Proficiency in L2

ACQUIRING READING SKILLS

- Reading – a psycholinguistic guessing game

Role of background knowledge

- Reading occurs in a context

The procedure is actually quite simple. First, you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run, this may not seem important but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well.

At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another fact of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one can never tell. After the procedure is completed one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually, they will be used once more, and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is part of life.

- Bransford, J. D., and M. K. Johnson. "Contextual Prerequisites for Understanding Some Investigations of Comprehension and Recall." Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior 11, no. 6 (1972): 717-726

- This passage is about 'washing clothes'
- If you don't know the topic, the understanding may be limited
- The sentences themselves do not change when you know the topic; but, the interpretation in our minds changes
- Background knowledge - schema

- Mary heard the ice cream man coming down the street. She remembered her birthday money and rushed into the house and…

- Who is Mary?

- What do you think happened at the end?

- How did you make this guess?

- Are other interpretations possible? If yes, why did you not think of them?

Garden Path Effect

- The horse raced past the barn fell.

- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.

- The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families.

- The old man the boat.

- The prime number few.

- Fat people eat accumulates.

- I convinced her children are noisy.

- The horse (that) raced past the barn fell.
- (Time) (flies) like an arrow (flies); (fruit flies) like a banana.
- The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families. (house = V)
- The old man the boat. (man = V)
- The prime (people) number few. (number = V)
- Fat (that) people eat accumulates.
- I convinced her (that) children are noisy.

Fluency in reading

- Automatic recognition ability: Automatic (as opposed to conscious) recognition and recall of words and structures

- Vocabulary and structural knowledge: a large recognition vocabulary and a sound knowledge of grammatical structure.

- Knowledge of discourse structure: logical patterns of organization (e.g. cause–effect, problem–solution).

- Content/world background knowledge: prior knowledge about a topic

- Synthesis and evaluation processes/strategies: evaluate information in texts and compare it with other sources of knowledge

- Metacognitive knowledge and comprehension monitoring: recognizing problems in the process of interpreting information in a text, and awareness of non-comprehension.

Role of affect and culture

- The love of reading

- Reading culture

- Rewarding people for literacy skills

Reading for Quick Understanding - Skimming

- Determine what a text is about and whether or not to spend more time on it

- In case of a difficult/ long text, skim to have a sense of where the text will lead us and what we may need to understand it

- Work through many texts to decide which texts to focus on

- Under intense pressure to complete reading in short span of time

- The aim at this stage is not to get to grips with its detailed arguments, simply to understand how many sections a book/ an article has, which of them require careful reading and which you can read through quickly, etc.
- Check the contents pages to see how many sections there are. Check headings, images and summaries

Reading for specific information - Scanning and Skimming

- Running your eye quickly over the text to locate specific words or phrases of interest

- Scanning headings and subheadings, images and diagrams, the body text for authors' names, the contents page, the index for specific words

- Then reading the selected parts for a quick understanding

- Looking for a specific topic in the index of an encyclopedia/ handbook
- Then going to that specific page to read in detail

Reading for detailed understanding

- Analysis Asks

- Interpretation Asks

- Evaluation Asks

(Writing Centre, University of Toronto)

Analysis: What are organization patterns of the text?

- Looking at the parts to detect patterns. Analyse the arguments of the author

- What is the main idea or the central argument?

- What are the supporting points? How do they relate to each other and to the main argument?

- What are the examples used? How do they relate to the points they instantiate and to the main argument?

- What techniques of persuasion (appeal to emotion, reason, authority) are used?

- What rhetorical strategies are used (e.g. definition, explanation, description, narration, elaboration, argumentation, evaluation)?

- What modes of analysis are used (illustration, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, process analysis, classification/division, definition)?

Interpretation: What do the patterns of the argument mean?

- Be aware of the cultural and historical context (author's life, the context of debates within the discipline at that time and today)

- What debates were the author and the text engaging with at that time?

- What kinds of reasoning (historical, psychological, political, philosophical, scientific, etc.) are employed?

- What methodology is employed and what theory is developed?

- How might my reading of the text be biased? Am I imposing current ideas or values on the text? If so, is this problematic?

Evaluation Asks: How well does the text do what it does? What is its value?

- How does it contribute to the discipline? Are its main conclusions original?

- Does the evidence and reasoning adequately support the theory/theories presented?

- Are the sources reliable?

- Is the argument logically consistent? Convincing?

- Were the tools designed and executed in accordance with the accepted standards of the relevant discipline?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory?

- How would competing theories criticize this text? How could the author reply?

- Overall, is the theory/approach in this text better than competing theories/approaches? In other words, what are its comparative strengths and weaknesses?

- Let's look at two reviews of the same movie

Sure, Nitesh Tiwari's Bollywood crowd-pleaser "Dangal" follows a formula: Father abandons his dream of being an international wrestling champion. Father hopes for a son who will live out his dream for him. Father ends up with four daughters. Father discovers that two of his daughters are dexterous brawlers. Father declares, "From now on, they will only wrestle." Father trains those daughters, in defiance of the villagers' tut-tutting and assumptions about women's roles, to mud wrestle, and instills in them a spirit of feminism. (*New York Times*, Dec 22, 2016)

In the story department, Dangal offers few surprises because Geeta and Babita's historic wins at the Commonwealth Games and following championships are common knowledge. However, this screen adaptation serves as a recap of their arduous journey and it vigorously recaptures their stubborn father's resolve to make them professional wrestlers against the odds. Since it encapsulates the historic wins of the Phogats, who brought India glory, the film is also bound to inspire more women to seriously consider kushti as a sport. (*Times of India*, Jan 25, 2017)