Studying in English

A practical approach to study skills in English as a second language

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Longman
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Unit Seven
Reading textbooks

A. Listening comprehension: Skimming

Listen carefully to the talk which you are about to hear. Answer each question below when you are instructed to do so.

Skimming

1. Complete the following sentences according to what has been said. (Write several words to replace the blanks.)
   a. When we read normally our eyes concentrate on ______, but when we skim our eyes become aware of ______.
   b. Although the eye movements appear to move in no regular direction, they are influenced by ______ and ______.

2. According to what you have just heard, write T if the following statement is true and F if it is false:
   We should try to maintain the same level of comprehension when we are skimming as when we are reading.

3. Complete the following sentence according to what has been said:
   The application of skimming techniques enables us to find out whether a book will be ______.

4. Complete the following sentences by writing one word to replace each blank:
   a. We scan when we want to locate ______ information.
   b. After finding the information we want, it will probably be necessary for us to read the appropriate section ______.

5. a. Give another name for selective reading.
   b. When is this technique used?

6. According to what you have just heard, write T if the following statement is true and F if it is false:
   Only those students who can read quickly can learn how to skim successfully.

B. Note-taking: Relationships (1)

As was demonstrated in the reading text in Unit 3, the ability to recognise basic relationships is essential for successful note-taking. Although sets of relationships are expressed by numerous verbal equivalents, the basis of each set can often be shown by a single visual symbol. An awareness of fundamental relationships between words and ideas is thus one of the most important aims in seeking to attain the required skills of note-taking. Consequently, each section in Units 7–10 will concentrate on giving examples of the various symbols commonly used in notes. (The lists of verbal equivalents given for each sign are far from being exhaustive; in most cases only a limited selection of verbal equivalents is given.)

1. ______ is equals, is the same as, is like, is synonymous with, consists of, is made up of, is called, represents, is on a par with
   There are some reading texts which are packed with information.
   Some texts = full of inf.
   Words which denote linkage are called linkers or connectives.
   Words showing linkage = linkers/connectives.
   Signs represent relationships between various words and ideas.
   Signs = relationships between words and ideas.

2. ______ is approximately, (is) more or less
   The reading speed of many foreign learners of English at university is approximately 150 words per minute.
   Many f-learners' r speed = 150 wpm.
   or
   Many f-learners read at = 150 wpm.

3. ______ Not
   This symbol is used to reverse the polarity of a relationship:
   eg. different means is not, does not equal, is different from
   Many exercises designed to train the eye are not very useful.
   Many exs for training eye ≠ useful.
   The Italian word 'simpatico' does not mean the same as the English word 'sympathetic'.
   Simpatico (It) ≠ sympathetic (Eng).

4. ______ v. r. f. (important)
   Underlining is used in notes to show various degrees of importance or emphasis.
   The ability to read quickly is very important.
   Able read quickly = imp.
   A timetable is an extremely effective means of helping the student to establish and maintain a routine of study.
Reading textbooks

Timetable = effective in est study routine.
therefore, thus, so, then, consequently;
with the result that, as a result, so (that)
Reading requires the ability to understand the relationship between
words. Consequently, for these reasons, many experts have now
begun to question the usefulness of eye training.
Reading = und reltnsp btwn words · eye training = useful.
Many native language-to-English dictionaries contain numerous errors
and so should be avoided by the student.
Many Li-Eng dictns = many errors · avoid.
because (of), as, since, for, as a result of, on account of, owing to, due to,
now that
A considerable number of speed reading courses are successful since
students attending them want to read quickly and are prepared to
practise a lot.
Many speed rrdng courses = success · stdnts i) want to improve and
ii) practise hard.
Almost all dictionaries give guide words at the top of each page;
these guide words, often printed in heavy type, can save the reader a
great deal of time in locating a particular word.
Can find words quickly · guide words in most dictns.

C Reading: The SQ3R method

Skim through the following text in order to obtain a general idea of the SQ3R
method. The maximum time allowed is 90 seconds.

The SQ3R method
That aspect of reading with which students are most concerned is the study of
textbooks. Although studying a textbook encompasses reading, it involves much
more than reading. This is demonstrated clearly by what is probably the most
popular technique* for dealing with textbooks. This technique, commonly referred to
as the SQ3R method, is described in detail here and is strongly recommended for
studying an important text, the contents of which you need to know thoroughly. It
consists of the following five steps:
Survey
Question
Read
Recall
Revise (or Review)

*Based on the method developed by F P Robinson and described in Effective Study. Harper
and Row, 1946.

2 Survey. Look through the whole of the textbook before studying the various parts
in detail. Glancing through the material very rapidly will help to establish a
familiarity with the plan and organisation of the book. It will throw light on the
aims and the method the author uses to achieve these aims. First, a scrutiny of the
title page of the book will provide basic information on the topic of the book.
Even the author’s name and the date of publication may be of direct relevance.
The Preface, Foreword, or Introduction to the book will state the author’s aim
and describe the various features of the book. It will generally inform you of the
audience for whom the book is intended and of the kind of information
contained in the book. After skimming through this section, turn next to the
Table of Contents for information on the topics contained in the book. This is
generally the quickest and the easiest way of determining what the book is about.
From the Table of Contents you may be able to see how topics are related to one
another and into which broad divisions they fall. Sampling the Index (ie finding
out the main references) is also a useful practice when surveying the book. An
index provides a more detailed presentation of the topics listed in the Contents
section, but does not show the relationship between the topics. If the book is
considered useful for your requirements, a rapid survey of the individual
chapters will now be necessary. When conducting such a survey, glance at the
beginning and the end of each chapter as well as at the various section headings
and end-of-chapter summaries (if any). A cursory glance at any glossary and
bibliography will complete the survey stage.

2 Question. The next stage in the process necessitates the formulation of questions
and imparts a sense of direction and purpose to the reading. You will probably
ask general questions after surveying the book as a whole. For example, what do
you need to know? What do you already know? What do you expect to learn from
the book? How can you break up the book into sections for study purposes?
How can you approach the book? A survey of each individual chapter of the book
will then produce more specific questions. The introductory sentences in each
chapter and section of the book are of great help in the formulation of specific
questions. Occasionally, the author may set out by deliberately posing questions.
If headings are used, simply transform each heading into the interrogative, for
specific questions will lead to the adoption of an active approach to reading.
Always write out your questions either in full or in note-form, dealing with one
section or one chapter at a time.

3 Reading. The next step is to read the book as quickly as possible, but not in the
same way as you would read a novel. Indeed, habits arising from reading novels
may be harmful when applied to reading textbooks. The reading of a textbook
will often of necessity be slower. Frequent regressions may occur, and you may
find yourself turning back pages in an effort to understand more clearly the various
relationships treated or the arguments developed. The questions formulated in
the previous stage should now be answered during the reading, every attempt
being made to approach the book actively. It is not too late to formulate any
questions omitted previously and to check them against your preliminary survey
and questions. Although many reading specialists would advocate the taking of
notes in the next stage, it is possible at this stage to use useful notes from a
reasonable unit of text (eg from a section or a chapter). Remember, however, that
it is better not to make notes while you are actually going along: try to make
them after finishing reading part of the section.

4 Recall. At the end of each section or chapter, attempt to recall the contents. Read
out your original questions and attempt to provide an answer to each question.
If a friend or colleague has read the same material, you can formulate questions to
ask each other and to discuss. The nearer the opportunity for recall, the
progressive material will be fixed in your mind. The recall stage is the time to
check and amplify your notes – or, if you have not already done so, to make notes.
This stage is generally considered to be the most active of the five stages in the
SQ3R method, requiring more time to complete than any other stage.

5 Revise. Revision shortly after the previous steps have been completed is useful in
ensuring that the information learnt is retained for a longer time. One method of
revision recommended is to look again critically at the material as a whole,
writing a form of summary or discussing it comprehensively. Some students
prefer to read another textbook on the same topic, checking the new information
against the notes they have made and, where necessary, expanding the original
notes. Another form of revision recommended for later purposes (ie before an
examination) takes the form of a very rapid repetition of the previous four steps in
the SQ3R method. Clearly, after the four steps have been completed once, your
revision will take only a fraction of the time spent in the first instance.

In conclusion, the SQ3R method is recommended as a means of generating an
active participation in study and an intelligent attitude towards the material being
studied. It is preferable by far to the widespread habit of opening a book and
reading through it page by page, since it ensures a much higher degree of both
comprehension and retention.

Pause and think carefully about what you have read. Now list the various steps in the
SQ3R method and write at least one sentence about each of the steps.

Note-taking practice
After completing the first exercise, check each statement with the text and take
outline notes.

NOTES
The SQ3R Method

1. Survey
   i) Title page gives basic inf on topic.
   ii) Preface, Front, Intro give aim and pass outline.
   iii) Table of Contents shows reln of topics to each other.
   iv) Index gives detailed list of topics.
   v) Survey of chapters – skim.
   vi) Glossary and bibliography.

2. Question
   Gen qstns from book: specif ones from chs.
   Intro seneces lead to qstns. [Headings, etc.]
   Qstns encourage active approach.

3. Reading
   Read quickly [but ≠ novel; e.g. regression etc.]
   Answer qstns now and ask others.
   Take notes at end of scnt or chn.

4. Recall
   Try to remember reading.
   Read orig qstns = answer, discuss.
   More opp for recall = better remember.
   Check or make nots.
   Most active stage in SQ3R.

5. Revise
   Revise soon: remember more.
   Rev = i) review material and write summary
   ii) read other text books on same subj
   iii) repetn of 4 steps [quick].

Writing practice
Using the information in the notes above, describe the SQ3R method, illustrating
how you would use it by referring to a textbook which you have recently read.

D Practice section

1 Apply the SQ3R method to this book.
   a Survey:
      i) Make a note of the title, author and date of publication.
      ii) Summarise in one or two sentences the main points in the
          Introduction.
      iii) Table of Contents: Which of the following topics occupy
          complete chapters in the book?
          Memory/Research/Dictionaries/Skimming/
          Organisation of study/Note-taking/Reading speed/
Reading textbooks

Lectures/Topic sentences/Vocabulary/Libraries/
Timetables/Study skills and objectives/Tutorials/
Reading textbooks/Health/Writing reports/
Reading improvement/Abbreviations/
Examinations/Reference techniques/Studyng in
English

iv Each unit in the book is divided into 4 sections. Name each of these sections.

b Question:
   i Write down one or two general questions about the book as a whole and one or two questions about some of the specific topics it contains.
   ii Now write down a few questions arising from a survey of the first reading text in Unit 1.

c Read:
   i Read the text in Unit 1.
   ii Answer the questions you formulated in the previous stage.
   iii Now answer the questions on the whole book.

d Recall:
   Make outline notes of the first six chapters.

e Revise:
   After three days, survey the book once more, repeating steps a–d.

2 Imagine that you are writing a book review for a local university/college/school journal. Write a brief summary of this book, outlining its contents and commenting on those parts which you think will prove useful and on those which will not be so useful.