

READING ACTIVITY
Slow Reading*: A Virtuous Strategy
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“A book can be simple but not a book reader.”

- Objective** : To make readers realize that slow reading has its own values as to enable them to develop all the cognitive skills enumerated in Bloom’s taxonomy. Although fast reading is to be encouraged it is the content that determines the reading speed.
- Participation** : Individual
- Material** : Any text, densely worded, from any domain of knowledge. For instance, I stumbled upon the following site: <https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/4/5/21208629/essays-life-during-coronavirus-arundhati-roy-david-byrne>, wherein the writers record their life during the coronavirus pandemic, one of which I went through was Simon Callow’s essay.
- Preparation** : Deliberately slowing down the speed whenever a reader wishes to reflect on what is being read.

Procedure

Context

- Having identified the essay at random (one of the reasons was its brevity – only three paragraphs), I decided to read it because of the topical interest. I initially thought of glancing through it rapidly.
- When I started reading, however, right into the second sentence there was a reference to Camus’ *Plague* and I thought of skipping it but came the next reference to Defoe in the same line. Further into the next paragraph, I was bombarded with more references: World War II, pianist Myra Hess, actors Donald Wolfit, Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson, and ballet dancers Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann. References continued in the third paragraph as well to IRA aggression and ended with the press conference of Mr. Johnson with Mr. Trump.
- The number of references in the text gave me an option to refer to them or merely to get the general tenor skipping the references. Had I chosen to do the latter, I would have lost the richness of the text. Texts of this kind force one to pause to grasp the meaning by activating the schema and/or by accessing the referencing sources. One cannot speed-read a text of this sort but reading slowly brings rich rewards.

Points to Remember

- Choose a text that demands slow reading (not all of them do).
- While reading, pause at the places when the mind is creating a parallel text (imaginative

readers often do – something that reminds them of similar things in their lives, or they could imagine how it would be if they were in such a context).

- One could also generate similar or contradictory ideas to what is presented. And, relating to other texts that are similar or dissimilar – *intertextuality* (reflective readers often engage in such acts), is yet another possibility.
- References that are made to other texts, articles or authors could lead to engaging in reading them (extensive readers keep up this sort of a chain).
- While reading, some of us go word by word (which automatically slows down the speed), paying attention to all possible aspects such as content, style, tone, tenor and background to critique the text (exploratory and analytical readers follow the style).
- When reading a text, if one goes beyond the surface level to unearth the implied meanings to inform others of the same text (reviewers do), the reading speed slows down.

Learning Outcomes

1. Learners understand that a text determines the kind of reading, whether intensive or extensive, and the former requires slow reading to grasp all its meanings. And, instead of reading all texts in a similar manner, learners need to switch styles.
2. Learners recognize that reading intensively (necessarily slow) promotes cognitive skills such as exploratory, analytical, critical, reflective, and so on.

Further Reading

Texts that demand serious attention have to be read slowly to capture all their nuances and richness.

***Slow reading:** It has several positive aspects which fast readers are likely to miss. Speed readers often skim and scan; hence, their understanding is often shallow and there is a lurking danger of misunderstanding.

Slow reading enhances sensitivity to the linguistic and semantic aspects of a text, which, besides deeper comprehension, leads to better writing style as they are interrelated.

“A traveling traveller travels but the non-traveling traveller travels to places with the help of books that opens a traveller’s chapter in the life of a non-traveling yet traveling traveller.”

— **Suyasha Subedi**

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