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Reading Circles: Equipping and Motivating Students to Develop Their Academic Reading Skills

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It is often assumed that students already know how to read academically before they attend university (Erickson et al, 2006). With technology rapidly evolving, students are seeking ways in which to explain topics and knowledge without reading complex content themselves (Miller and Merdian, 2020). This may be because of the lack of confidence when using academic sources as students have been taught the knowledge rather than the skills to learn the knowledge before attending university. Nevertheless, this has caused a decline in academic reading skills. Academic reading skills that are necessary for their education and for their future careers (Wyatt et al, 2011).

Academic reading is described as reading for academic purposes to construct knowledge (Allen, 2012) and is often seen as more critical and purposeful (Sengupta, 2002). Reading circles are used to allow students to collaborate on what they have read from academic sources and critically evaluate these sources. The lecturer can compile a list of questions related to the article they want the students to read, and the students read the article and answer the questions before the reading circles. This allows students to develop a deeper understanding of academic sources, such as the purpose of the reading, the author’s argument, and connect existing concepts and knowledge to the new reading (Hermida, 2009). Through social construction of knowledge (Lord and Robertson, 2006), the students contribute and develop their own knowledge and the knowledge of others around them through discussing the articles in depth. The lecturer contributes through guiding the sessions and discussing these articles further.

Within this presentation, I will discuss how I have used reading circles in three seminars to further enhance the academic reading skills of first year students in Play and Learning: Theory and Practice, a module that focuses on theory and academic reading. I will present and discuss the reading logs used to help students read and discuss academic articles in seminars. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how reading circles and logs can be used to develop academic reading skills and how this has been beneficial to students in first year.

