

Examination of Undergraduates' Perception of the Purpose for Academic Reading

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Abstract

Learning to learn is a predominate topic in current education research. This topic accompanies the need for undergraduate students' active engagement in applying their literacy skills for learning, specifically the academic reading process. The research presented here examines the perception of 402 undergraduate with respect to their reading ability and purpose for complying with academic reading assignments. This research also includes students' perception of their instructors' view of student reading ability and the purpose for academic reading. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, the basic premise of which is to enhance the reliability within the quantitative and qualitative data. From a dual lens perception of required reading, undergraduates indicated differences in the purpose for reading between their individual goals and instructor requirements. Despite these differences, students identified academic reading ability as a significant component in academic success. Findings from this study are also analyzed against the Process Education reading methodology and the use of reading logs, through which significant alignment is noted as well as the need for faculty to preassess academic reading skills and provide constructive intervention on steps within the reading methodology.

Background

The primary means of communication within and outside of higher education is the written word. Therefore, one may conjecture that obtaining a degree in higher education demonstrates the use of a high level of communication using the written word i.e., literacy skills. *Literacy* is interpreted as the ability to read, write, listen, speak, and think critically, which enhances academic success. Textbooks are noted as a major vehicle for conveying information and are in direct correlation with content students learn when attending college (McKeachie, 2002). Every semester instructors select a textbook or set of readings for undergraduate students and develop a predetermined schedule for completing the assigned readings. Yet research reveals that most often undergraduate students do not read or complete their required textbook reading assignments (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump, Bauer, & Bradley, 2004; Sappington, Kinsey, & Munsayac, 2002). Researchers indicate four categories of reasons for students reading or not reading academic assignments: expectations, purpose for reading, reading ability, and comprehension strategies (Hoeft, 2012; Lei, Barlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010). Other researchers stated that without extrinsic motivating factors such as quizzes or consequences impacting grades, students will not read (Ruscio, 2001, Sappington, et al, 2002). It was also noted that an instructor's lack of monitoring reading assignment compliance sent a message to students that reading was optional and of little importance.

Reading Expectations

Expectations include personal beliefs, mental representations, and perceptions of what actions are necessary for achieving a perceived set of learning outcomes. Such expectations include self-regulation, self-efficacy and self-esteem. *Self-esteem* refers to confidence in abilities. Low self-esteem involves a sense of incompetence or incapability. *Self-regulation for learning* involves the ability to use self-selected learning strategies, resistance to distractions, completing assignment, and participating in class discussions for academic achievement (Klassen, 2007; Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008). From an academic set of expectations, student involvement requires a sufficient amount of physical and psychological energy by students within academic experiences. In other words, "*Those that do the work, do the learning*" (Doyle, 2008, p. 63). Jolliffe and Harl (2008) noted that most undergraduates do not spend adequate time reading or use adequate reading strategies. However, their findings also revealed that personal, self-chosen reading was preferred by some students over required academic reading.

Instructors' expectations may be for students to demonstrate behaviors that include active engagement and involvement in the learning process as referenced in The American Association of Colleges and Universities (2002), *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* report. Such expectations require students to be actively engaged in academic reading.

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Undergraduates' perceptions of what actions are necessary for achieving a set of learning outcomes may or may not correlate with instructor expectations. Grigsby's 2009 interviews with 60 Midwestern public university students over an extended period indicated that commitment to academic rigor correlated with students' ability to navigate course requirements. Their incentive was to gain an academic GPA rather than actually learning something meaningful during the process, which could be realized through completion of required as well as supplemental readings. This belief is reinforced by quizzes/tests that focus only on reading content, rather tools that monitor student efforts to read and reflect what they have read.

Reading Ability and Comprehension

Ryan (2006) argues that poor reading comprehension is the cause for lack of motivation. Linderholm and Wilde (2010) assert that students' beliefs about reading performance and confidence contribute to the need for deeper cognitive processing when reading in order to learn. Inference making, paraphrasing, text repetition, reading speed, metacognition, and recall varies when reading for pleasure and reading for academic purposes (Linderholm, 2006, 2008; van den Broek, Lorch, Linderholm, & Gustafson, 2001). Adequate reasoning and metacognitive skills necessary for transference and application of knowledge is missing (Linderholm, 2006). Such research infers that critical thinking when reading is missing.

Jolliffe and Harl (2008) analyzed students' ability to make connections with what they read: text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world. They discovered that students were able to make connections with support, but lacked the ability to make connections between the texts they were reading. The key point being textbook or academic reading provides increased reading difficulty (Linderholm, 2006). The lack of reading comprehension, critical thinking and minimal understanding of academic reading correlates with students' personal beliefs, abilities to use mental representations for reasoning and metacognitive processing, and self-esteem i.e. self-confidence. Therefore, undergraduates' expectations about the purpose for academic reading appear to be the key element when examining their perception of personal reading ability and efforts to improve reading skill.

Purpose for Reading

Academic expectations of educators in higher education most often includes required academic reading in order to comprehend course content. The underlying premise is that students will read and make connections between texts in order to learn. Therefore, assigned readings require in-depth text-to-text connections for reading comprehension

(Jolliffe & Harl, 2008). Students are required to incorporate cognitive processing and comprehension skills that match the purpose for reading (Linderholm, 2006). Reading for understanding necessitates students engaging in the critical thinking process (van den Broek et al, 2001).

Critical thinking, when reading, requires the ability to assess relevant information, reasoning, and self-corrective thinking (Paul & Elder, 2008). Therefore, critical thinking requires a sufficient amount of time for reading. Inefficient use of time or resources creates delays in completing course-reading assignments that result in procrastination. Undergraduates' academic procrastination is between 70 to 95% (Steel, 2007, 2010). Procrastination may reflect students' identification of purpose for in-depth reading for understanding course content is minimal to non-existent.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to determine undergraduates' perception regarding compliance or lack of compliance in completing required academic reading assignments. Examination of expectations, abilities and/or purpose were explored. Additionally, the study included analyzing students' perception of instructors' expectations for reading compliance, abilities, and purpose.

Perception, for purposes of this study, is interpreted as the way undergraduates think about or understand the reason behind reading or not reading to achieve academic success. An essential component for engaging in the learning process is the perception of what needs to happen during the learning process – reading. Linderholm, (2006) determined that students read to memorize information for a grade on a quiz, test, or major exam. Yet, textbook or expository text reading requires a functional purpose. Whereas, reading for understanding requires engaging in the critical thinking process (van den Broek et al., 2001).

Undergraduate students' perception of their ability to read academic material and the purpose for reading was hypothesized to differ from their perception of the instructors' expectations. Therefore, the following research questions were addressed: (a) What are undergraduates' perception (understanding, interpretation, mental impression) of their reading ability or purpose for reading assignments; and (b) What are undergraduate students' perceptions of their instructors' view of undergraduates' reading ability and the purpose for completing reading assignments?

Research Methods

A mixed methods approach was used in this study through administration of a researcher constructed a two-part survey that included 32 statements in which participants responded based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1

being the lowest and 5 the highest response on the scale. Additionally, four open-ended questions were included at the end of the survey for students to respond to, expanding on their overall perception of ability and purpose for academic reading. The statements constructed by the researchers address attitudinal perceptions of reading abilities and purpose.

The basic premise for selecting a mixed method approach is to enhance the reliability within the quantitative and qualitative data (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The implications within the research problem and questions requires valuing both objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) information (Morgan, 2007).

Participants

The participants in this study were 402 undergraduate students in the College of Education at a southeast Texas university. Undergraduate participants were interdisciplinary study majors with the opportunity to obtain teacher certification in the areas of early childhood through grade 12, including specialization areas for special education, bilingual education, the arts, STEM, language arts, social studies, and mathematics. Included in the study were 172 sophomores, 129 juniors, and 99 seniors. Gender distribution was 378 females, 22 males. Ethnicity included, 71% Caucasian, 14% Hispanic, 11% African American, and 4% other.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data—Cronbach's alpha was run to determine survey internal consistency of Likert scale items. Statement items that correspond with specific sections were evaluated separately for internal consistency, more specifically; student's personal view and their view of instructor's perception of student reading ability as positive or negative; as well as student's personal view and their view of instructor's perception of student reading purpose as positive or negative. Each section of the survey was evaluated for reliability. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .61 to .86.

Additionally, descriptive statistics were calculated to determine overall mean of responses to each of the statements on the survey. Based on the 5-point Likert scale, researchers analyzed mean differences between student's responses regarding perception of personal reading ability and their perception of instructors' view, as well as differences in perceptions of purpose for reading.

Qualitative Data—A coding and triangulation strategy was used, with the generation of theoretical ideas from the data (i.e., grounded theory) as the focus for the reflective reading and coding of responses to the four open-ended questions.

The three researchers independently analyzed the student responses for salient categories (open coding). This led to a combined transcript of themes and related concepts that emerged through discussions and researcher interpretations. Triangulation was finalized after common sets of codes were identified among researchers, then emerging themes were discovered, and categorization of themes were agreed upon to represent overarching concepts. Such an approach ensured that the findings were reliable and comprehensive (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Results

The results of the survey responses reported on the Likert scale are presented in Tables 1 through 4. Statistical differences of 0.80 or greater were considered noteworthy and are indicated in each table.

Quantitative Survey Responses

Students' *positive perception* of their reading abilities are similar to their interpretation of instructors' perception for 75% of the statements. The speed for reading textbooks versus novels and the easiness for reading textbooks are rated a mean difference of 1.00 to 1.09.

Student responses to each of the statements noted in Table 2 indicate a higher mean for negative perceptions of their individual academic reading ability versus perceptions of instructors' view of reading abilities. Noteworthy, is that responses to 50% of the reading statements were at or above the 0.80 mean difference in perceptions of reading.

Student responses to the majority of the survey items as noted in Table 3 indicate that students' positive perception of purpose for reading are lower than their perception of instructors' purpose. Additionally, the lowest means were found for motivation to read textbooks and need to complete assigned reading to understand and participate in class.

As noted in Tables 3 and 4 for each survey item, students reported a more negative perception for individual purpose for academic reading versus their perception of instructors' purpose for academic reading. Additionally, two distinctively negative perceptions of the purpose for reading are lack of clarity in the purpose for reading assignments and the importance of reading compliance based on course requirements.

Qualitative Survey Responses

Presented in Tables 5 through 8 are results of open-ended questions provided at the end of the survey, along with the number of responses and percentages for coded themes which emerged through analyses of participant responses.

Table 1 Student Responses to Positive Perception of Reading Ability

Survey Item Measured	<i>M</i> View of Individual Reading Ability	<i>M</i> Instructors' View of Reading Ability
<i>Applying reading to what is presented in class is important</i>	3.95	4.23
<i>Textbook reading is just as fast as reading novels</i>	1.65	2.65
<i>Confidence in one's reading ability provides academic success</i>	3.78	3.95
<i>Reading a textbook is easy</i>	2.34	3.43
<i>Instructor consider students' reading abilities for reading assignments</i>	2.53	3.17
<i>Understanding big picture helps with reading</i>	4.17	4.18
<i>Knowing how to read a textbook is necessary for reading assignments</i>	4.21	4.08
<i>Reading a course assignment is something that can be done</i>	4.00	4.11

Table 2 Student Responses to Negative Perception of Reading Ability

Survey Item Measured	<i>M</i> View of Individual Reading Ability	<i>M</i> Instructors' View of Reading Ability
<i>Reading a textbook is difficult</i>	3.22	2.21
<i>Textbook reading is slow and boring</i>	3.95	2.65
<i>Textbooks, nonfiction expository texts are confusing</i>	3.40	2.49
<i>Skimming the reading provides enough to pass the test</i>	2.84	2.04
<i>Difficult to apply what I have read to what is presented in class</i>	2.87	2.23
<i>Profs. expect all students to read at the same level</i>	3.58	3.26
<i>Problem with reading is inability to comprehend textbook</i>	3.83	3.22
<i>Reading stresses me out because I may be tested in class</i>	3.64	2.90

Table 3 Student Responses to Positive Perception of Purpose for Reading

Survey Item Measured	<i>M</i> View of Individual Reading Ability	<i>M</i> Instructors' View of Reading Ability
<i>Reading is necessary for academic success</i>	3.77	4.25
<i>Reading is necessary to understand course content</i>	3.30	4.04
<i>Reading college textbooks encourages my motivation</i>	2.19	3.35
<i>Reading assign. ahead of time prepare me for class</i>	3.77	4.20
<i>Instructor's interest in course provides relevance to reading</i>	3.79	3.94
<i>Interest in course provides relevance to reading assignments</i>	3.84	3.82
<i>Every reading must be completed to understand and participate</i>	2.83	3.63
<i>Reading provides opportunity to learn new ideas in my own way</i>	3.46	4.01
<i>Instructor's expectations determines need for reading assignment</i>	3.75	3.60

Table 4 Student Responses to Negative Perception of Purpose for Reading

Survey Item Measured	M View of Individual Reading Ability	M Instructors' View of Reading Ability
<i>Academic success occurs without reading</i>	2.67	2.08
<i>Reading assign. before class is a waste of time</i>	2.46	1.83
<i>Understanding course content does not require reading</i>	2.78	2.11
<i>Lectures and discussions should take place about readings</i>	3.45	2.75
<i>Only reason for reading textbooks--required by the instructor</i>	3.40	2.43
<i>Purpose for a reading assignment is not always clear.</i>	3.75	2.57
<i>Concern for my grade is only reason I read</i>	3.75	3.22
<i>Academic success occurs without reading</i>	2.67	2.08
<i>Reading assign. before class is a waste of time</i>	2.46	1.83

Table 5 Percentage of Theme-Based Responses to Open Ended Question Survey Question 1

What are your feelings about reading assignments?	527 Statements	Percent
<i>Time</i>	80	15%
<i>Not Necessary</i>	40	7.5%
<i>Cover Content in Class</i>	20	4%
<i>Comprehension – Difficult</i>	58	11%
<i>No Interest – Boring</i>	65	12.3%
<i>Don't Like</i>	67	12.7%
<i>Prefer Other Material</i>	44	8%
<i>Necessary</i>	113	21%

Table 6 Percentage of Theme-Based Responses to Open Ended Question Survey Question 2

Why will you complete or not complete a reading assignments?	502 Statements	Percent
<i>Time</i>	115	23%
<i>Depends on Circumstances</i>	26	5%
<i>Grade - Tests or Quizzes</i>	103	21%
<i>Use in Class – Importance</i>	61	12%
<i>Interest</i>	28	5.5%
<i>No Interest – Boring</i>	43	8.5%
<i>Comprehension – Difficult</i>	65	13%
<i>Compliance – complete or not</i>	61	12%

Table 7 Percentage of Theme-Based Responses to Open Ended Question Survey Question 3

What is your perception of reading requirements when taking college courses?	537 Statements	Percent
<i>Useless – Unnecessary</i>	62	11.5%
<i>Helpful</i>	59	11%
<i>Necessary</i>	132	24.5%
<i>Depends on Reason</i>	36	6.7%
<i>Amount of Reading</i>	76	14%
<i>Interest Needed – Boring</i>	28	5%
<i>Dislike – Difficult</i>	62	11.5%
<i>Depends on Prof./Instructor</i>	82	15%

Table 8 Percentage of Theme-Based Responses to Open Ended Question Survey Question 4

Why do you like or not like to read?	637 Statements	Percent
<i>Comprehension Difficulty</i>	63	10%
<i>Pleasure – novels, etc...</i>	194	30%
<i>Knowledge – Learning</i>	40	6.3%
<i>Don't Like</i>	48	7.5%
<i>Relevance</i>	50	8%
<i>Textbook – dislike, boring</i>	103	16%
<i>Pressured</i>	44	7%
<i>Time</i>	35	5.5%

Themes and responses to the open-ended questions are consistent with students' perception of their reading abilities and purpose noted in the quantitative survey data. Many of the undergraduate students' written responses connect to the inability to read and comprehend expository texts with the purpose for academic reading.

The common threads among responses to all four questions are amount of time to complete readings, difficulty with comprehension, and dislike as well as lack of interest (boring) in academic reading. Interestingly, some of the highest percentages in responses to two of the questions included statements that course readings were necessary to understand the content. This is in direct conflict with scores noted on the survey for statements 'The only reason for reading a textbook is because it is required by the instructor' and 'The purpose for reading is not always clear'.

Consistent with the findings of Jolliffe and Harl (2008, 2012), the highest percentage for a theme was noted in question four (Table 8), where students reported their highest levels of engagement in reading for pleasure or leisure. Additionally, students indicated that they felt compelled to complete readings when they were tested or quizzed over the material. This correlates with Linderholm's research (2006).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine undergraduates' perception and reasoning behind compliance or lack of compliance for assigned reading requirements – expectations, abilities and/or purpose. A mixed methods approach is used to provide strength and validity to data analysis. The following integration of quantitative and qualitative data provides well-supported observations about student perceptions of academic reading.

Expectations

As noted previously, *expectations* refer to personal beliefs and perceptions of what actions are necessary for achieving a perceived set of learning outcomes. There appears to be a general difference between students' perception of their reading abilities and purpose for reading their view of the instructors' perception which may translate into overall perception of expectations reading and the purpose for reading. Approximately, one third of all statements referring to reading ability reflect students' struggle with academic reading, which possibly leads to a lack of compliance for completing reading assignment or meeting course expectations. Additionally, several reasons for possible lack of compliance were indicated in the responses: time, not necessary, comprehension – difficult, no interest-boring, compliance, useless-unnecessary, amount of reading, and don't like.

The expectations for reading with a purpose varies between students' positive and negative perceptions. The perception of purpose for reading indicates a distinct difference between students' views of themselves and instructors for motivation for reading and completing reading assignments and the purpose for required reading is not always clear. Importantly, students appear to support some forms of reading — when necessary and for pleasure.

Reading Ability and Comprehension

Abilities appear to be a prevalent theme between part 1 and responses to all four open-ended questions on part 2 of the survey. Findings from analysis of part 1 of the survey indicate a mean difference for 'Reading a textbook is difficult', 'Textbooks, nonfiction expository texts are confusing' and 'Reading a textbook is easy.' Student responses regarding comprehension difficulty strengthen such findings. Examples of student responses include:

"Some are difficult but some are easy, but others are so full of content that it gets taxing to read."

"They are hard for me to read and understand all the material."

"If it very hard to understand the way the textbook is written."

"Teachers expect you to understand the material and it's hard to comprehend."

"I struggle with comprehension & processing the material. Summarizing is very difficult to me."

Another commonality noted in all four questions is the theme "no interest, boring". The qualitative data and survey statements match, 'Textbook reading is slow and boring' and 'Textbook reading is just as fast as reading novels.' Response statements include:

"It gets boring way too fast for me It is boring."

"I do not like to read text books or journals articles because they are long & boring."

"Boredom & no interest plays a huge role in incomplete reading assignments"

"I would not complete it because the book is boring & there are too many pages to read."

"I cannot read for long without getting bored."

Purpose for Reading

The concept of *purpose* is also correlated among the survey statements and student written responses. The survey statements, 'Reading college textbooks

encourages my motivation' implies a negative purpose for reading; as well as 'Purpose for a reading assignment is not always clear.' Themes within Tables 5 through 8 draw a parallel: don't like, depends on circumstances, and useless/unnecessary. Comments noted by participants include:

"Hate them. I do not read textbooks; I've done fine without them so far."

"I don't think that if you don't read the book it's the end of the world."

"I will not complete it if the topic does not interest me."

"Because of the emphasis on the lecture material, I don't believe it to be essential in college courses."

"Most of the time, with most teachers, they end up not even talking about what we read, or they just recite the book- so why read it?"

Considered Responses

Communication within and outside of higher education includes the development of literacy skills, the ability to read, write, listen, speak, and think critically. Critical thinking requires the ability to obtain, analyze, evaluate, and use or assimilate information effectively. Reading comprehension enhances critical thinking. Akkaya's (2012) research determined that the use of metacognitive reading strategies correlated with students' ability to critically think. Metacognitive reading strategies include making connections, predicting, inferring, using context clues, making graphic organizers, and writing comments or questions within the margins of a page or on sticky notes.

One factor to consider is the possibility that students may have reading strategies but most often can't name the strategy or determine when to effectively apply a specific strategy. This is evident when students have highlighted the majority of a chapter that was read using multi-colored highlighters. As instructors, we may need to identify and model how and when to use a strategy to clarify reading. The point is to help students develop strategies that promote a conversation between themselves and what they are reading. Such conversations facilitate and synthesize what is read with what the student previously understood. Strategies may also include underlining the topic sentence in a passage, writing questions in the margin, circling new and unfamiliar words, drawing arrows to connect related ideas, or constructing a code that can indicate the relevance or significance of a particular statement or phrase, e.g., !, #, ?, ☺.

Instructors can take an active role in facilitating reading strategies by requiring students to keep reading logs or journal entries, and/or using reciprocal teaching (wherein students are prompted to predict, question, clarify, and summarize, based on their reading). A well-designed reading log can help students to chunk the text, record significant information to understand content and use metacognitive reading strategies.

The Reading Methodology: An Integrated Strategy

If a strategy is to improve the results in terms of expectation, comprehension, and purpose, it must explicitly address those issues. The Reading Methodology (Apple, Morgan, & Hintze, 2015) is a 12-step process, the goal of which is to help students improve their reading comprehension. The Reading Methodology also speaks to the issue of expectation in that Steps 1 through 4 require a student to determine and share their expectations (potentially going a long way towards managing those expectations):

- Step 1 Establish purpose—Determine why you're reading the material.
- Step 2 Set learning objectives—Determine what you want to learn from the reading.
- Step 3 Set performance criteria—Determine how you will know you read successfully.
- Step 4 Estimate time involved—Browse the reading to determine level of difficulty and how long it should take you to complete the reading.

While Step 1 is part of the issue of expectation, it also asks students to directly confront their purpose for engaging in the reading.

The remainder of the steps guide students through addressing unfamiliar terms, reading, formulating inquiry questions, and assessing their reading performance (see Table 9), each process targeted at improving reading comprehension, culminating in Step 12, Assessment, where students are guided through comparing their outcomes with the expectations they set at the beginning. Additionally, they are prompted to consider ways of improving their reading performance in the future.

While each step is a strategy in and of itself, as a process, the Reading Methodology works as an integrated strategy for successful and strong reading performance.

The Reading Log shown in Figure 1 (Apple, Morgan, & Hintze, 2015) explicitly implements all 12 steps of the Reading Methodology. As such, it guides students through the application of a wide range of strategies that promote the student's interaction with the text, leading to increased comprehension.

Table 9 The Reading Methodology

Step	Description
1 Establish purpose	Determine why you're reading the material.
2 Set learning objectives	Determine what you want to learn from the reading.
3 Set performance criteria	Determine how you'll know you read successfully.
4 Estimate time involved	Browse the reading to determine the level of difficulty, and how long it should take you to complete the reading.
5 Vocabulary terms	Browse the reading for vocabulary terms that are unfamiliar (keep a dictionary handy to look up unfamiliar words and write down definitions so you can refer back to them).
6 Outline	Survey the structure of the reading, so you understand the organization of content.
7 Quick read	Complete a quick reading, largely skimming the content for the author's purpose, intended audience, type of writing and key emphasis areas (diagrams and pictures) to prepare for developing initial questions. Note any questions you have as you begin to read.
8 Comprehensive read	Read carefully using your initial questions, taking notes and highlighting important passages, annotating in the margins and marking difficult passages to answer your questions, formulate new questions, and support your ideas.
9 Inquiry questions	Elevate the inquiry to higher levels of learning, so more significant issues can be addressed by applying this knowledge.
10 Synthesis	Think about what you've read, combine the parts, sections, or ideas into a whole and produce learning around your learning objectives.
11 Integration	Integrate new information you've learned with your existing knowledge base to find new ways to apply this knowledge in your life.
12 Assessment	Assess your progress. Did you meet your learning objectives? How long did the reading take? How could you improve your reading performance in future?

Conclusions

The first guiding question for this study was, “what are students’ perception of their abilities, purpose or expectations to read academic materials and their reasoning for compliance or noncompliance regarding completion of reading assignments?” The second research question explored was “what are students’ perception of their instructors’ beliefs about students’ ability and purpose for academic reading?” Student perception of their own academic reading abilities may be a factor in academic success. How students perceive instructors’ view of student ability and purpose for reading may also influence the completion of reading assignments.

Reading academic textbooks requires various strategies and techniques for processing and learning course content. Fox (2009) identified three reading characteristics for processing and learning from informational text. First, the readers are expected to engage in are comprehension, monitoring and evaluating what has been read. Processing behaviors include strategies, metacognition, monitoring,

goal setting and use of prior knowledge. Learning behaviors include engagement, interest, knowledge, goals and abilities. Secondly, readers’ mental representation of text determines how readers extract and construct meaning. And third, readers’ ability to transfer, apply, interpret, infer, and evaluate what was read – active comprehension. In terms of the Reading Methodology, each step is validated by and easily correlated to processes, goals, and behaviors in Fox’s formulation, including the advanced skills of synthesizing (interpreting, inferring) and integrating (transferring, applying) what has been read with one’s previous knowledge and understanding (Apple, Morgan, & Hintze, 2015). It is clear that readers need to interact with the text as they read in order to mentally represent text for meaning including relevance to background knowledge.

The purpose for reading academic text aligns with Fox’s reading characteristics for informational text. Arum and Roksa’s 2011 analysis of more than 2,300 undergraduates at 24 institutions noted between 40 and 50% of students demonstrate minimal progress in a range of skills that involve critical thinking, complex reasoning, writing and

Figure 1 Reading Log

EXPERIENCE 10: READING FOR LEARNING

WORKSHEET

Reading Log

Book/Title, Pages _____

Name _____
Date _____

1 My purpose is: _____

2 My learning objectives are: _____

3 My performance criteria are: _____

4 Time I expect to spend reading: _____

5 Key Vocabulary _____
Use each key word in a new context or phrase.

6 Outline of reading (structure): _____

7 Quick read (information about the reading and questions I have as I begin to read): _____

(continued on the other side)

LEARNING TO LEARN: BECOMING A SELF-GROWER 301

WORKSHEET

EXPERIENCE 10: READING FOR LEARNING

8 Comprehensive Read _____
Actual Time I spent reading: _____

9 Inquiry Questions Questions, ideas, opinions, discoveries: _____

10 Synthesis Pull it together: _____

11 Integrate The relationship between the new information and my previous knowledge and experience is: _____

12 Assessment The following affected (positively or negatively) the quality of my reading performance and how I can improve: _____

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK

Strengths: _____
Areas for Improvement: _____
Insights: _____

LEARNING TO LEARN: BECOMING A SELF-GROWER 302

more within their first two years of college. Yet, Burchfield and Sappington (2000) determined that students in advanced college courses may read required assignments. The purpose needs to be clear and completing the readings should actually be necessary in order to meet the course objectives.

Expectations among undergraduate students and instructors varies. Students need to know how to set reading goals and criteria for comprehension based on the purpose for reading. Students may have stricter criteria for how well they must comprehend reading assignments such as for tests and quizzes or interest level. Subsequently these criteria, or standards of coherence, influence engaged cognitive processing and learning. Guiding students through completing a Reading Log and then assessing their use of the log can help them become proficient at setting learning objectives and performance criteria for their reading (Apple, Morgan & Hintze, 2015). Not only can this help bring student and instructor expectations into closer alignment, it can also help students appreciate that different purposes for reading lead to different objectives or goals for how the student will complete the reading and what he or she will gain as a result of its completion (Apple, Morgan, & Hintze, 2015). This increases the students' control over what might otherwise be seen as just a typical reading assignment, potentially having a positive impact on expectations, comprehension, and purpose (Apple, Morgan, & Hintze, 2015).

Reciprocal teaching is another approach for nurturing reading comprehension for a deeper understanding of assigned text. Reciprocal teaching helps students learn and use four strategies to increase comprehension: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. *Predicting* requires students to hypothesize based on their prior knowledge and perusal of the text what the overall purpose or reason for reading. *Questioning* becomes students' ability to ask questions about the text which leads to inferences about what has been read. *Clarifying* refers to students determining unclear or difficult concepts that need to be

reread or asking for explanations when attending class. *Summarizing* is when students ask themselves what is the most important information or gist of what I read: who and what. The identified and recorded responses for each strategy is revisited during class discussions.

Reciprocal teaching lends itself to in class discussions or activities. Aagaard and Skidmore (2009) note that students want instructors to use a variety of in-class activities that support the reading of course materials. This includes tests over reading assignments, shortening the reading assignments, providing advanced organizers to guide note-taking while they read (and offering credit for them), and using the textbooks in class. Research also indicates that test taking "makes it stick" (Brown, Roediger III, & McDaniel, 2014). The students' perception of quizzes as a form of punishment needs to be replaced with the understanding that well-constructed quizzes validate student understanding or flag misunderstanding. Identifying misunderstanding allows for re-teaching misunderstood concepts.

There are other instructional strategies conducive to stimulating student abilities and establishing the purpose for reading to meet academic expectations. Instructors can implement interactive class activities that build on the assigned reading and support content such as constructing concept webs, analyzing case studies, and students generating higher order questions related to the reading for in-class discussions. Students can make connections between themselves and the text, text-to-text and text-to-world. Also, to bridge the outside readings various medias that extend and support the content may be introduced and discussed in class.

At this point, the questions we might need to ask are: (a) what are instructors' perception of undergraduate students' abilities and purpose for academic reading; and (2) if we know that undergraduates have difficulty reading academic expository text what are we as instructors going to do about it?

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