

INCORPORATING EFFECTIVE RE-READING STRATEGIES IN ESL READING CLASSES TO ENHANCE READING COMPREHENSION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

There has been very little study on the effectiveness of re-reading strategies that is used in ESL classrooms. As such, this study was done to analyze the strategies that were incorporated in ESL reading class where students were asked to read the same passages a few times for better comprehension. This qualitative study was conducted through class observations and interviews that were done with the ESL classes lecturers. The research questions focused on identifying strategies used while the students did the re-reading of passages in their classes. Findings revealed that re-reading, when done correctly could lead to better understanding of the context of passage and helps the brain retain the information longer. Observations and responses from the participants revealed that the several rounds of reading of the passages should be done appropriately to ensure better comprehension and skimming and scanning has been found to be the first level of the re-reading strategy. This study also showed that the second round of reading was done to familiarize the students with the words and the third round of reading helped them understand the context of the passage better. The major findings of this study revealed comprehensive ways that could help ESL students enrich and enhance vocabulary and comprehension when they cultivate effective re-reading strategies in their classes. This practice was also said to aid students' cognition for other areas of study as well because the brain has been trained to understand passages through several levels of reading, however further comprehensive studies will be needed to gauge its validity.

INTRODUCTION

According to Ferlazzo (2021) ESL students criticized learning and focusing on the English word order or word forms to create sentences. Adams & Keene (2000) explained in their study that as an important medium of instruction, the English language plays a major role in constructing and improving current modern education, thus making it a compulsory necessity. Learners are expected to master other fields that are taught in English, such as Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and Business.

Grell and Blakely, 2023 defined reading as an active and smooth process that involves the connection between both the reader and the reading material or text in order to construct the meaning of what has been read. This implies that a two-way link is needed for a mutual understanding to be made about what has been read. The reader needs to have proper background knowledge about what is being read and similarly, Goodman (1967) defined reading as a receptive language process which is described as a psycholinguistic guessing game. He described reading as a skill that enables the reader to understand a message by recognizing the written words or written symbols. He also postulated that to grasp the meaning of certain text, the teaching of pronunciation is crucial. In contrast to other studies where the focus is on teaching reading, Goodman (1967) focused on the recognition of words through pronunciation, deeming it as an imperative aspect that permits the reader to recognise the words better, and use it. In the absence of the ability to pronounce words fluently, readers will not be able to recognise words, thus leading to a failure to utilize the words in future. The ability to pronounce words from the text indirectly allows them to grasp the meaning or cues more effectively.

A study conducted by Gabb (2000), revealed that learners face difficulties in moving into the fluency stage although they have basic decoding skills. Gabb (2000) identified several "barriers" which were limited vocabulary and lack of background knowledge, or also known as schematic knowledge, that may be the biggest problem for learners to fully comprehend a text while reading. This indicated a crucial need for readers to learn new vocabulary from time to time and have prior knowledge in using it, to be more fluent in the target language. A long standing research done by Orasanu (1986) confirmed that the knowledge a reader brings into the process of reading a text is an important determinant in the manner of which the text is comprehended, learnt and remembered.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the strategies used to conduct re-reading of passages in ESL reading lessons?
2. How effective are the re-reading strategies in order to help students gain better understanding of the passages?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners gain skills and strategies through guided reading and/or free-reading. To reiterate in simple terms, learners promote their language proficiency through reading for accuracy and reading for fluency, labels suggested by Naely,2019. In one of his established research, Naely,2019 investigated the influence of combining extensive and intensive reading to reinforce language learning. He asserts that both extensive and intensive reading approaches are effective and have their own advantages in foreign language learning process. Thus, a well-balanced reading program should include both intensive reading and extensive reading concurrently. Nuttal (1996) concurred that "intensive and extensive readings are complementary and both are necessary" as learners transfer the skills and strategies they developed in intensive reading to extensive reading.

Intensive reading focuses on accuracy rather than fluency by emphasizing detailed study of vocabulary and grammar. The implementation of guided reading in the language classroom aids in fostering student achievement. Detailed analysis of the reading materials by intensive reading allows learners to master the language effectively. On the other end of the spectrum, extensive reading, first introduced by Harold Palmer and Michael West after a pilot study in India, also defined it as reading in large quantities of easy language materials for comprehension without performing any tasks after reading (Loh 2009). Here, there is a major aspect that differs intensive reading to extensive reading, that is the after reading task. It is known from the preliminary study that the after reading activity such as writing, certainly helps students reach the greatest benefit rather than just reading. This justifies the reason why many teachers opt to use the intensive reading approach as they are able to give students tasks that are related to writing or describing details using the words that have been learnt. A formal and reliable assessment can also be done to measure the proficiency level achieved after a certain duration of using the intensive reading approach. On the contrary, extensive reading merely focuses on meaning rather than the language use, therefore reading is done for general understanding (Celik,2019). However, when extensive reading and intensive reading is combined, explicit and implicit learning will occur simultaneously. Explicit learning and intensive reading enables learners to understand the texts, become aware of text organization, use effective reading strategies, and develop skills to use the target language efficiently (Mart,2015).

Nation (2009) succinctly captures the significance of intensive reading as a learning tool in that the emphasis on both comprehension of the text and the language features introduced in the text will be beneficial to the learning advancement of the student. Without the detailed focus on learning language features, the text chosen may prove difficult for the reader to understand due to the content or the language. For example, unfamiliar grammar or vocabulary may be a challenge for readers. Hedgcock & Ferris (2018) mentioned the following significant features of intensive reading:

- **The teacher selects the texts** to be studied, introduces and subsequently, reinforces certain reading strategies by means of whole-class instructions and student activities.
- **Students read the same text at the same pace** and complete several exercises that facilitate understanding.
- The teacher and students have **clarity about what to do** before, during, and after reading.
- **Pre-reading activities** are instrumental in facilitating comprehension. These activities include surveying the text, making predictions, asking questions, and introducing key vocabulary.
- While-reading activities entail a first reading, where one reads through the entire text quickly to obtain the gist of the text and a reinforce initial predictions made during the pre-reading activity, the **re-reading of the text**, which is a second reading of the text where one reads the text meticulously, takes a closer look at language as well as inspects the text structure.
- **Post-reading activities** include summarizing and responding, thinking critically, and making reading- writing connections. It provides the teachers the opportunity to assess the progress of the student as the internal reading process and its outcomes are more apparent in post-reading activities. In essence, post-reading activities can provide clear insight into the student's language skill level.

The use of intensive reading method has helped students transcend factual knowledge and delve into conceptual knowledge through learning key vocabulary, using questions to guide their reading process, relating what they read to what they previously knew, and actively participating in the reading process. Even though students are expected to become autonomous learners, guidance on how to effectively use the method is required. Reading then becomes a dynamic process enhanced by both teachers' and learners' strategies which acts as the significant contribution for this research to be conducted.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the two research questions, the class observations and interview recordings were used to create themes which were derived from codes. A total of twelve (n=12) class observations and six (n=6) interview sessions were analyzed using a qualitative data analysis software known as ATLAS.ti 8 software. The class observations and interview recordings were first transcribed before they were analyzed using the software. All six participants in the qualitative phase were interviewed, and each of the lecturers' class were observed twice. The ATLAS.ti 8 software functioned as a platform that allowed the researcher to thoroughly analyze and organize the codes and themes of the findings. The codes that were listed represented the re-reading strategies that were used in the reading lessons as seen during the class observations. Later, these codes were re-analysed using the same software to create networks through code groups to cluster the strategies that were frequently observed. Based on the frequency count in the ATLAS.ti 8 software, the codes that were presented in this part were the most frequent strategies that were done by all the lecturers during the ESL reading lessons. Hence, to fortify these findings, sample quotations from the class observations and interview recordings are presented as follows.

In addition, based on Hecker (2023) who is the CEO of the Atlas.TI software, approves it as being one of the most suitable software that can aid and enhance data collection procedures through its systematic coding system which can turn a raw data into an organized and meaningful data set which would enable researchers to draw an insightful connection from their research studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: What are the strategies used to conduct re-reading of passages in the ESL reading lesson?

Figure 1 below shows the strategies that were incorporated in the Re-reading of selected passages.

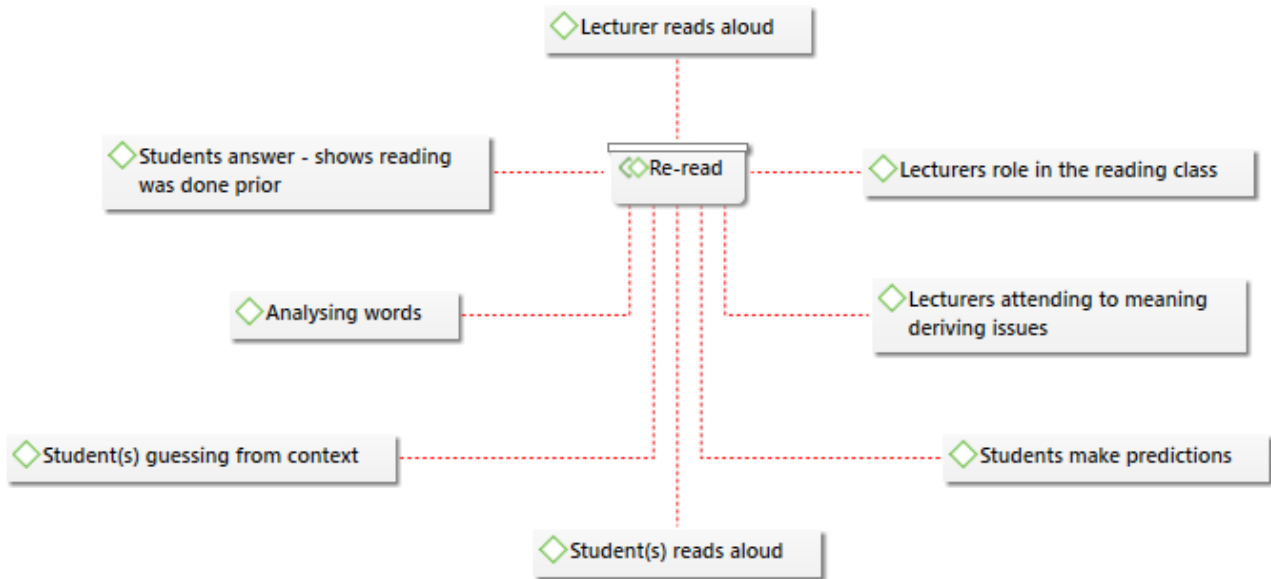


Figure 1. Re-reading Strategies

Figure One represents the strategies that were used when passages were read a few times in the reading classes. These were known as re-reading strategies that was analysed and grouped according to its frequency done in the reading classes that were observed. The several frequently observed and mentioned steps that were involved in this group were categories as strategies. These strategies include lecturers and students reading aloud, lecturers attending to meaning deriving issues, students making predictions and guessing from words. The three most important strategies in this group were the Lecturers’ role in conducting the lesson, Analysing words and Students giving answers, which indicates that prior reading has been done.

There were numerous examples that were identified for each strategy under the main theme Re-read. In the interview done with the fourth participant (R4), she explained that it was important that lecturers and students read aloud in their reading classes. She explained that:

So what I do is, in my undergraduate classes, I normally ask them to read aloud in the class and ask them to say the words and repeat the words. Sometimes they may not be able to pronounce the words correctly, I would ask them to read the sentence again. It may look like a reading class. However, I think it will really help the students and also build up their confidence as well. I also did that to my post graduates students as they will be some foreign students that will struggle to speak in English. So when they are forced to read in the classroom, this will build their self-esteem. When they present in class such as their assignments, I can see the difference in them.

Also in an interview, the sixth participant (R6) pointed that:

What I do is I make it a point to read the text with the students. What I normally do is, while reading I will pause during certain words, instances or events of the story and give them the actual meaning why they are powerful and how to use the word. Then, they will jot it down. I believe this is what you call intensive reading. When they come in the classroom, I would do all these pauses and stops to discuss about all the other things such as symbolism, cultural context, modern element and so on. So we pause and talk about this. Sometimes, they will respond and give their opinions in which I allow. So our intensive reading, even if it is a short story, it will take an hour or two depending on how responsive the students are.

For the next strategy, determining lecturers’ role in class, it was recorded in an interview with the second participant (R2) that lecturers played a major role in the intensive reading classes. R2 explained that:

So now, what you should do is ask them to read at home and re allowed in class. That would make them more interested to read and be liberal to them. Do not point out the mistakes of their pronunciation, and just ask them to read. This is very important as whatever extent their pronunciation is, make them feel confident. The teacher must not comment of how the words are pronounced first. After that you can correct them without injuring their pride.

Similarly, the sixth participant (R6) of an interview also stated that:

If you have a good reading material but it does not create interest then, the students won't find any common ground and they cannot relate to the text. However, if you have a discussion and relate it to their lives, show them the beauty of it and the stigmata, how such symbolism works, eventually they will like the story. Naturally the words will be transferred to their vocabulary selection.

This was to explain that the roles of a lecturer are highly important when the re-reading strategy is used in their reading lessons.

The next re-reading strategy, Lecturers attending to meaning deriving issues was well illustrated by the fifth participant (R5) in her interview. She stated that:

One thing which I normally do is I mention the word and then I explain what it means. I think that one of the problems with reading class is that it encourages the students to use dictionary and for me I found it very intrusive. So, if I can provide the definition, why not. You see because the focus is not so much on the particular word, it's on the meaning of the context itself.

Correspondingly for the following re-reading strategy, Lecturers attending to meaning deriving issues, the third participant (R3) also mentioned in her interview that:

If there's a description about a character that they don't understand I get them to read the whole paragraph again and ask them what kind of images come to mind and see it as a whole because the description can mean differently depending on everything around it. The students may understand other words and so they can relate it to each other. I give synonyms sometimes. Basically, it's things like that and that makes things more flexible rather than just teaching straightforward.

Analysing the next re-reading strategy, Student(s) guessing from context, a clear example could be derived from the interview done with the fourth participant (R4) who stated that:

Contextual meaning will change as it depends on the meaning. Then, as teachers you should help and facilitate them on certain words that may have two meaning, especially in literature. This certainly helps students to guess the meaning of the word from the context that it has been used in.

When Re-Reading took place, there were many activities that focused on analysing words that happened in the intensive reading classes. It was understood that the re-reading was done to analyse words and how they are used in certain contexts. As such participant 2 (R2) in an interview explained that:

You see when they read short novels or stories, they are sort of forced to learn the new words. They have not heard the word before. So when the new word is introduced they will check into the dictionary and so on and I will explain it in class. So when I give them questions, I can see them using the words again. They can also give you a substitute of the word sometimes. They are able to write better.

Similarly, for the same re-reading strategy, Analysing words, participant 5 (R5) pointed in her interview that:

It's not just about merely reading comprehension, understanding the text and so on but it has to go further into questioning some of the ideas being put forward, analysing words and sentences and understanding what is left unsaid rather than what is being said. So, that is higher level thinking in not too many words. Thus, literature takes the student further.

The next re-reading strategy, Students answer - shows reading was done prior, was clearly observed in the sixth participant's (R6) class observation, as below:

Lecturer: What are other words in the story that describes Farid? Students: It is challenging... it's sarcastic... logical thinking... childish...

Lecturer: Now we are talking about the characters... who is being protective in the story?

Students: Farid...

Lecturer: Very clearly Farid... Who are is the target of the story?

Students: Pak Seman...

Lecturer: If we are examining the story, Kadijah Hashim actually wants to talk about people, especially people like you, therefore just for this context, you are so close... very close with first semester university students.

The excerpt above clearly indicates that students have done prior reading because they were able to answer the questions which were raised by their lecturers.

RQ 2: How effective are the re-reading strategies in order to help students gain better understanding of the passage?

From the analysis of the excerpts that had been presented earlier, it can be comprehended that Re-read is one of the common, yet important technique that was usually implemented in the reading classes. Re-read as it sounds, was basically the action of reading what has been read again for better understanding. In addition, in the intensive reading classes, re-reading also referred to conveniently analysing words and phrases that were in the reading materials. As such, in this phase, the lecturers' role is considered highly crucial as they needed to read the materials with their students aloud and at the same time, have stops and pauses to define or explain words and phrases to the students. It was known from the interviews that when lecturers do not actively

participate in this stage, students will first, fail to recall and retain information, and second, find it challenging to learn new words and know how they function in that text being read. One interview also clearly revealed that this stage takes time, and this was proven in the class observations that were done, where each short story took almost 2 hours and more. While students actively participated in reading aloud, lectures were also responsible to attend to meaning deriving issues and give details about words that were being used. This is so that students in return, were able to make predictions and guess meaning of upcoming words in the content. At this stage, students were also actively taking part in reading aloud and providing details about the words that were being learnt.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of re-reading strategies would enable students to comprehend reading passages and thus improve their fluency as well as their accuracy in the ESL reading classroom thus enabling them to perform academically well in the ESL reading classroom.

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