres:

3.1. Introduction:

Generally speaking the three strategies SQ3R, USSR, and CR are reading strategies used by successful readers for a wide range of purposes. From study and critical reading, to reading for pleasure and entertainment. They also proved to be so flexible to be used by readers reading all sorts of materials, scientific, cultural or literary.

Since literature consists generally of three major genres: prose, poetry and drama, we shall endeavour to apply the three strategies to the reading of the three literary genres.

3.2. SQ3R reading comprehension strategy

SQ3R is a five-step comprehension strategy developed by F.P Robinson in 1961 as Jordan (2000:17) points out:

“Several books refer to the well-tried and widely-used system of reading text books, known as SQ3R...It ensures a high degree of understanding and remembrance.”

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.

3.2.1 SQ3R stages

A-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.

B-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.

C-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.

D-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.

E-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.

3.2.2 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.

4. APPLYING SQ3R TO LITERARY TEXT:

4.1 Stage 1: Survey

- What genre of writing is the work?
- Is it poetry, fiction or drama?
- What is the title or subheading?
- Who is the author?
- When was the work written?
- Are there any introductory or concluding paragraphs?

The design below adapted from F.P Robinson can be helpful.

Genre:.....	Title:.....
Author:.....	Time period of work:.....
Subheading:.....	
Main idea(s)from the introductory or concluding paragraphs	
.....	
Ideas you get from pictures or graphs:.....	
length of reading assignment:.....	
Due dates for assignment:.....	

Design 4: survey stage

4.2 Stage 2: Question

- What questions has the teacher raised?
- What themes and issues have you been discussing in class?
- Is it possible to convert the title or subheading to questions?
- Can you add other questions?

Questions are not restricted to comprehension, but can cover structure, figurative language, plot, characters, point of view, depending on the teacher’s objectives of the reading course and the availability of information required through questions in the reading passage.

Teacher's questions:.....

.....

1-Understanding 2-Style and genre 3-Figurative language 4-context

5-Others:.....

Themes discussed with instructor:

1- 2- 3-.....

Your questions:

1-.....

2-.....

Design 5: question stage

4.3 Stage 3: Read

- Read the text with questions you wrote.
- Use your questions and the teacher questions so that you select what to annotate, highlight, note take, etc.
- Read any captions under pictures or graphs...
- Consider any italicized, bold printed words or phrases.

- Annotate (to help you answer questions or understand).
- Highlight:
- Notes.....
- connotations: consider italicized, bold faced words:

.....

N.B: reading should be explicitly done on the text paper through the use of, asterisks, underlying, circling...

Design 6: reading stage

4.4 Stage 4: Recite:

At the end of each section: verse, stanza, scene, act, chapter, etc., orally answer the questions you have raised in your own words without referring to the text.

You can write in margin of the text some notes, or underline / highlight the key words or ideas that help you answer and recite the answers to questions.

- Underline key words(of the reading section)

- Key ideas on the margin section

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- Oral answers to questions

- Summaries: from mind.....

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N.B: this design can be done each time after the end of any section, if the passage is not long, it can be done once without referring to the text.

Design 07 : recite stage

4.5 Stage 5: Review:

- Answer the questions about the whole work, write the answers then recite them.

- Reread any sections to find answers to particularly difficult questions.
- Write down the major topics and subjects you picked from the text.
- Briefly summarize, in your own words, key points, key ideas and the answers of the questions.
- Read weekly, the summaries and answers.
- Write questions about your notes and summaries likely to have in tests.

- Major topics and subjects:

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- Summary of key ideas

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- Answers to questions:

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.Answers to questions with particular difficulty.

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- Summaries of the whole work

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- Predicted test questions: questions after class discussion

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- Answers to predicted test questions.

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Design 08: review stage

5. CRITICAL READING STRATEGIES: CRS

5.1 Introduction:

Readers usually treat texts with great reverence and acceptance, since they think that published materials are objective and true. This view however can not be applied to literary texts. Reading literary materials actually implies critical reading. Readers have to question and judge the value and worth of information a text contains as well as the way information and ideas are expressed.

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. Many theorists however, assume that critical reading exhibits a great challenge to low level and beginner students. Thus, they recommend that it would be useful with to high level advanced or literary-minded students.

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. Wallace (1990) asserts that teachers need to develop step-by step activities to guide students to negotiate and question the information content and the ideological assumptions that the writer tries to impart.

5.2. 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 are 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.

5.3. 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) analysing.

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.

A- Annotating:

a- 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.

b- 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.

c- 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.

B- Analysing:

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

a- 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?

N.B: The purpose of analysing arguments is to be able to distinguish fact from opinion: thus, students have to question and helped by check list of questions, everything that does not make sense to him /her and then discount arguments based on faulty reasoning.

b-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.

- Looking for repetitions or patterns of recurring images.
- Repeated descriptions.
- Repeated words and phrases, examples and illustrations.

- 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 realise whether they are used appropriately to serve the writer's topic, themes, morals and ideological beliefs and convictions.

5.4. 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 summarising, 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.

*Students comment on the message and language of the text.

*Based on reasoning, arguments and conclusion students produce an essay in which they explain the writer's ideological, cultural, or social strengths and weakness, the way language and diction are used to convey the message.

On the whole, the over all 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.

6. UNINTERRUPTED SUSTAINED SILENT READING (USSR):

6.1 Introduction:

USSR is a very common reading strategy. It is a time set aside and devoted solely to the activity of reading. Everyone reads including the teacher and in some situation even the administrators. Some theorists call it Sustained Silent Reading or SSR for short; others call it Daily Independent Reading Time or DIRT, or Drop Every Thing and Read DEAR. Whatever it is labeled, SSR 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).

6.2 USSR and extensive reading(ER):

Some theorists however and particularly teachers still confuse between ER and USSR. Seow (1999) affirms that ER is reading for an extended period of time which may last more than one hour yet, USSR lasts just a short period of time very often 20 to 30 minutes. In ER, students read from a wide selection of reading material in the classroom or in library, in USSR students read just short articles, or extracts which interests them. Moreover, in ER programs, reading material mainly extended novels and plays may be completed overtime. In USSR, any material read is to be completed within the time given for the session. Furthermore, in ERP, no skills training necessary, but just some follow-up reading activities may be conducted periodically in the classroom. In USSR on the other hand, basic skills training should be included. But, no formal assessment has to be incorporated for both strategies.

6.3 Purposes of USSR:

According to Seow (1999) USSR is best used as a prelude to ERP, when students have formed the habit of sustained silent Reading, they would then be ready for independent extensive reading Program.

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.

6.4 USSR class session:

a- The teacher:

- Set up a classroom library.
- Know the reading level of students for appropriate work selection.
- Teach "book-selecting" strategies to students.
- Set up expectations and outcome for USSR time.

b-The student:

- Listen to and concentrate on their teacher's instructions and orientation.
- Select for themselves the right books considering their level and interest and not imitating other students.

6.5 USSR Stages:**6.5.1 Before-reading stage:**

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

6.5.2 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.

6.5.3 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?

The teacher has to encourage the students to answer these questions, but he need not force them to do so. He continues only when students show interest in giving impressions about the text. The teacher also has to encourage students to relate the reading text to their personal experiences through holding panels for discussing ideas, opinions and experiences related to the text.

On the whole, the success of USSR is greatly dependent on the teacher. Teachers' enthusiasm or lack of interest in reading could easily be communicated to students. Creating a quiet relaxing and no evaluative classroom environment is also an essential element for successful USSR.

7. Conclusion

Since literary texts exhibit a somewhat considerable length and in most times challenging and hard syntactic and semantic elements, reading strategies that imply before, during and after reading activities seems to be so much efficient tools for helping learners comprehend and engage in literary material.

Most of researchers in the area assert that reading strategies such as Survey Question Read Recite Review (SQ3R) Critical Reading (CR) and Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) if used consistently and appropriately will help learners acquire life-long independent reading habits both for study or pleasure. Moreover, they will foster the learners reading abilities as well as responses whenever confronted with considerably lengthy and challenging texts particularly literary ones.