Effective Reading Strategies for Generation Z Using Authentic Texts

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Abstract
The article deals with the use of effective reading strategies with Generation Z students based on a critical review of modern psychological and pedagogical studies of 'digital learners'. The relevance of the study is substantiated by the fact that the subjects of the modern educational process today are mostly representatives of Generation Z and their ways of study, preferences and values are bringing important changes to teaching and learning contexts. The purpose of the article is to analyse effective reading strategies using authentic texts. It features a brief overview of the studies devoted to the reading strategies and highlights the differences between reading skills and reading strategies. The authors explore the concept of authenticity of texts and tasks and suggest their highly motivational nature for digital learners. The article presents an analysis of Generation Z's unique characteristics and projects them onto the choice of effective reading strategies for digital learners. The article concludes with a discussion of pedagogical implications and a list of recommendations to consider when selecting effective reading strategies for language classrooms.

Keywords: authentic texts, Generation Z, learning strategies, reading strategies

Introduction

Innovations and teaching excellence are the most prominent factors of educational systems of different countries in the 21st century. Higher educational institutions are investigating the ways to meet the needs of diverse student audiences, shifting the teacher-centred approach towards the learner-centred one. This shift in centredness, as well as rapid development of technologies, have created a new generation of 'digital' students that have the opportunity to learn more, preferring dynamics in activities to passive reception of information. Language as a tool of communication and the instrument for gaining knowledge leads to the development of learners' communicative competence. In order to develop this competence and to make the language acquisition meaningful and relevant to the learners' needs, the process of mastering the language skills should be based on the principle of consciousness that highlights the idea of using the effective learning strategies, and especially reading strategies as reading is crucial in multiple contexts of teaching and learning process.

The issue of learning strategies is complex and has received considerable attention from many scholars. Learning strategies have been studied by Rubin & Thompson, (1982), O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper, & Russo (1985), Wenden (1987), Oxford (1990, 2011), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Stern (1992), Ellis (1994), Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins (1996), Griffiths (2006), Saks & Leijen (2014) and others. They have developed various classifications of strategies in learning a foreign language that deal with various personalities of learners, for example, the strategy aimed to work with language material on their own emotional feelings; strategies that provide social forms of interaction between students, during which they could solve their problems in the situation, choose a particular optimal strategy that gives the feeling of success, and many others. The studies devoted to the reading strategies were conducted by Jacobs and Paris (1987); Irwin and Bake (1989); O'Malley, Chamot, and Stewner-Manzanares (1998), Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001); Pressley (2002); Israel (2007); Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008); Khazaal (2019) and others.

The purpose of this article is to analyse effective reading strategies for the generation of digital natives (commonly referred to as the Generation Z) while using the authentic texts. First, we review the pedagogical standpoint on reading strategies and look into their existing classifications. Then, we explore the characteristics of the Generation Z and project the reading strategies upon them. We conclude by suggesting several steps to take into consideration when teaching reading and introducing the reading strategies to the language classroom.

Literature Review

There are different definitions of strategies in the scholarly literature. Briefly, a strategy is a plan developed by a reader to assist in comprehending and thinking about texts. In recent decades, reading strategy instruction has entered language classrooms and become the focus of extensive research and scholarly enquiry (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, 2002.) The main premise is that teachers should help students understand how these flexible tools work and thus enable readers to tackle challenging texts with greater independence.

Baker and Brown (1984) suggest that reading strategies are purposeful and cognitive actions that learners make when they read to help them in making and keeping meaning. Similarly,

Anderson (1999) defines reading strategies as mental tasks that readers apply to make meaning from the text. According to Pressley (2006) and Trabasso and Bouchard (2002), reading strategies are seen as conscious behaviours that readers use before, during, and after reading to get meaning from the text. Alder (2001) defines reading comprehension strategies as conscious schemes that successful readers use to understand a text. According to Lai, Li and Amster (2013), reading strategies are methods of finding the meanings of a text. Whether defined as actions, tasks, behaviours or methods, reading strategies aid learners become competent readers in control of their own reading comprehension.

A study of reading strategies reveals how readers interact with written text and how these strategies contribute to (or hinder) text comprehension. Research in second language reading suggests that learners use a variety of strategies to acquire, store, and retrieve information (Rigney, 1978). Strategies are often defined as learning techniques, behaviours, problem-solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). In the context of second language learning, a useful distinction can be made between learning strategies and the reading comprehension strategies that learners use to enhance reading comprehension and overcome comprehension failures. Oxford (1990) offers a comprehensive classification of the various strategies used by learners. Within the broader context of reading strategies, the author identifies the following categories of strategies: cognitive, memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. Cognitive strategies include note-taking, formal practice with the specific aspects of the target language such as sounds and sentence structure, summarizing, paraphrasing, predicting, analysing, and using context clues. Memory strategies include creating mental images through grouping and associating, semantic mapping, using keywords, employing word associations, and placing new words into a context. Compensation strategies include skills such as making inferences, guessing while reading, or using reference materials such as dictionaries. Metacognitive strategies are behaviours undertaken by the learners to plan, arrange, and evaluate their own learning and include directed attention and self-evaluation, organization, setting goals and objectives, seeking practice opportunities, and so forth. In the context of reading, self-monitoring and correction of errors are further examples of metacognitive strategies. Affective strategies, such as self-encouraging behaviour are used to lower anxiety and encourage learning. Finally, social strategies are those that involve other individuals in the learning process and refer to cooperation with peers, questioning, asking for correction, and feedback; for example, while reading, a student may ask another individual for feedback about their reading responses.

Metacognitive strategies specific to reading can be classified in the following three clusters: planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies (Israel, 2007; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Planning strategies are used before reading; activating learners' background knowledge to get prepared for reading is an example of planning strategies (Almasi, 2003; Israel, 2007). Also, previewing a title, picture, illustration, heading, or subheading can help readers grasp the overview of the text. Readers may also preview the general information in the text and its structure (Almasi, 2003; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Learners may check whether their reading material has a certain text structure, such as cause and effect, question and answer, and compare and contrast. Furthermore, setting the purpose for reading can also be categorized as a planning strategy (Pressley, 2002).

Further analysis of literature demonstrates an even greater variety in the classifications and interpretations of reading strategies. Thus, Barnett (1998) indicates that reading strategies involve skimming, scanning, guessing, recognizing cognates and word families, reading for meaning, predicting, activating general knowledge, making inferences, following references, and separating main ideas from supporting ideas. Furthermore, reading strategies can consist of evaluating content, such as agreeing or disagreeing, making an association with prior knowledge or experience, asking and answering questions, looking at the keywords, using sentence structure analysis such as determining the subject, verb or object of the sentence, skipping and rereading (Almasi, 2003).

Clearly, not all strategies are equally effective, many depend on different types of reading texts and tasks, and the choice of a reading strategy by each reader. Brantmeier (2002), having analysed a bulk of empirical studies, suggests that the most successful readers use top-down strategies, i.e. constructing meaning by activating background knowledge, making and checking assumptions, asking questions, rather than bottom-up. Block and Israel (2005) also suggest that predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning, and summarizing are strategies that improve reading comprehension. A recent experiential study in Iraq has provided evidence that intensive reading strategies yield positive results in developing learners vocabulary (Khazaal, 2019).

A great deal of interest has been generated by attempts to differentiate between reading skills and reading strategies as well as between strategic readers and skilful readers. Strategies are often seen as supporting but independent of skills. In their widely-cited paper Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) suggest that:

> reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text. Reading skills are automatic actions that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency, and fluency and usually occur without awareness of the components or control involved. (p. 368)

Following Alexander, Graham, and Harris (1998), the authors emphasise that strategies imply intention and that a strategic reader uses strategies to work toward a certain goal. Moreover, strategic readers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy used, revise if needed, and adapt to each particular reading action. In our opinion, this is an important argument to advocate the importance of teaching effective reading strategies to the new generation of learners who are known for being success-oriented and task-focused with shorter attention spans.

Looking into the teaching of effective reading strategies through authentic texts, it should be noted that the benefits of using authentic texts in language classrooms and particularly for the purposes of communicative language teaching (CLT) approach have long been discussed in the literature. According to Berardo (2006), the use of authentic texts has a positive effect on student motivation. It gives authentic cultural information, exposes students to real language, relates more closely to students' needs, and supports a more creative approach to teaching.

In the context of teaching Generation Z learners, authentic texts give that much needed motivational boost to the learning process, particularly when learners are gradually given more autonomy in making choices and selecting texts to read, or rather when the task set by the teacher encourages independent search and exploration of authentic texts. When the selection is done by the teacher, the criteria for choosing authentic texts defined by Nuttall (1996) remain relevant. They include suitability of content, exploitability and readability. Suitability of content is the key since reading material should interest the students as well as be relevant to their needs. Exploitability refers to how the text can be used to develop the students' competence as readers. Readability is a combination of structural and lexical difficulty of a text that will guide the teachers in choosing the desired level of complexity. Variety and visual presentation of the text may also influence the choice of authentic materials.

Since generation Z is exposed to a true whelm of new formats and non-traditional content such as memes, Instagram feeds, Twitter, and web-content aggregators, this reduces their time to read traditional content. This may have several implications for the classroom: to introduce the more traditional formats for learning and practising reading strategies; and to use all the variety of authentic content to encourage learners to use the strategies in dealing with authentic texts in real-life contexts.

Furthermore, as the concept of authenticity is central to CLT and relates not only to the authenticity of the texts used as input data for our students, but also to authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning (Breen, 1985), this has further implications for adapting the reading tasks to the new needs and expectations of Generation Z learners.

Characteristics of Generation Z
It is common knowledge that the young generation considers the Internet an essential environment rather than an innovative technology. It has become part of their lives. Understanding of this is of great importance for educators and can be justified by the following fact. When the theory of Multiple Intelligence by Howard Gardner first appeared in 1980s and was afterwards updated (Gardner, 2000), the practitioners came to the conclusion that the students having been considered as disabled in learning were not the ones. They were unsuccessful in learning because they had another type of intelligence that was in a contradiction with the type of teaching style. The same is happening with the Generation Z. They have their special characteristics that on the one hand can be the cause of problems in studying and relationships with the teachers and parents, and, on the other hand, can serve as a spring in achieving success in it.

According to Adams (2004), by acknowledging a new type of intelligence – the digital intelligence and all its implications for education and communication, we become more aware of the need to develop effective strategies to accommodate this new style of learning. This new style of learning involves the use of multiple platforms that Generation Z can not live and learn without, that include social networking, blogs, personal websites, pinboarding, forums, and social gaming.

According to the Generation theory by Howe and Strauss (1992), the time interval in which a person is born affects his worldview, his system of values. This "generational conflict" is not always connected to age-related contradictions. People, reaching a certain age, do not acquire the age values characteristic of this period, since children, reaching the age of their parents, do not

become the same as they are, their attitude to life is still different. As a result, Howe and Strauss substantiated that every 20 years a new generation appears with a different scale of values and excellent predecessors' behaviour. According to scholars, the model of upbringing adopted in the family and other factors such as political, economic, social has a dominant influence on the generation's values development. Despite the fact that initially the theory of generations of Strauss and Howe aimed at studying the Anglo-American history, later it was widely used in many countries of the world and its relevance was proved.

The modern generation of students born after 2000 is the first fully digital generation. It should be stated that 2000 is the date that varies from 1991 to 2004 depending on the country. They are often referred to as 'Generation Z', 'Gen Z', or 'digital natives' because the Internet, YouTube, mobile phones, social media and instant messengers are their environment that forms their style of living. Some researchers claim that their values are still in the process of formation, but others have proved that their main psychological characteristics and main values have already been developed.

Barcelon (2010) identifies generations Y and Z whose life is connected with the age of computers that created the environment for their life and learning. Harmanto (2013) after Barcelon identified the four groups of characteristics for Generation Z. These characteristics contain positive features but may also have potentially negative implications.

Table 1. *Generation Z characteristics (after Barcelon and Harmanto):*

Group	Positive	Negative
Tech Savvy	Members of Generation Z are called 'digital natives', they are comfortable with e-mail, texting and computer applications. They easily adapt to advances in technology.	Generation Z are not interested in outdoor activities, prefer a sedentary lifestyle that has a bad influence upon their health.
Social	They are powerful communicators with virtual strangers. Cell phones and instant messages make communication immediate. As a result, a member of Generation Z is very collaborative and creative.	Their socialization is virtual, they feel difficulty in real-life situation socializing.
Multitasking	They can do some tasks simultaneously: send messages, read, watch, talk, eat and so on. They have one-click-away access to find any answer, to know any news, to connect any person.	According to mental health experts, Gen Z is prone to Acquired Attention Deficit Disorder. The generation is losing the ability to focus and analyse more lengthy, complex information.
Speedy	Getting used to getting information in a short period of time. Information should be delivered in rapid, short portions. "Generation Z thrives on instant gratification ".	The patience and work ethic might have been lost.

This classification goes alongside with the characteristics of children of Generation Z suggested by an American child psychologist Postnik-Goodwin (as cited in Verbitskiy, 2016, p. 11). According to the author, Generation Z is set apart from the previous generations by a set of characteristics, including being impatient; focusing on short-term goals; addiction to the Internet; fragmentation of figurative thinking; the desire to be successful; orientation to use (they can present a lot of arguments in order to get what they want); seeing honesty as value; prioritising the virtual world; knowing technique better than people's feelings (they prefer finding the answers via the Internet, than asking teachers increasing the distance in communication, not allowing the process of transferring experience happen); and being smart performers.

According to Seemiller and Grace (2016), Generation Z students' learning styles, academic skill sets, social practices, and social concerns are quite different from those of previous generations. The authors' findings suggest that "83 per cent of Generation Z students prefer face-to-face communication because it allows them to connect better and read the other person" (p. 61). Since they are able to access online information immediately that results in instant answers, Generation Z students may not pay as much attention to details as they could and may believe the first information they hear, instead of checking the accuracy of the facts they have heard or read. Moreover, authors have found out that in order to remain anonymous, students may create an alias or avatar identity when sharing some information.

According to Shatto & Erwin (2016), the average Generation Z person has an attention span of eight seconds, compared to twelve seconds for the previous generation of Millennials. This implies that learners may expect prompter feedback and may become frustrated if answers are not clear immediately. Most importantly for teaching reading, Generation Z prefers learning from the internet over learning from print material such as books. Because of their access to so much information, authors conclude that Generation Z students learn by observation, visual experiences and practice instead of by reading and by listening to classroom presentations.

Thus, when teaching reading comprehension and developing skills in using reading strategies, teachers should take into account some contradictory points. On the one hand, Generation Z learners want to succeed in learning, on the other hand they are impatient and strive for an immediate result. Even though they are considered to be addicted to the Internet, they are able to quickly navigate through masses of content and can easily find an interesting authentic article that may suit their needs. They are not powerful communicators in real life but smart performers, seeking face-to-face communication.

Overall, teaching Generation Z to use reading strategies effectively can give them the purpose of actually using them in real life and can be considered as a positive psychological factor for better socialising practices, involving learners into other kinds of activities different from those they experience in their environment, either learning or social.

Effective Reading Strategies for Generation Z

When deciding on most appropriate reading strategies for Generation Z, educators can rely on this generation's positive characteristics such as excellence at technology, desire for achievement and success, preference for reading short texts, ability to multitask – or rather promptly switch between

tasks, but also need to take into consideration some negative ones. For instance, the fact that Generation Z is not brought up on books and is not seen as a generation of readers, they prefer not to read and engage with longer texts, dislike asking questions and prefer seeking answers online rather than approaching a teacher (or a peer) since it might take longer to get what is needed, and experience certain problems with socialising in the real life.

Thus, we suggest that the following is considered when teaching reading strategies in the language classroom with Generation Z learners:

1. Reading strategies should be allocated enough instructional time and the benefits of their use should be emphasized consistently; also, they should be taught and practised throughout the academic year.

2. Action research into the effectiveness of reading strategies should be carried out: teachers should act as observers and evaluators to be able to select the strategies that will really add value to the new generations of learners. It is clear that the way the new generation interacts is very different from all previous generations and only by experimenting we can really review and update the existing pedagogies.

3. Strategies for effective reading of digital content should be explored. The value of applying strategies to different types of texts and different content areas should be emphasized; a clear connection with real-life contexts and situations is needed.

4. The use of authentic texts and life-related, meaningful tasks will help increase motivation and engagement with reading. Using shorter texts but more engaging tasks is likely to prove successful with Generation Z learners.

5. Top-down strategies should be prioritized over the bottom-up ones. A balance between extensive and intensive reading is to be sought by replicating real-life contexts where they take place.

6. Collaborative tasks and tasks promoting interaction and communication between learners will help engage and replicate real-world practice of Generation Z to interact with information. Moreover, it is likely to promote learners' socialisation.

Finally, we should not underestimate the power of reading for pleasure and giving our learners autonomy and independence in what they do. Encouraging Generation Z to interact meaningfully with the content they are passionate about is likely to give that the feeling of instant gratifications they are so much after.

Conclusions

Generation Z are learners that live and learn in the era of advanced technology with wide-ranging opportunities to access information. The evidence suggests that they learn more effectively when given tasks involving solving a problem or finding a solution; their shorter attention spans and preference for smaller 'bites' of visually-attractive information is changing the classroom pedagogies. Moreover, Generation Z learners are characterized by the ability to perceive information in small, logically complete portions and by their preference for visual content. This makes teaching reading and reading strategies particularly challenging, but nonetheless exciting. Knowing what works and helping Generation Z learners apply the acquired reading strategies in real-life contexts and situations should be the real purpose of teaching reading. Remembering that reading always has a purpose and making the use of reading strategies clear to learners through

authentic texts and authentic tasks with collaborative elements will benefit Generation Z learners in more ways than one. This article sets a background for further development of a system of activities and tasks that aim at specific reading strategies training of Generation Z learners.

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