Improving Reading Comprehension skill for English Language Learners

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A B S T R A C T

It is a truth that bilingual students learn English differently from foreign language learners because the latter group interacts with many languages. After that, this article concentrates on reading in a second language for English language learners. The use of the first language, culturally disparate schemata, and a lack of vocabulary knowledge are all issues that English language learners must contend with when trying to improve their reading comprehension skills in the language. This article discusses these concerns and offers ideas for English teachers to receive better training. Improving the reading comprehension of English language learners requires cultivating cultural sensitivity, promoting biliteracy, and using explicit instruction in real-world situations. With the help of QuillBot's paraphraser, you can rapidly and effectively rework and rephrase your content by taking your sentences and making adjustments!

Keywords: Foreign language, reading comprehension, culturally different.

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a difficult task. "To construct text meaning based on visually encoded information" is the purpose of reading, according to Koda (2007, p. Readers who read in their first language (L1) only use one language, whereas readers who read in their second language (L2) utilize at least two languages. L2 readers employ different reading strategies than L1 readers due to the following factors, per Carrell and Grabe (2002): the former group has limited language expertise; they lack cultural and social knowledge that is typical in the English setting; they study English for a variety of reasons, such as accommodating English-speaking countries and seeking degrees in these countries, and they do not always maintain earlier knowledge, which is the basis for understanding English materials; they used both L1 and L2.

Because of these distinctions between L1 and L2, L2 readers have more difficulties than L1 readers (Koda, 2007).

The primary topic of this study is English language learners' second-language reading. It seeks to show the difficult problems that English language learners

encounter when developing their reading comprehension skills in English and to offer suggestions for better training for English language learner teachers.

II. DISCUSSION

2.1. Defining Reading Comprehension

Constructing the meaning of the spoken or written information is referred to as reading comprehension. By utilizing "bottom-up" and "top-down" strategies, readers compensate for their incomplete comprehension of the signals (Stanovich, 1980). Readers that use bottom-up strategies concentrate on letters, sounds, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The written words serve as the foundation for developing the meaning. In other words, readers who use this method start by concentrating on more manageable portions of the texts. They frequently don't get the text's full meaning.

On the other hand, top-down approaches are the opposite of bottom-up approaches. Rather than focusing on individual words or analyzing how each word is structured, readers emphasize the whole text passage and look for key information by activating prior knowledge and compensating for meanings of unknown vocabulary. Comprehension involves the ability of understanding the intended messages of a text. Reading comprehension is based on using the appropriate meaning-making processes from the printed messages. Reading comprehension involves the passage, the reader, and the context. Readers construct meanings with various approaches, such as using background knowledge, analyzing words, inferring the text, and identifying key vocabulary or information.

2.2. Challenging Issues English Language Learners Experience

Culturally Different Schemata

Schemata, or background knowledge, display "the relationships among their component elements" and are made up of "generalized information abstracted from a variety of instances" (Koda, 2007, p. 1). Rich schemata on a topic matter are associated with higher reading comprehension, according to earlier research (Hudson, 2007). For instance, it is simpler for readers to anticipate what the text will be about and to integrate their existing knowledge with the passage on "Halloween" when they see a title of a text, such as "Halloween," and if they already know what "Halloween" is. Therefore, rich schemata can aid pupils in comprehending the reading material more effectively than students who lack prior knowledge of the subject.

One of the characteristics of English language learners is that they are not likely to have the same schemata that English-speaking students possess (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). Due to cultural differences, English language learners may have a hard time in understanding the content of a message that is not culturally familiar to them. Singhal (1998) summarized several studies on L1 and L2 reading in terms of cultural differences. She specifically looked at the following variables:

- content/background schema,
- formal/textual schema, and
- linguistic/language schema.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Their inadequate vocabulary knowledge is another difficult problem English language learners face (Garca, 2003). Another essential component for improving reading comprehension is having a strong vocabulary (Hudson, 2007). L2 readers must increase the breadth and depth of their English vocabulary. Because English language learners do not take into account the meaning of the word in context, some

words in the English language can have many meanings and can be confusing. One example is the word of "table." "Table" in the following sentence, "We sit around the breakfast table," means "a piece of furniture." The same word in another sentence, "I kept the whole table entertained with my jokes," indicates the people who are sitting at a table. In the sentence, "Look at the table of contents," "table" means a list of information in a book. Table can also refer to a tablet or plateau. Used as a verb, the sentence, "They tabled a question in Parliament," means to set aside a question for later discussion. Used as an idiom, "The proposal is on the table," "table" means submitted for consideration.

In addition, many English terms have roots in other languages, including Latin and Greek. When evaluating prefixes and suffixes, English language learners frequently experience difficulty. The rules for affixes in English words are inconsistent.. Affixes include prefixes (e.g., anti-, di-, or ultra-) and suffixes (e.g., -able, -ism, or -ness). Some English-language learners study affixes so that they can analyze unknown words and infer their meanings on their own. For example, "in- (or il-, im-, or ir-)" refers to "not" or "the opposite of something." "Infinite" is the opposite of finite. "Inability" is not being able to do something. However, the word "indifferent" does not fit the rule of this particular prefix. English language learners, therefore, need to understand each meaning of the word case by case.

Use of the First Language

According to Carrell and Grabe (2002), L2 reading does not follow the same steps as L1 reading. L2 readers often translate into their mother tongue, especially those who are less proficient. Upton (1997), for instance, looked at two sets of adult Japanese students who were enrolled at an American university. Participants in the study were six less advanced and five more advanced learners, ranging in age from 20 to 36. While reading an English

explanatory piece, they pondered aloud. If they were thinking in English, they spoke out loud in that language. When they were processing in Japanese, they spoke loudly in the language. After the think-aloud activity, the subjects listened to their tape recorded protocols and were interviewed to explain how they were thinking and reading the text. Interviews were conducted in Japanese to clearly identify the participants' intentions.

The findings indicate that students who were less advanced used more Japanese to think aloud than more advanced pupils. To clarify, the former group translated the English passage into Japanese, rephrased English sentences in Japanese to clarify the content of the passage and to understand the meaning of the unfamiliar language. In contrast, the majority of the proficient students used the passage's content to determine the meaning rather than translating the words' meanings. Less experienced students also tended to utilize bottom-up strategies, emphasizing lexical resources and grammatical structure. However, the advanced learners focused on the top-down approaches, such as capturing the whole picture of the text passage and making inferences from prior knowledge. Upton's study supports the findings of the studies conducted by Anderson (1991) and Carrell (1989).

L2 readers typically translate words from English into their native tongue, especially in the beginning stages. Without knowing the definition of each word, they believe they cannot comprehend the meaning of a book. When they come across unfamiliar words, they pause and check a word's definition in a dictionary. There is a chance that by the time they have translated every unfamiliar word into their mother tongue, they won't remember what was said in the text. This drawback may be brought on by employing the bottom-up technique excessively.

2.3. Suggestions for Teachers of English Language Learners

The development of their English reading abilities presents many challenges for English language learners. Their difficulties include using their first language, having little vocabulary knowledge, and having schema that varies between cultures. For enhancement and facilitation of L2 students' English reading comprehension, the following four suggestions are made:

- developing cultural sensitivity,
- encouraging bi-literacy, and
- using explicit instruction in authentic contexts.

Developing Cultural Sensitivity

Being sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of pupils is one of the most crucial and fundamental parts of teaching L2 students. Understanding and respecting cultural variations among pupils is part of being culturally sensitive. Nieto (2000) argues that socioeconomic position, cultural heritage, or a lack of English language ability should not be used to categorize English language learners. Teachers must recognize and value the diversity among their students (Ovando, 2005). One of the fundamental elements of improving kids' academic achievement is offering them a safe learning environment.

It is advised that teachers carefully analyze the reasons why English language learners are having trouble learning the language. These pupils' constructive learning strategies differ from those they used when learning their first language. Additionally, it is advised that teachers communicate with their coworkers to improve their cultural awareness and adapt their lesson plans for English language learners (Nieto, 2000).

Encouraging Bi-literacy

According to Upton's research in the preceding section, English language learners, particularly underachievers, are more likely to check the definitions of words in a textbook using their native tongue. Using L1 is not always detrimental to increasing reading comprehension. In order to acquire English, it is actually advised to use both languages. Biliteracy, or the ability to read and write in two languages, therefore, aids English language learners in their understanding of what they are reading. For example, Jiménez, García, and Pearson (1996) examined the impact of bilingualism and bi-literacy on reading strategies among the sixth or seventh grades of three groups of high-performing bilingual Spanish and English students, of successful monolingual English students, and of low-performing bilingual Spanish and English students in the ESL setting. The researchers used an analysis of four tools:

- a think-aloud protocol,
- an interview,
- an assessment of background knowledge, and
- a text recall.

According to the findings, effective bilingual students employed more top-down strategies than the other groups. Additionally, proficient bilingual pupils used both their first and second languages to make up for reading materials that they didn't grasp. The better bilingual participants also used reading strategies that could be translated between Spanish and English, such as monitoring comprehension, using background knowledge, asking questions, using contexts, and inferring meaning from contexts. For improved reading comprehension, Garca (2003) and Ovando (2005) advise teachers to use both their native and second languages.

Using Explicit Instruction in Authentic Contexts

Another suggestion for teachers of English language learners is to explain reading strategies clearly in meaningful contexts. Rote learning or memorization may not lead students to retain word meaning or grammar for a long period. If English language learners study vocabulary in the context where the word is most likely to be used, and if they can connect

that scenario to their real life experience, authentic learning occurs. This style of instruction enhances students' reading abilities. Using research-based reading strategies clearly is also important. García (2003) presents different studies on how teaching specific reading strategies, such as self-questioning and making inferences, positively influence English language learners' reading outcomes.

III. CONCLUSION

English language learners who absorb information in at least two languages have trouble mastering English reading comprehension. They have little language knowledge and culturally distinct schemata. They are unable to improve their reading since they solely use their first language and exclusively use the bottom-up method. It is critical that their teachers accept each student's unique differences while also understanding them from a cultural, linguistic, and social standpoint. It is also advised to promote biliteracy and provide explicit education in relevant settings. These recommendations support second language learners' reading comprehension not only in reading classes but also in all subject areas where reading is a crucial component of subject-matter knowledge.

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