

Chapter 8

The Role of Annotations in Summarization: A Writing-to-Learn Strategy

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ABSTRACT

In today's reading education, the importance of explicit instruction of specific cognitive literacy strategy that promotes readers' active participation in the reading process is highly recognized. This active participation is synonymous with readers' interaction with the text, the context, and himself/herself. Hence, this study was conducted to investigate the role of annotations in the ability of the students to write a summary. This chapter considered teacher-modelling as an important factor in the students' annotations. Explicit instruction and modelling gave the students' opportunity to learn the skill until they could independently apply the strategy without the guidance of the teacher. A qualitative analysis of the students' annotations revealed that those who have both verbal and non-verbal glosses had better output in their summary. This implies that annotations provide students better interaction with the text, themselves, and the world.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is said to be “the skill of skills” (Anderson, 1984). It is not surprising then that an enormous amount of time, money, and effort is spent teaching reading in elementary and secondary schools around the world. It is probably true that more time is spent teaching reading than any other skill. Unlike speaking, reading is not something that every individual learns to do (Nunan, 1999). One has to spend a great amount of effort learning how to read, especially today that almost all information can be acquired from printed materials. Therefore, it is understandable that one of the primary concerns of educators today is to train students to become better readers and language users to be able to survive in the academic world, in industry, and in society as well.

The results of national examinations and surveys are reflections of the quality of classroom language instruction in the students’ learning environment. Too many high school students are not prepared for what college reading is or even for what the demands of academic life are. Consequently, it is important to review the existing practices of teaching English, specifically reading and the application of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information that is gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (Scriven & Paul, 1987).

This “meeting of the minds” between author and reader should be given importance and particular attention. In order to establish this, it is vital that teachers create a meaningful interaction between the text and the reader. Letting the students feel the need to have a dialogue or conversation with the text is a challenge for all reading teachers. Allowing the learners to realize the need to bring the metacognitive thoughts and ideas they use during classroom learning situations (especially during a reading session) to the forefront of their consciousness is not an easy task.

Active learners monitor their process, but how they do this is another issue. Brown (2007) suggests that writing is the means that must be used to get learners monitoring their process, especially trying to make sense of the text. Writing helps students think about the text they read and work out their ideas. The reading and writing connection broadens the possibilities for teaching, as reading becomes a process of engaging and making inferences, and writing makes this process explicit (Bowman, 2000).

Educators need to offer students specific techniques (i.e., reading-to-learn skills) for navigating and drawing conclusions from content-area texts; specifically, students

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