

Looking in From Within: Student Diaries as a Bridge to Understanding the Reading Minds

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This paper examines the mental processes of the highly proficient and less proficient tertiary students in a Malaysian tertiary institution while reading academic texts through the use of student diaries. Being process oriented, the study conducted was treated as a case study which lasted in 14 weeks time. Four research participants with twelve journal entries each were involved during the data collection. The analysis of the data from the student diaries was conducted using the Constant Comparative Method (Wellington, 2000, p. 137). For triangulation purposes, the reading texts read by the participants were also collected for document analysis. The study has yielded interesting findings on how the different academic reading proficiency of the selected tertiary students was reflected by the difference in quality in their use of the identified academic reading strategies. These findings have direct implications on the teaching and learning of the English language for the tertiary students. Besides enlightening the trainers, curriculum designer and policy makers, the findings have also provided means and ways on how the tertiary students could be more reflective of their academic reading strategies and be able to regulate their academic reading strategies more effectively through the use of student diaries.

Key words: student diaries, reading strategies, ESL

INTRODUCTION

We can no longer teach adults to read in the same way we teach children. Even adults who can't read come to our classes with a wealth of background experience.

(Greenfield & Nogueira, 1980, p. 30)

This statement has brought about the conduct of this research. While much research conducted on reading has focused on children who comprise the primary and secondary students, adult learners are yet to be the center of such research. Additionally, when dealing with adult learners, researchers interested in reading need to address alarming issues concerning the tertiary students. At tertiary level, the main concern is to enable the students to understand reference texts and materials as well as to extract information. It is a common fact that most of the references are in English. According to Ramiah (1999), more than 95% of the references and texts in Malaysian universities are in English. Unfortunately, previous research conducted on Malaysian tertiary students has revealed that the students face tremendous difficulties while attempting academic reading tasks.

Most of the time, these particular students would be those who were in Malay-medium secondary schools. A study done on the reading behaviour of students in University of Malaya by Cooper (1984), revealed that the "unpracticed readers", that is, those who came from Malay-medium schools demonstrated greater difficulty in reading English academic texts than the "practiced readers", that is those who came from English-medium schools. This finding is supported by Michael (1996) who claims that students from most schools in Malaysia which use Malay as the medium of instruction are "severely deficient in both linguistic and reading competence where English is concerned" (p. 9). Though the students may have been trained and had many hours of reading classes, many educators still express their frustration over the tertiary students' incompetence of English and academic reading in English in particular. In their paper which highlights the challenges of

teaching English at tertiary level, Mazli and Nor Fariza (2001, p. 257) commented, "...by the time they enter university, Malaysian students usually have completed eleven years of English classes, yet most are unable to carry on simple conversations or write sentences free of basic grammatical errors." They further elaborated on the reading problems of the tertiary students when they claim, "...very few of them read enough English written materials and use English when interacting with peers and friends" (p. 258).

Alarming, tertiary students who are pursuing bachelor degree courses majoring in English and Teaching of English suffer the same agony when it comes to academic reading in English. A research conducted by Cheong (1996) has specifically focused on the problems of university TESL students in reading literary texts in English. It has been discovered that despite being trained in English, the students still faced various difficulties in reading with failure to make inferences as the top of the list. In addition, a paper which addresses the literacy needs of ESL teacher trainees has successfully pinpointed problems faced by the pre-service and in-service TESL students (Kuldip, 2001). According to Kuldip,

It is often assumed that ESL teacher trainees are equipped with the necessary language and literacy skills required for study in a tertiary institution. However, evidence from trainees' written performance suggests that they often have difficulty with the language and discourse used in the texts on teacher education. They are unable to fully comprehend what they read, and fail to apply appropriate ideas from their readings to course-related tasks. (p. 159)

In her discussion, Kuldip claims that the school-based language and discourse the in-service TESL students experienced as teachers "is often restricted in nature and provides few opportunities for personal expressions, much less analytical thinking" (p. 162). It could be assumed that these set of experiences faced by them as school English teachers may have some effects on their difficulties as readers of English academic texts.

From a global perspective, a study that examined the characteristics of research on reading between 1969 and 1998 claims that only 3% of the studies involved adults as research participants according to Guzzetti, Anders, and Neuman (as cited in Campbell & Malicky, 2002, p. 3). Interestingly, of the 3% of the research conducted, only one body of research examined the reading strategies used by adult learners (Malicky & Norman 1982, 1983, 1989; Campbell & Malicky, 2002). Others were narrow in scope, with studies focusing on “phonological and orthographic skills, and have employed assessment procedures that do not reflect authentic reading” (Campbell & Malicky, 2002, p. 4). This implies that more research on the process of reading which employ authentic procedures in data collection are deemed necessary.

Faizah (2004) who conducted a research on the academic reading strategies of Malaysian TESL in-service students discovered evidence that help to explain the causes of the students’ difficulties in academic reading. Besides confirming previous local studies and those conducted abroad, her research has shed some lights on how more authentic procedures on reading could be conducted.

This paper in particular addresses the issue on an authentic data collection procedure vis a vis the use of student diaries. The following are the research objectives of the study.

- 1) To determine how student diaries can provide an authentic means of eliciting data on the mental operations of the respondents.
- 2) To identify the type of information that can be obtained from the student diaries.

The following are the research questions which were formulated based on the objectives.

- 1) How can student diaries provide an authentic means of eliciting data on the mental operations of the respondents?
- 2) What type of information can be obtained from the student diaries?

The discussion in the paper will first focus on previous research conducted and their use of research instruments. Finally, the paper will focus on the present research which in particular used 'student diary' as one of the instruments in investigating the mental operations of the respondents who read English academic reading texts in an English as second language context.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON READING STRATEGIES AND THEIR INSTRUMENTATIONS

Fauziah (2002) conducted a study which focused on the strategy use of Malay students reading in English and in their mother tongue, Malay. Thirty-nine Malay students who were sixteen years old enrolled in three Malaysian public schools were involved in her study. Fauziah had grouped the participants into four namely Good L1 and L2 readers, Poor L1 and L2 readers, Good L1 and Poor L2 readers, and Poor L1 and Good L2 readers. The grouping was made based on the participants' performance in a Malay reading test and an English reading test.

Fauziah used four sets of reading passages which were either narrative or expository texts. All the four sets were written in two languages, English and Malay. Attempts were taken during the writing of the passages to ensure similar reading difficulty level for all the passages. Think aloud protocols were used to collect the relevant data. Each protocol was analyzed and the strategies employed were inferred.

From her investigation, Fauziah discovered 26 familiar strategies from which 17 were strategies for top-down processing and 9 for bottom-up processing. Among the strategies for top-down were predicting content, confirming prediction, making comments, correcting behaviour or process, reacting emotionally, and using prior knowledge. In addition, she discovered three new strategies which were interacting with the characters, interacting with the author, and stating failure to understand a passage. On the other hand, some of the strategies for bottom-up strategies were paraphrasing, re-

reading, stating failure to understand a word/phrase/sentence, and literal translation.

Della (1998) was interested to investigate the academic reading strategies of postgraduate students enrolled in a Malaysian university when reading two different texts with different text organization.

Three Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students took part in her study. The selection of participants was made based on several criteria. First, they were willing to participate and second, they were fluent in English so that verbal reporting on their strategy use would not be a problem. Most importantly, the participants were “expert readers” (1998, p. 51). Three instruments were used to allow triangulation of data; think alouds, observation, and interviews.

Upon the identification of the participants, Della conducted the think aloud protocols. The responses from the think alouds were analyzed using Block’s (1986) categorization of comprehension strategies. Della also followed her participants to the library and observed their reading. Among the things she observed were the types of materials chosen by the participants to read and the overt behaviour such as note-taking, underlining, and mind-mapping done by the participants.

Her findings showed not much difference from that of Block’s. However, Della managed to discover seven new strategies (p. 151). The strategies are; 1. questioning text based on prior knowledge, 2. agreeing or affirming, 3. summarizing, 4. practicing intertextuality or relating to what read before, 5. skimming, 6. making inferences, 7. giving opinions.

Teoh (1996) wanted to discover the academic reading strategies employed by undergraduate students. Interestingly, she focused on the reading of Science texts of four students studying in the same class in one of the Malaysian colleges.

Teoh had a checklist of the academic reading strategies, an end-of-chapter exercise, and an interview session. Upon identification of participants, the participants were asked to complete the checklist. Specifically, they were asked to tick the particular reading strategies that they use when reading.

Later, they were given a science text which was about 650 words in length to read. They were required to complete the exercise that proceeded the reading text. Each participant was given the passage to read at a different time allowing the researcher to observe them. The passage was later taken back for the researcher to study the types of markings done by the participants. Finally, the participants were interviewed. The interview enabled the researcher to elicit information on the participants' view on their reading.

The scores from the exercise were used to classify the participants' reading ability. It was discovered that one was a good reader, one was a poor reader while the other two were average good readers. From the data collected, 34 strategies were identified and 10 were common for all participants (1996, p. 149). Good readers were discovered to have employed more reading strategies than the others. In brief, the good readers were more metacognitively aware and had processed the text at a deeper level. In addition, they used the visual representation extensively. Interestingly, although the poor readers had some reading strategies similar with the good readers, they "were not used in the same way" (p. 152).

Anderson (1991) investigated the academic reading strategies of 65 ESL learners at an American university. His subjects were given textbook-type passages which range from 643 to 1057 words. These passages were followed by questions in the format of end-of-chapters questions in content textbook. Interestingly, from Think Aloud Protocols, Anderson identified 29 academic reading strategies which he categorized as supervising, support, paraphrasing and translating, coherence and test-taking. His research has enabled many to understand how ESL learners read academic materials and the problems they have engaging in such academic tasks.

Block's (1986) research was interested in exploring the approaches to reading for educational purposes by a number of poor readers. Her participants included both the native and non-native speakers of the English language. All the participants were in the same educational level that is, first year college students who had failed a college reading ability test. Using a think aloud procedures similar to that of Olshavsky's (1977), she discovered

a number of strategies familiar from previous research. There were two broad categories identified namely the general strategies and local linguistic strategies. Adding to that, Block also discovered that there were two modes of responses to reading academic materials; extensive and reflexive. While those who approached reading in the extensive mode remained fairly closely to the text, those who approached reading in the reflexive mode responded to the text with a large amount of personal comments, identification and anecdotes.

Aslanian (as cited in Teoh, 1996) was more interested to find out how ESL readers make word choices in 'modified cloze' stimulus. Interestingly, a list of words was given. From the list, the subjects were to choose one word for each blank in the passage they were reading. Once his subjects had completed the cloze test, he questioned them their reasons for the choices they made. The discussion on the subjects' choices and reasons for their choices had yielded interesting findings. Particularly, in the ensuing interview, Aslanian's questions had revealed more than just bottom-up or top-down strategies.

Hosenfeld's study (as cited in Block, 1986) was interested to discover what good ESL readers seemed to be doing that poor readers were not. In an interview which was conducted in the subjects' native language, the subjects were asked about their thoughts while they were attempting to comprehend the text. Generally, the research revealed that good and poor readers do different things. Some of the strategies applied by the good readers identified were reading in broad phrases, skipping inessential words, guessing from the context, evaluating their guesses, having a good self-concept as a reader, and using orthographic information.

While Hosenfeld was interested to know the strategies used while reading in the second language, Olshavsky's (1977) study was interested to know the strategies used while reading in the first language. Using Think Aloud Protocols, Olshavsky asked her subjects to say what they were thinking about at particular points in the text, marked by red dots on the page. These dots appeared at the end of most clauses and sentences. Interestingly, Olshavsky only considered a reported activity as a strategy if it was reported at least five times. This was done to satisfy the fact that a strategy is a "repeatedly used

way of solving a problem.” She discovered ten strategies which were used by all the subjects. However, the strategies were used more often when the subjects were interested with the text and were more proficient. Interestingly, while Hosenfeld (as cited in Block, 1986) found differences in the quality of the strategies used while reading in the second language, Olshavsky discovered that there were differences in the frequency of the strategy used when reading in the first language.

THE COMPARISON AMONG PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEIR USE OF INSTRUMENTS

The following table depicts the summary of the previous research which was described in this paper. Emphasis is given on the use of the instruments which further illustrates the variety in the instruments used by researchers across the world in investigating the use of reading strategies.

TABLE 1
Comparison Among Previous Researchers

Studies	Focus	Subjects	Instruments
Campbell & Malicky (2002)	- to provide research-based knowledge on how adults read	- 219 Female, 125 Male adult learners 1. average age was 33 years 2. full-time and part-time students enrolled at colleges, school boards, community-based or volunteer tutoring programmes 3. reading proficiency ranged from beginning to advanced - 19 Adult Basic Education trainers 1. trained	- miscue analysis - unaided retelling - comprehension questions

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Studies	Focus	Subjects	Instruments
Fauziah (2002)	- to discover potential differences in strategy use when reading in L1 and L2	- 39 16 years old Malay students in 3 Malaysian public schools 1. grouped into 4: Good L1, good L2 Poor L1, poor L2 Good L1, poor L2 Poor L1, good L2 2. groupings made based on participants' performance in a Malay reading test and English reading test	- 4 sets of reading passages 1. either expository or narrative 2. all sets were written in both languages 3. texts had similar level of difficulty - TAPs
Della (1998)	- to investigate the ARS of post-graduate students in a Malaysian university when reading two different texts with different text organization	- 3 MBA students selected based on specific criteria	- TAPs 1. analyzed using Block's (1986) categorization of comprehension strategies - observation 1. once, in the library - interview
Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson (1996)	- to discover strategies used by bilingual Latina/o students	- 8 Latina/o students who were successful English readers - 3 monolingual Anglo students who were successful English readers - 3 bilingual Latina/os students who were less successful English readers	- prompted and unprompted TAPs - interviews - measure of prior knowledge - passage recalls
Teoh (1996)	- to discover reading strategies employed by under-graduates students	- 4 undergraduate students studying in the same class in a Malaysian college	- checklist - end-of-chapter exercise - interview observation

Studies	Focus	Subjects	Instruments
Kletzein (1991)	- to discover strategies used by good and poor readers as they read passages at different level of difficulties	- 48 10th- and 11th-grade students at a sub-urban high school in USA 1. 24 good comprehenders (10 Female, 14 Male) * scored > 50% on California Test of Basic Skills 2. 24 poor comprehenders (14 Female, 10 Male) scored < 50% on the same test	- 3 passages with different level of difficulty (7th-, 11th- and 14th-) 1. difficulty measured using Fry readability scale - interview
Anderson (1991)	- to discover the ARS of ESL learners at an American university	- 65 ESL undergraduates	- textbook-type passages with different length - end-of-chapter exercises - TAPs
Block (1986)	to explore the approaches to reading for educational purposes by a number of poor readers	3 native and 6 non-native speakers of English language studying in the same educational level	- TAPs
Aslanian (1985)	- to find out how ESL readers make word choices		- a modified cloze stimulus - interview
Hosenfeld (1984)	- to discover what good ESL readers do that poor ESL readers don't	- 2 groups of ESL learners; good readers and poor readers	- interview
Olshavsky (1976-7)	- to know strategies used while reading in L1		- TAPs

THE USE OF 'STUDENT DIARIES' IN RESEARCH ON READING

A study conducted by Faizah (2004) attempted to investigate the academic reading strategies of 4 female Malaysian TESL in-service students aged between 30 and 35 years. All the participants had been trained in local teacher training colleges and had between 7 and 10 years of English teaching experience in primary schools prior to pursuing their studies in the Education Faculty in one of the country's public universities. The research was conducted over a period of 14 weeks. In each week, each of the participants was given an academic reading text to read. In addition, they were asked to reflect on their academic reading by writing in their student diary. Each diary entry was collected weekly and the respective academic text was collected for further document analysis in attempting triangulation of data. As suggested by Weinstein, Goertz and Alexander (1988, p. 70), besides the reported data in the student diaries, the product data that is the markings on the reading material, could help to enrich the data. Most importantly they could serve as the written evidence of the reported and unreported strategies in the student diaries.

When necessary, the participants were interviewed for further clarifications on what they had reflected in the diary. Since the student diary was not part of the assessment, it was not returned to the participants. The collection of the student diary was merely for the document analysis which the researcher needed to carry out. It must be mentioned that the reading texts used were the actual texts the participants had for one of the courses they took in the programme. All research participants were aware of the procedures involved in the study and that they had agreed to cooperate by signing the consent form. To build trust and maintain the research participants' motivation, the researcher worked together with them throughout the semester, collecting the diaries at the end of each week. That was hoped to encourage the participants and to give them the impression of the importance of their diaries to the study.

STUDENT DIARY

Student diaries are a kind of “annotated chronological record or a ‘log’ of experiences and events” (Wellington, 2000, p. 118). The data collected from the student diaries are those that are generated by the research participant themselves which might be difficult to trace via other instruments. According to Marefat (2002, p. 105), researchers are interested in student diaries because they are “records of opinions and perceptions important for the learner – ideas which cannot easily be tapped in other way.” The importance of student diaries in a study like this one is further supported by Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 32). According to them,

... not only is a document of this kind useful for providing factual information, it can also help with analysis and interpretation, in that it can jog memory and indicate patterns and trends which might have been lost if confined to the mind.

Nevertheless, keeping diaries may be problematic to some researchers. Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991, p. 15) commented that at least two problems are obvious with student diaries. The first is the degree of trust the research participants have on the researcher while the second is on their perseverance. To rectify, researchers are encouraged to obtain the consent from the participants prior to conducting the research and to work closely with the participants and make the participants feel that each entry is valuable.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF STUDENT DIARIES IN THE RESEARCH

In administering student diaries, a researcher is not confined to any specific formula or rules. Wellington (2000) further clarifies by suggesting that the rule of thumb for the conduct of student diaries is to ensure the participants to write “a chronological account of events with the diarist’s

(participant's) own interpretation or version of them, and reflection on them" (p. 119). He continues by recommending an approach that is, to ask the participants to "look out for, and record critical events in their experiences". It is believed that "by recording critical or significant incidents, the participants can often convey far more than could be achieved by a daily, blow-by-blow account" (Wellington, 2000).

In this study, each respondent was instructed to reflect on their reading and the strategies they had employed in a special diary given by the researcher in the beginning of the study. Since the study was interested to find out the reading strategies of the respondents each time they read academic texts, the reading materials given were the actual ones used in one of the courses the respondents took. Besides commenting on the difficulties they encountered while reading the texts, they were asked to describe the strategies used while reading. They were also encouraged to cite relevant examples whenever necessary. Each student diary entry was collected weekly along with the text read for analysis purposes.

FINDINGS

The discussions on the findings will be based on the following tables. Answers to the research questions are discussed by elaborating how the student diaries can provide an authentic means of eliciting data on the mental operations of the respondents and by identifying the type of information obtained from the student diaries.

Relevant excerpts from the student diaries are identified as episodes in the tables. The episodes provide the qualitative data in narrative forms. As can be found in the following discussions, the episodes display the authenticity of the student diaries in eliciting data on the mental operations of each respondent. Additionally, the data elicited from the student diaries also provide the information on the quality of each strategy use which may not be traceable from other use of research instruments. It is the identification and

the understanding of the strategy use that make ‘student diaries’ a valuable research tool in tracing the minds of the participants during academic reading tasks. To clarify the findings presentation, each table provides the relevant excerpt taken from the student diaries of the participants.

It is worth noting that four major strategies have been identified amongst the participants through the use of student diaries in the research. Besides confirming findings from previous research which used other means of data collection, the findings also provide authentic evidence based on the narratives of the respondents in their student diaries. Most importantly, the excerpts taken from the relevant diary entries have provided evidence of the difference in the type and quality of the strategies used while attempting academic reading.

TABLE 2
Re-reading Amongst the Less Proficient Participants

Source	Episodes
Student diaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actually I have to re-read this passage many times in order to understand the content but there is some part of the passage that I don't really understand what it means) 2. ...this passage is quite difficult to understand by reading it once but when we re-read it many times, finally we will understand the contents 3. ...there are certain parts of the sentences which are quite hard to understand. For those difficult sentences I have to re-read the sentences again.

It is quite obvious from Table 2 that the less proficient readers in the research tend to re-read for an inappropriate reason. Episodes 1 and 2 clearly signify the inappropriateness of their re-reading, that is it is done when they faced difficulties in understanding the respective part of the texts. Previous research has informed that proficient readers read in broad context and will skip certain difficult part in order to continue reading. Additionally, the proficient readers will continue reading and make guesses based on the incoming information to compensate the missing information. However, the fact that the respective respondents in this research commented that they

needed to re-read instead of pursuing their reading is a strong indication of their inappropriate use of such strategy. Interestingly, Episode 1 further provides evidence on the participants' poor use of re-reading since she still could not make sense of what she had read and re-read.

TABLE 3
Summarizing Amongst the Less Proficient Participants

Source	Episodes
Student diaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It can also increase the students' motivation. Group work can also place responsibility for action and progress upon each of the numbers of the group somewhat equally and can also help students with varying abilities to accomplish separate goals. 2. This passage is about the advantage of group work. Where it is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which 2 or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language. 3. This passage is an issue about how to teach grammar. There are 4 primary issues that have been discussed. The issues such as should grammar be presented inductively or deductively, should we use grammatical explanations and technical terminology in a CLT classroom, should grammar be taught in separate 'Grammar only' classes and should teachers correct grammatical errors.

Relevant excerpts from the student diaries also provide evidence on the poor quality of summarizing done by some of the participants who were labeled as the less proficient readers. It has been learnt from the literature and previous research that summarizing is an effective strategy in recalling important details or information based on the text. When queried, many participants would claim that they do summarize when they attempted academic reading. However, when the summarization was transferred into the student diaries, it is quite obvious that the quality in summarizing differs between the proficient and less proficient readers. Typically, the less proficient readers tend to re-write respective sentences and consider trivial ideas as prominent ones to be included in their summary. These claims are evident enough from Episodes 1, 2 and 3 from Table 2.

TABLE 4a
Content Organization Amongst the Proficient Participants

Source	Episodes
Student diaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If I did not read the second paragraph carefully, I might not understand the third paragraph well. 2. The reading material is quite long but it has many short sections so, I can read and stop at each section before continuing the other. 3. I think the most important part in the passage is the findings and the conclusion.

TABLE 4b
Content Organization Amongst the Less Proficient Participants

Source	Episodes
Student diaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All I can say is that the text is clear enough... 2. The explanation is very clear...

Table 4a and 4b signify the use of 'content organization' as one of the strategies used by the respondents. This strategy has been proven from previous research as one of the strategies that enable the readers to make the text more comprehensible and their understanding easier. However, excerpts displayed in Table 4a and Table 4b clearly differentiates the different perception and use of such strategy. While the proficient readers understood how the content organization had helped them and eased their understanding, the less proficient readers could only comment superficially about the content organization. This difference in perceptions of the importance of content organization in academic reading mark the difference in the participants' quality of strategy use and in turn in their academic reading. Clearly, the narratives given by the participants in their student diaries had enabled a clearer understanding of their differences in the strategy.

TABLE 5
Relating Content with Teaching Experience Amongst Proficient Participants

Source	Episodes
Student diaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As a primary school teacher, I would say that group work is the most challenging activity to handle.2. I don't find any difficulty to understand the whole chapter..., as I am one of the counselors in my school3. ...more or less, it does reflect to myself. For teacher like me, motivation element is essential to teaching field. No doubt about it.4. I did some note taking...and related them to my experience in teaching.

The narratives extracted from the student diaries also provide evidence on the ability of the proficient readers to relate the content of their reading texts with their teaching experience. Since the participants were all in-service teachers and were taking up a degree course in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL), they were able to relate their reading with their working experience. Additionally, the academic reading texts were the actual texts they had to read in one of the methodology courses offered in the programme. Hence, it is acceptable that they could make connection between new knowledge gained from the texts and their experience as a teacher. Episodes 1, 2, 3 and 4 clearly describe the relation established between the texts and the participants' experience. Unfortunately, such strategy was not evident amongst the less proficient readers in the research. These findings confirm the fact that proficient readers always relate new knowledge with existing ones as well as bring new learning experience outside the classroom boundary by including relevant experience from the world. The narratives given in their student diaries provide information on how the connections were made.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the potential of 'student diary' as one of the

research instruments in eliciting data on the use of academic reading strategy. Besides providing findings which confirm those from previous research, the strengths of student diaries lie on the fact that authentic data could easily be tapped in through the writing of student diaries. Most important is the potential of the student diaries to provide authentic evidence on the differences in use and quality of the strategies amongst the participants which may not be tapped in by other means of data collection. Tables 2, 3, 4a, 4b and 5 have provided relevant excerpts from the student diaries that serve as evidence in confirming the types and use of the strategies. Most enlightening is the fact that the student diaries also provide details on how the strategies were used and why. Access to such details may not be easy through the use of other common research instruments.

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