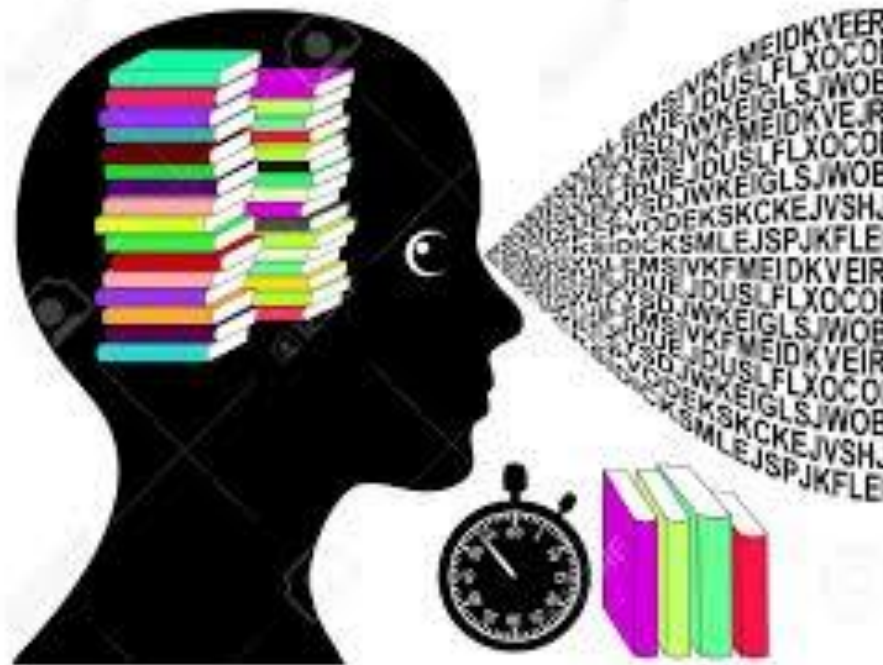


Developing Academic Reading

Dr Karamallah S Mahmood
PhD Clinical Pharmacology

Analysis

Reading



Understanding
Interpretation
Writing
Presenting

‘Think of reading as a “treasure hunt”: an active search rather than an attempt to absorb everything you come across.’

Peter Levin Write Great Essays! (2004. p2)

Critical reading is an important precursor to critical writing.




READING COMPREHENSION AND READING STRATEGIES

by

Rebecca J. Baier

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
In
Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits


Dr. Amy Carole Schlieve

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

December, 2005

What is Critical/ **Active** Reading?

The most characteristic features of critical reading are that you will:

- Examine the evidence or arguments presented
- Check out any influences on the arguments
- Check out the limitations of study design or focus
- Examine the interpretations made
- Decide to what extent you are prepared to accept the authors' arguments, opinions, or conclusions.

Why am I
reading this?

Which parts will
be most useful?

Do I need to
read it all?

When reading
for academic
purposes it is
useful to ask

Where should I
start?

How can this
text help me?



Why do we need to take a critical approach to reading?

the author(s) will have made many decisions during the research and writing process, and each of these decisions is a potential topic for examination, rather than for blind acceptance.



Different ways of reading

The way we read depends on our purpose for reading it.

1 Skimming – reading to form a general impression of the text.

- You do not try to read every word or in too much detail.
- You can skim the introduction and conclusion to a book, or the opening and closing paragraph to a article.
- You can quickly skim through the content page, index or chapter sub-headings.
- The main purpose when skimming is to get the point.



2 Scanning – looking for a particular piece of information.

- When you scan you ignore all the other information and focus on finding what you want.
- We scan when using a telephone directory.
- When we scan for information we usually know what we are looking for.



3 Critical reading – close and detailed reading of a text.

- When you read critically you need to continually analyse, question and evaluate what you are reading.



Some useful questions include asking yourself:

- What is the main argument?
- What evidence does the author use to support and develop this argument?
- Is the evidence valid? (Is it up to date/relevant/biased?)
- Is the author's argument similar or different to others you have read?
- How does the author's argument develop this particular area of study?
- Do you agree with the author? (Why? Why not?)
- How can you use this information? (E.G. in an essay/report/presentation)



Critical reading does not have to be all negative

The aim of critical reading is not to find fault, but to assess the strength of the evidence and the argument.

Broadening the definition of evidence

This includes:

- The report of the context within which the **data** were collected or created;
- The choice of the **method** for data collection or selection;
- The audit trail for the **analysis** of the data
- The rationale for the **interpretations** made

- Evidence cannot contribute to academic debate. The interpretation and presentation of that evidence within an argument allows the evidence to make a contribution.

Linking evidence to argument

- The term 'argument' explains for example:
- Why the authors considered that what they did was worth doing;
- Why it was worth doing in that particular way;
- Why the data collected, or the material selected, were the most appropriate;
- How the conclusions drawn link to the wider context of their enquiry.

If you take a critical approach right from the start of your reading and **note taking**, it can save a lot of time later on.

When you come to write your assignment or thesis, you will need to comment on the validity of the writing that you refer to.

Useful Web Links and Resources

- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) <http://www.casp-uk.net/>
- University of Toronto: Advice on critical reading for academic writing
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/reading-and-researching>
- Burns, Tom. & Sinfield, Sandra. (2006). Essential Study Skills, SAGE Publications Inc: London
- Cottrell, Stella. (2003). The Study Skills Handbook 2nd Edn. Palgrave-Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- Cottrell, Stella. (2005). Critical Thinking Skills. Palgrave-Macmillan: Basingstoke
- Greetham, Bryan. (2001). How to write better essays. Palgrave-Macmillan: Basingstoke
- Levin, Peter. (2004). Write great essays! Open University Press: Maidenhead
- Race, Phil. (2003). How to Study. Blackwell: Oxford

- Aston University LDC www.aston.ac.uk/ldc - this is the LDC home page with links to the study skills materials and other useful sites.
- Learn Higher <http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/> - this link will give you access to numerous resources being developed by a number of universities in many different study areas.
- Open University <http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php> - the OU have developed many online resources, including a section on Study Skills
- Royal Literary Fellowship
<http://www.rlf.org.uk/fellowshipscheme/writing/glossary.cfm> - this link will open the RLF website which includes a number of additional links you may find useful.
- Write Now <http://www.writenow.ac.uk/> - Aston University are part of the Write Now project, and the LSC provide student writing mentors through our work with Write Now.

Thanks