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Can the reading load be engaging? Connecting the instrumental, critical and aesthetic in academic reading for student learning

Ha Thi Thu Nguyen

University of Melbourne, ha.nguyen1@unimelb.edu.au

Ariana Henderson

University of Melbourne, ariana.henderson@unimelb.edu.au

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Can the reading load be engaging? Connecting the instrumental, critical and aesthetic in academic reading for student learning

Abstract

Learning an academic discipline requires at a fundamental level reading of knowledge that has been recorded, debated and developed in writing over time. Given the essential role of reading in shaping knowledge, there needs to be more emphasis on approaches that nurture an engaged reading practice. This article explores the role of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances in engaging students in academic reading at university and the extent to which connecting these reading stances can enhance student learning through academic reading. Using this dynamic view of reading, the article examines insights and evidence from recent research to investigate the connection between these reading stances and student learning. The studies analysed indicate elements of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading in approaches that effectively engage learners in academic reading. These ways of reading are linked to enhanced learning in terms of individual reflexivity, disciplinary participation, social perspective and global awareness. An analysis of the studies investigated advocates for using a variety of text types, giving students choice of texts, explicitly teaching dynamic reading skills, providing opportunities for social reading practices and implementing process-based assessments for learning. These practices can lighten the academic reading load by enhancing engagement and learning of disciplinary knowledge.

Keywords

Academic reading, instrumental reading, critical reading, aesthetic reading, reading pedagogies

Introduction

Academic reading is an essential scholarly activity for students to engage with at university. Despite the importance of this engagement, many students have struggled with academic reading across study levels, disciplines and languages (Manarin et al. 2015). Academic texts are usually perceived by students as highly specialised, content-heavy and therefore harder to read and less interesting than non-academic texts (Sylvan 2018). This problem becomes even more acute for students transitioning into university study for the first time or from an additional language background (Hamilton 2018). These students need more time and support to meet the demands of academic reading in a new, more challenging context of education. Students' struggles with academic reading have been reported widely in universities around the world, and particularly in Australia, where variations in student backgrounds have become increasingly large due to the globalisation of higher education (Fujimoto et al. 2011; Hamilton 2018; Saltmarsh & Saltmarsh 2008).

Across different study contexts, students' issues with academic reading have been manifold. Some students find it difficult to understand discipline-specific texts, especially journal articles, at the basic level of comprehending terms, concepts and general content of the texts (Hamilton 2018). Reasons for this include unfamiliarity with disciplinary writing conventions and discourses, lack of conceptual understanding and language difficulties, especially for but not limited to students reading in a non-native language. When students fail to grasp the key information of a text, they are also unable to use it instrumentally in their study either to further their knowledge or to perform well in assessments. Even when students understand what a text is about, their approach to it may be more descriptive than critical, which can result in a failure to see the academic and social implications of the text. Another issue rests with the lack of motivation in a typical academic context to connect creatively or imaginatively to the text, an approach Rosenblatt (1994) calls an aesthetic transaction. This transaction involves the reader's personal experience and response to the text, which, if encouraged, can arouse new ideas and insights in academic pursuits. Students' issues with academic reading on instrumental, critical and aesthetic levels have led to a disengagement from this fundamental learning activity (Saltmarsh & Saltmarsh 2008).

A range of factors in an education context pose challenges to creating and maintaining reading engagement. There are technical difficulties with academic reading relating to language competence, academic literacy, disciplinary conventions and the diversity of reading tasks (Fujimoto et al. 2011). Pedagogically, formal assessments of academic reading may reward and reinforce compliance to a dominant way of reading, thus impeding engagement, especially in the sense of social awareness and participation (Manarin et al. 2015). The perception that academic reading is necessarily instrumental (Allen 2011) may discourage students from engaging more deeply with disciplinary knowledge bases. The intrinsic relationship between reading and writing means this thinking may lead to a depreciating feedback loop between these essential academic activities. Ironically, a predominantly instrumental treatment of academic reading not only precludes critical and aesthetic engagement with texts but also harms instrumental reading itself, as the usefulness of a text can only be fully extracted through a critically and aesthetically engaged reading.

This article explores whether student engagement in academic reading can be enhanced through bringing together instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading practices. It posits that educating students to read academically must go beyond teaching reading techniques to raising awareness of broader reading processes. Effective readers are able to move purposefully and fluidly between instrumental information-taking, critical evaluation and aesthetic experience of texts (Misson &

Morgan 2006), and the value of entwining these reading stances lies in their complementary strengths for meaningful, multimodal reading experiences.

Using this framework, the article examines insights and evidence from recent research in academic reading to investigate the following questions:

- What role does instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading play in engaging students in academic reading at university?
- To what extent can connecting these reading stances enhance student learning through academic reading?

Although instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading have been discussed in a literary and general reading context, they have not been brought together for academic reading in disciplinary studies at university, whether in Australia or other contexts. The answers to these questions can provide useful strategies for enabling students to engage with academic reading with more joy, purpose and effectiveness.

Methodology

To answer these questions, we explored the theoretical and empirical literature on reading approaches and pedagogies with regards to academic contexts. Given the broad scope of our inquiry, we designed our study to be a position paper discussing themes of reading engagement in the relevant literature and relate them to instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances.

We first examined the three reading stances, drawing especially on Rosenblatt's (1988) concept of aesthetic reading and Misson and Morgan's (2006) fluid approach to reading in a general context. Whereas Rosenblatt (1988) focuses on the aesthetic transaction between the reader and the text as distinct from the instrumental extraction of information, Misson and Morgan (2006) highlight the continuum between critical and aesthetic reading practices. These frameworks have been chosen because together they can provide a comprehensive response to students' various issues with academic reading at university. The three reading stances – instrumental, critical and aesthetic – were then used to investigate teaching practices that aim to nurture student engagement with academic reading. As instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading have not been articulated and researched in a holistic sense in academic study contexts, they are best explored through a broader look at different approaches to academic reading at universities in Australia and globally.

To this end, we examined recent empirical, practitioner and position papers and other scholarly works on reading and academic literacy to map what has been advocated and undertaken to engage students with academic reading across discipline areas. The works were chosen so that they represent a variety of university teaching contexts that address students' issues with academic reading. The scope of the works we explored focused on reading in English, whether as a first or additional language, although issues with academic reading and the implications of reading engagement cut across language differences. We also filtered the literature for works that approach academic reading as a broad practice that serves student learning in multiple ways rather than works that narrowly frame reading and associated techniques.

These works were analysed for their positions and methods regarding academic reading, which were then related to instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances. We identified elements of these

stances in the studies to understand their effects on learning. The discussion that ensues is an attempt to link the conceptual reading stances with practical and empirical approaches to academic reading.

Instrumental, Critical and Aesthetic Reading

In response to the challenges academic reading poses to university students in terms of instrumental, critical and aesthetic interactions with texts, we look at these three reading stances, which have a firm conceptual foundation in reading theory, and discuss their relevance to academic reading.

Instrumental Reading

At university, much time and effort is spent by students, and indeed academics, on instrumental reading. Rosenblatt (1988) calls this ‘efferent’ reading, which is where the reader focuses on what needs to be retained or taken away afterwards rather than the reading experience itself. Rosenblatt suggests readers selecting an instrumental (or efferent) stance when they want to focus narrowly on specific information or ideas depending on their needs at the time. The reader may then go on to apply these ideas for a specific purpose.

Instrumental reading has held a strong position in academic reading, perhaps due to the efficiency it lends to the time-poor reader. Indeed, a student urgently extracting ideas from a text to incorporate into a paper is likely to benefit from using an instrumental approach. Skimming or scanning techniques may also be employed to speed up the process. They may choose to skim a text to extract key ideas for a tutorial discussion or scan an article for specific terms ahead of an urgent deadline. Likewise, a student reading to prepare for an exam may rely on instrumental reading to ensure they focus solely on the information necessary to pass.

Reader behaviour in the university setting is greatly influenced by university expectations. Allen (2011) reports a perceived conflict by academics between ‘real reading’ and ‘instrumental reading’ whereby ‘real reading’ is for leisure, and academic reading is usually instrumental. This narrow, utilitarian view of reading is then transferred to students, thereby making academic reading less meaningful than if a more holistic view were taken. By focusing on a narrow set of ideas or facts for a specific purpose, the reader may miss the overall theme of the text and indeed miss out on bringing themselves to it. Furthermore, the reader risks not applying a critical lens to their reading and co-creating meaning according to their own prior experiences and perspective. While instrumental reading is useful for obtaining targeted information from texts, to truly make the reading experience more engaging and conducive to student learning, we need to explore other reading stances for a more balanced approach.

Critical Reading

Critical reading offers an opportunity to go beyond simply consuming ideas. Critical reading, according to Misson and Morgan (2006), requires the reader to acknowledge their personal bias as they question and analyse the argument from various angles. It moves beyond the text to evaluating its implications and encourages a reader to be open to considering the writer’s perspective and, in some cases, adjust their own accordingly (Misson & Morgan 2006). Critical reading skills are a core element of academic success, which translate and are useful beyond the university context. Manarin et al. (2015) assert that these skills are “crucial for an engaged, thoughtful and resilient society” (p. xi) and improve the reader’s “ability to engage with the social world” (p.vii). Developing critical reading skills means cultivating an open-mindedness but also a focus on the evidence presented, which can lead to a “reasonable scepticism” (Wallace, M & Wray 2016, p. 5).

However, Wallace and Wray (2016) caution, to avoid developing ‘overly critical’ readers, it is best to encourage students to maintain a balance rather than focus on the extremes. This means students develop the skill of examining the evidence in order to determine how best to understand and apply what they are reading; they are not accepting everything they consume as fact, nor are they assuming everything they read is flawed. Students are expected to take an informed position based on a thoughtful evaluation of multiple perspectives. This open-minded evidence-based approach will also help institutions to embrace and value learning traditions within and outside of the Australian context (Wallace, M & Wray 2016). Indeed, the way we read is shaped by our past experiences. If students learn how to view texts from a perspective outside their personal experience, they will in turn develop the ability to question rather than ‘solve’ as they read (Wallace, C 1999).

Aesthetic Reading

Aesthetic reading is commonly associated with the reading of literary texts and less discussed in academic contexts. However, it offers plenty of potential for making academic reading more appealing and meaningful to university students and staff alike.

Aesthetic reading has been widely perceived as the forging of an imaginative, co-creative relationship between the reader and the text. In her transactional theory of reading, Rosenblatt (1994) sees aesthetic reading as a transaction between the reader and the text that happens in a unique combination of time, space and environmental factors. In this transaction, meaning does not lie inherently in the text, waiting to be conveyed technically to the reader. On the contrary, it is evoked imaginatively through the reader’s own response to textual cues. As the meaning of a text is created during the reading event, no two readings of any text, even by the same reader, can ever be the same. Rosenblatt also distinguishes aesthetic from efferent reading, where aesthetic reading focuses on the lived-through experience of the text while efferent reading stresses instrumental information taking. Aesthetic reading, thus, means the reader does not just take away information but also brings to the text their own life experience. Through this transaction, the reader not only constructs but is also constructed by the meaning evoked.

Given that aesthetic reading is a stance rather than a genre-specific prescription, it can be applied to academic reading to enrich the reader-text relationship by helping students to deeply understand and connect to academic ideas and facilitating high-order thinking: analysing, evaluating and creating. These thinking processes depend on imagination and interpretation to forge new connections and ideas, which in turn depend on aesthetic reading skills.

Aesthetic reading might be perceived as incompatible and impracticable with the academic workload (Allen 2011). However, insofar as an experiential connection to a text can arouse deep understanding and creative responses, aesthetic reading is a necessity to scholarly work. It can also increase reading efficiency when combined with other reading stances. As Rosenblatt (1994) demonstrates, when transacting with a text, the reader makes sense of the text based on their selective attention, which indicates that the lived-through experience of the text can be highly purposeful and productive precisely because it galvanises the reader’s whole-person resources. Because of this profound investment, aesthetic reading can speed up, rather than slow down, the reading process. A common example of this can be found when a reader feels as if they are savouring and flying through a good book at the same time, while a disconnected, purely methodical read can seem like drudgery and appear to take forever. Aesthetic reading, thus, can intensify the quality of reading time without sacrificing efficiency.

The three reading stances offer potential for making the most of academic reading at university. As such, they have provided us with a robust conceptual perspective for analysing practical and empirical approaches to engaging students with academic reading.

Approaches to Reading Engagement

Curriculum designs that enhance reading engagement can be elaborated in three aspects, as observed in a range of reported approaches to academic reading: genres of texts, pedagogies and assessment.

Genres of Texts

Academic reading is normally undertaken with expository texts but also includes narratives, creative texts and other genres (Sylvan 2018) as commonly read in disciplinary or professional communities (TeKippe 2017). Selecting the most appropriate texts at the right time in students' reading development can greatly impact their engagement levels with academic reading.

Although an important aim is for students to be comfortable reading academic journal articles, recent studies have supported scaffolding students' reading skills using different genres. Hamilton (2018) argues that the use of peer-reviewed journals may not be appropriate for starting undergraduate students as they need time and support to assimilate the highly specialised conventions of this genre. This scholar proposes using scholarly books alongside carefully chosen articles acting as useful models as these are more orderly and explanatory of the field. Hamilton (2018) suggests combining this scaffolding with early awareness raising of the role of academic reading in becoming a member of the academic discipline. This approach targets both a pragmatic, accumulated understanding of the discipline and a metacognition of how this understanding would serve students, thus blending instrumental and critical stances to academic reading.

An alternative approach involves engaging students in the process of selecting texts that most interest them. Sylvan (2018) employed a freely structured book club activity that allowed students choice from a given list and control of discussion topics. The books used were content-specific, yet written for a popular audience, thereby allowing students to see and practise the connection between academic topics, their own lives and professional practices of their discipline (Sylvan 2018). Analysis of students' reflection papers and survey data revealed high engagement by the students with the popular book genre, evidence of the value of social reading practices. Students' choice of books seemed to be empowering to them, making the course more connected to their personal and professional interests, with students reporting a deeper perspective which encouraged further reading (Sylvan 2018). Practices such as this, where students feel empowered to engage in the learning material via self-selected, often non-academic, texts, appears to generate increased motivation and improved student attitudes to academic reading (Takagaki 2002). This approach involves aesthetic and critical reading stances where students connect personally and socially with the text.

Pedagogies

Apart from the use of different text genres, reading strategies need to be explicitly taught for students to truly engage in the academic discourse of their discipline (Fujimoto et al. 2011). In a recent study, Wiles, Allen and Butler (2016) combined reading of different aspects of a paper, such as take-away message, contextual information, audience and personal engagement, with class discussion and sharing of reading models. This indicates the use of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading processes. In doing so, the researchers reported increased reading motivation, alongside a shift in skill level across numerous domains. It was found that, as students moved along the continuum of

criticality to develop multi-layered reading of texts, they were better able to acknowledge their own voice, engage reflexively with texts and summarise and critique those texts. This improvement is consistent with the level of reading engagement required at university and points to the importance of explicit instruction of different aspects of academic reading in higher education.

The gains reported above in student engagement of reading can be further enhanced with explicit instruction on bringing the 'self' into the reading experience and moving reading from an individual practice to that of a social endeavour, which indicates the aesthetic-critical continuum of reading. Fujimoto et al. (2011) advocate for a collaborative approach to reading that blends the social and individual in a structured, yet dynamic way. Students will not all come to this approach without explicit guidance, prompts and modelling. If they are supported within the curriculum to recognise and articulate their own attitudes and beliefs to the texts they are reading, they are more likely to be able to understand how their unique personal perspective influences meaning construction (Wiles, Allen & Butler 2016). Hill and Meo (2015) developed a specific module to help graduate students become aware of their own reading as a social practice, locating themselves in the discipline and developing discipline identity. Their study found that students' attitudes about reading shifted from viewing reading as an individual endeavour into a social activity, providing an ongoing basis for students to develop their own academic voice and future contributions to the field.

The increase in ebooks has further expanded the scope of opportunity for students to engage in academic reading at university. Social reading practices can translate to sharing comments on ebooks via apps and social media. The popularity and power of social reading can be harnessed for academic texts on the condition that teaching staff use collaborative features of ebooks to enrich students' learning experiences (Dean 2016), which can lead to increased participation and active learning. In addition, online social annotation platforms, such as Perusall, have been shown to be highly successful in enhancing student engagement with texts both before and during class. Mulder and Jones (2017) reported on the findings of their study whereby students prepared for class by reading and annotating the texts via the online tool, before participating in class discussion. This initiative resulted in increased time spent engaging with the texts, high quality annotations and increased in-class attendance. This suggests that ebooks can be used to increase engagement in social reading practices that directly benefit students' discipline knowledge in an instrumental and critical sense.

Assessment

Deliberate selection of texts and pedagogies plays a crucial role in nurturing reading engagement, but only to the extent that assessment practices support this. This is because assessment indicates to students what is important and guides them in setting their priorities to navigate their courses for the highest possible results (Kahu & Gerrard 2018). In promoting a socially engaged approach to academic reading, Manarin et al. (2015) warn of the detrimental effect of poor assessment design on creative and critical learning. Fujimoto et al. (2011) also raise this caution and highlight the importance of aligning assessment practice with subject goals in scaffolding students for reading engagement.

Aiming for this alignment, scholars have looked into developing robust reading practices through assessment for learning. Sylvan (2018), for example, assigned to the book club activities 10% of the subject's weight as an incentive to stimulate participation in this social reading practice. This assessment, which allowed students choice of books and topics for discussion, was found to increase their intrinsic motivation to read widely in their study areas. On a larger scale, Kahu and Gerrard (2018) report on a systematic assessment that incorporates regular personal reflections on course readings in first-year Bachelor of Arts core courses on critical reading, writing and citizenship in a

New Zealand context. This assessment focuses on students' identity development based on a cultivation of emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement with learning. The results revealed students' adoption of a responsive approach to reading, inquiry-based learning, increased reflexivity and a greater sense of self in relation to the world. If Kahu and Gerrard (2018) emphasise assessment that builds on personal experience, Saltmarsh and Saltmarsh (2008) explore a portfolio approach to assessing critical reviews of academic texts in different undergraduate and graduate subjects at two Australian universities. Here, students develop their critical reviews through multiple revisions over the semester both for use in ongoing class discussions and for a final submission at the semester end. This combines formative and summative assessment to address what these scholars perceive to be the conflict between constructivist teaching practices and standard measurement regimes. This approach has been found to enhance students' learning preparedness, critical thinking, scholarly writing and educational ethics in its contexts (Saltmarsh & Saltmarsh 2008).

All these text selection, pedagogy and assessment practices underscore a constructivist educational perspective, which takes into account students' purposes, preferences, experiences and fluidities of viewpoint resulting from social interactions in the reading process. As such they demonstrate key features of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances at work to enhance student engagement with academic reading. They also suggest the effectiveness of a coordinated approach to these stances.

In what follows, we explore students' learning through engaging with academic reading in different ways and the role of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading in this learning.

Learning Through Enhanced Engagement with Academic Reading

Research and practice in academic reading at university have suggested that nurturing an engaged reading practice benefits students' learning in four interconnected domains: individual reflexivity, disciplinary participation, social perspective and global awareness. These are visualised in Figure 1.

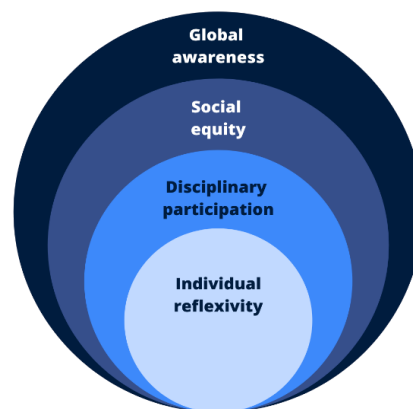


Figure 1. Enhanced engagement with academic reading extends learning across multiple dimensions

Individual Reflexivity

First, engagement with academic reading has the power to enhance students' reflexivity about their own experience and perspective in relation to the subject matter of their study. This is because academic texts, typically rigorously developed and reviewed, bring with them a robust breadth and

depth of a disciplinary area and original contributions that can stimulate new levels of thinking and refining of one's own knowledge, beliefs, values and aspirations in this area. Manarin et al. (2015) thus see beyond pragmatic curricular considerations that academic reading embeds the dimensions of being and becoming, which need to be tapped into for learning enrichment. Evaluating a graduate course on research methods using critical reading strategies, Wiles, Allen and Butler (2016) found that students achieved higher awareness of their own perspective and how it shaped their interpretation of the text through being enabled to go beyond the referential meaning of a text to evaluation and personal connection. Thus, this reflexivity appeared to have come from an intersection of critical and aesthetic reading. Such an integrated approach to reading engagement brings about a richer learning experience through student-directed changes in their relationship to texts to incorporate and expand their life experience, worldviews and purposes (Fujimoto et al. 2011).

Disciplinary Participation

Beyond individual reflexivity, an engaged reading practice also facilitates students' disciplinary participation, which is important to ongoing inquiry and development as a learner and member of a discipline or profession (Hill & Meo 2015). To become a member, one needs to develop an understanding of key topics, perspectives and debates in an area of study, as well as to contribute to these by formulating new syntheses and arguments (Buehl 2011). Reading provides a unique access to membership in both senses as it allows deep processing of rich textual and intertextual content. Cervetti and Pearson (2018) see reading as a dynamic process of both extracting and constructing disciplinary knowledge through the activities the reader undertakes with the text. Different from this action-oriented approach, Baker (2018) looked at the academic reading experience of undergraduate students transitioning into university. The results demonstrated that they were required to significantly shift their relationship to knowledge: from relying on school-designated textbooks and magazines to reading a wide range of discipline-specific texts, including journal articles and research papers, from reading to reproduce pre-defined knowledge to reading to learn a discipline, to work with others' ideas and to construct one's own. In Baker's words, knowledge shifts "from being received and recycled to critiqued and constructed, or from limited and packaged school-shaped knowledges to unbounded, contested, created and disciplinary-specific knowledges at university" (2018, p. 405). Thus, academic reading at university has, on both the normative and epistemological level, been conceived as an integral part of becoming a member of a discipline.

This membership entails an engaged reading practice that involves not only instrumentally obtaining disciplinary information but also finding one's own critical and creative voice in the discipline (Hill & Meo 2015). In a pre-service teacher education context, TeKippe (2017) placed reading at the centre of building a professional community focusing on active, problem-based learning, which was valued because it reflected real-world professional activities and generated high-order thinking. This could have a rippling impact on future learners as teachers-to-be could become key agents in promoting a richer reading culture.

Social Perspective

Engagement with academic reading extends learning from the individual and disciplinary level to a broader social perspective that relies on a holistic reading approach. While academic reading has often been considered a silent, individual receptive activity (Hill & Meo 2015), multiple studies have indicated that engaged reading widens students' social perspective of the content knowledge and of reading itself as a social act that shapes and is shaped by the historical, environmental and personal contexts of text production and reception (Baker et al. 2019; Manarin et al. 2015; Wiles, Allen & Butler 2016). This critical metacognition of reading allows students to reflect on the interplay of complex social networks around the text, the author and the reader.

The inextricably social nature of reading means that students engaged in it learn contextualised knowledge and skills. Critiquing the simplistic packaging of academic reading as a transferable skill devoid of context, Baker et al. (2019) view it more broadly as a social practice that involves repertoires that teachers and students bring to making sense of a text. Academic reading, according to these scholars, includes at its core a deconstructionist awareness of how texts are constructed and what/who they represent. This approach requires students to negotiate meaning based on their own life experience and knowledge of the social forces that influence their view. This critical stance, however, does not exclude the instrumental stance to academic reading, an activity that develops both technical and social competencies (Hill & Meo 2015).

Apart from raising students' social awareness of texts and of reading, a holistic reading practice also encourages the pursuit of social equity through arousing aesthetic text-world connections and a critical understanding of both the informational content of a text and its ideological agenda (Misson 2012). Investigating the intersection between academic literacy, reading and social equity, Baker et al. (2019) found that reading can empower disadvantaged students by familiarising them with academic genres and discourses considered to be gate-keepers to a discipline, thus equalising access to disciplinary capital.

Global Awareness

Students' learning through an engaged reading practice can take on a global dimension as they are enabled to position their study and themselves in an interconnected world (Kahu & Gerrard 2018). This means not only gaining factual knowledge of global issues related to their discipline but also interacting with diverse viewpoints expressed through texts with their own response. Nguyen (2018) explored the role of aesthetic and critical reading in a context of globalisation and demonstrated the importance of valuing cross-cultural responses to texts over colonised readings. This approach has the potential to enhance students' sense of self in the world and stimulate global engagement.

In this section, we have reviewed some evidence of learning through enhanced engagement with academic reading at university in various contexts. This learning spans different dimensions of skills and knowledge: individual, disciplinary, social and global. Across all these dimensions, we detected an intimate relationship between student learning and the development of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances. The most effective approaches to academic reading tend to be those that combine these stances and move flexibly between them. In what follows, we propose bringing these reading stances together purposefully in a dynamic academic reading practice to further student learning.

Bringing Instrumental, Critical and Aesthetic Reading Together

A balanced approach to academic reading allows for a 'cross fertilisation' between different reading stances (Rosenblatt 1988). Each reading stance has its unique features and contributions to understanding a text. Instrumental reading can help demystify the reading process and aid with comprehension of the informational content of texts. Instrumental reading tools may especially benefit English as an additional language (EAL) students as they provide basic guidelines to decoding texts. Critical reading, meanwhile, puts a premium on developing inquisitive readers who habitually ask questions of texts for the purpose of reading not just on but between and beyond the lines. Critical reading can also be approached on an ideological level, where the reader deconstructs the text's political agenda, helping readers to understand not only the ideological construction of texts but also the sociocultural shaping of their own responses (Misson 2012). Different from these

foci, aesthetic reading operates on a level of personal investment that can arouse a deep text-self-world connection and bring a lived-through nuance to a reading. It can thus generate imaginative experiences of and creative responses to a text.

The instrumental, critical and aesthetic stances can coalesce and complement each other for a fuller academic reading experience, as proposed in Figure 2. The tools and techniques of instrumental reading can become more effective at finding and deciphering information when combined with the questioning method of the critical stance and the creative connection of aesthetic reading. Conversely, readers can be facilitated by instrumental methods to read texts more critically and aesthetically. According to Misson and Morgan (2006), effective readers often move fluidly and purposefully on a continuum between searching texts for information, distancing oneself to evaluate texts and participating in texts creatively. These stances can change and morph into each other depending on changing contexts and purposes. Rosenblatt (2005) also noted the necessity of both aesthetic and efferent reading and the need to balance these based on reading circumstances.

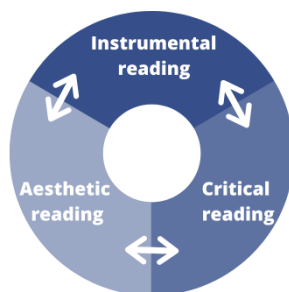


Figure 2: A dynamic reading practice connects instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading

Students' adoption of a dynamic reading practice that flows between the instrumental, critical and aesthetic depends on their awareness of different ways to read academic texts, their own beliefs about reading, and the pedagogical scaffolding and support they have access to. Viewing academic reading as a holistic activity that involves the dimension of being and becoming, Manarin et al. (2015) stress the importance of making clear to students the different processes that constitute transmission and transactional reading, which are respectively defined as reading to learn the content and language of the discipline, and reading with evaluations, inferences and reader responses. Understanding these processes will help students read texts on different levels of complexity and with different considerations depending on their purpose. Yang et al. (2016) applied the concepts of transmission and transactional reading into a science context to explore the role of reader beliefs and epistemic beliefs in students' understanding of science texts. They found that students with stronger transaction beliefs comprehended texts better and responded to them more critically. These beliefs value meaning construction based on the reader's own goal over sheer information reception, and justification of knowledge over authority-driven understanding. However, they also found that transmission and transaction beliefs were correlated, and both contributed to an understanding of science texts. In an EAL context, Nguyen (2016, 2018) combined aesthetic and critical reading through a scaffolding and dialogic approach that built awareness of different reading stances and supported students in exploring their own responses to a text individually and through interaction with other readings of the text. Together, these studies contextualise reading practices and highlight different ways to read texts. However, the scopes of these studies either do not extend to combining and balancing instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading (Manarin et al. 2015; Yang et al. 2016) or focus on literary rather than academic texts (Nguyen 2016, 2018). The dynamic approach to

academic reading we proposed in this section merges the concepts of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading with good practice evidence to inform teaching and learning so that academic reading practices can move along the instrumental-critical-aesthetic spectrum with awareness and purpose.

Educational Implications

Given the analysis above suggesting a close relationship between a dynamic view of academic reading and student engagement with reading, we must now consider how this experience can be created in the classroom. Giving students opportunities to engage in a dynamic reading practice need not be a burdensome or cumbersome experience for academics and curriculum designers. By explicitly teaching instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading practices, a dynamic reading practice can be fostered across all levels of study and within all disciplines. Reading engagement depends on the nourishment of a reading practice that is instrumentally, cognitively and experientially rewarding. Manarin et al. (2015) stress that reading engagement requires going beyond specific techniques, scaffolds and prompts in individual courses to a broadly coordinated and socially engaged approach. This rests with curriculum designs that connect academic reading with social perspectives to nurture future citizens who are capable and active contributors to the advancement of society. This cause lies at the heart of liberal education (Manarin et al. 2015).

A holistic approach to academic reading can start with involving students with text selection, including choosing non-academic texts related to their area of study. This approach infuses aesthetic experience with different text types into instrumental and critical considerations about reading material.

In addition, students will find the academic reading experience more engaging if they feel involved and believe their contributions are valued. Encouraging students to participate in social reading practices can extend their learning and increase their engagement with academic reading through interaction with multiple readings of the same text. In practical terms, this can be achieved by asking students to discuss:

- what they like about the reading
- how they feel about it
- what they learned from it
- what questions they have, and
- how they have gone on to apply their subject readings.

These questions call for shifting between aesthetic, critical and instrumental reading stances for a multilayered reading experience. They can be discussed in class or via online platforms such as Learning Management System discussion boards or the collaborative reading platform Perusall (Mulder & Jones 2017). It is crucial in any social reading environment that teachers maintain an open, balanced and evidence-based discussion of different responses to the text. Teachers can then make the most of student comments, including the critical comments, or comments that show confusion, to model critical reading practices. Effective use of social reading to engage students in academic texts and facilitated discussions, especially in online environments requires training on the part of the facilitators (Dean 2016).

To further extend student learning, reflective writing tasks invite students to consider the ideas that resonate with them, how these ideas relate to their own beliefs and past experiences, how valuable these insights are, and how this consideration might change their thinking and practice going

forward. Reflective writing pieces can also include students' insights regarding effective reading methods or struggles with reading, which can be used to inform ongoing pedagogies.

Pedagogical practices such as those outlined above should be normalised and incorporated across all levels of study and within all disciplines. Training to support academics to do this has the potential to make the reading load more engaging and foster a deeper level of learning for students now and in the future.

Conclusion

We aimed to understand the role of instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading in engaging students in academic reading to enhance their learning. Furthermore, we sought to identify through the literature the potential for these reading stances to be used together. The evidence reviewed in this paper indicates that student learning can be enhanced if a broader approach to reading is adopted, one that incorporates critical and personal perspectives alongside the instrumental requirement of traditional reading tasks. Thus, we argue for a dynamic reading practice that purposefully balances and flows between instrumental, critical and aesthetic reading stances. The learning that ensues has been demonstrated to extend from individual reflexivity and disciplinary participation to social perspective and global awareness.

In practice, evidence of this learning is seen when teachers use a variety of text types, give students choice of texts, explicitly teach dynamic reading skills, provide opportunities for social reading practices and implement process-based assessments for learning.

Further research can empirically explore this relationship between dynamic academic reading and student engagement. This undertaking could uncover ways to lighten the academic reading "load" by making it more meaningful to students' educational endeavours in Australia and worldwide.

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