

THE TEACHING OF READING: READING SKILLS RECOMMENDED FOR TUITION



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Without undermining the roles of other macro language skills (listening, speaking and writing), reading usually receives substantial attention in the teaching of English to students whose primary goal of learning is to be able to read literature or texts in English. In this regard, there are a number of theories teachers should explore before they design a reading course and develop teaching techniques, as these theories may help them developing the course design and its delivery. The theories highlighted in this paper are (1) that problems of EFL reading are language problems and strategy problems, (2) that reading skills may be developed through training, and (3) that training should focus on selected skills. The paper also suggests instructional materials to suit specific areas of study.

1. Introduction

Reading plays an important role in the development of an educated and civilised society (Maryanto, 1998) as most of our knowledge is obtained through reading (Pudjiastuti, 1996:2). This is consistent with Dechant's (1991:vii) claim that educational success requires successful reading. Strevens (1977:64) argues that reading is regarded as a skill of great importance to learners because, other than providing them with a great quantity of further experience of the language, it also gives them a window onto the normal means of continuing his personal education.

For English as a second or foreign language students, reading is an essential skill and, for many of these students, who desire to attend overseas universities, reading is the most important skill to master (Carrell, 1989; Lynch & Hudson, 1991). It is partly for this very reason and partly for other reasons that the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFLIN) has given priority to the development of independent reading ability (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1995:3). In the context of Indonesian national development, reading in English as a foreign language assumes the function of accelerating the absorption, application and the development of science, technology and arts, and the development of international friendship (Madya, 1993:33). According to

Madya (1993:34), the reason is clear: most of the books on science and technology are written in English. This is supported by Tickoo (1995:261) who observes that, for the Asian context, the primary goal of learning English is to gain access to the world's most powerful source of scientific knowledge. Therefore, Tickoo (1995:261) considers English the most important "library language". Despite the important function of EFL reading, however, Djiwandono (1993:49) observes that the current methods of teaching EFL reading in Indonesia fail to promote the students' independent ability to cope with English books. If this failure is confirmed, it also reflects the failure of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. In turn, this failure is likely to hamper the development of the country (Madya, 1993:33-34). This has raised concerns among language teaching experts and educators in Indonesia.

Djiwandono's (1993:49) close look at the TEFLIN reading methods reveals that most of the classroom activities engage the teachers in testing the students' comprehension rather than in *teaching effective reading comprehension strategies*, hands-on, practical ways and tactics of tackling English texts. The teachers focus most of their attention on the product of reading, rather than on the process of achieving the product, the comprehending. Meanwhile Maryanto (1998) sees the need for *effective speed reading skills* as a response to the information explosion accessible through the printed media, but the primary and secondary school curricula have not included skills of speed reading which are prerequisites for an educated community in this era of globalization. He makes an appeal for concrete efforts through strategy training as well as research studies to address vital issues such as effective speed reading and reading habits. Through the development of techniques in teaching effective reading, the educated community in Indonesia may gradually reach the status of a community of readers.

However, developing techniques is a complex process involving consideration of a number of aspects. One of these aspects is the teachers' understanding of issues related to the nature of reading itself. This understanding is paramount, as it will determine the kind of reading course they design and teaching techniques they develop. These issues will be highlighted in the following sections.

2. EFL reading involves both language and strategy problems

While current reading specialists have seen considerable evidence to conclude that there are similarities and differences between first and second or foreign language reading processes (Barnett, 1989; Grabe, 1991), it is necessary to recognize a seminal work of which the basic idea remains unchallenged to the present.

Coady (1979) and Jolly (1978) suggest that the source of success in foreign language reading is reading ability in the first language. Poor first-language readers will read poorly in the foreign language and good first-language readers will read well in the foreign language. In contrast, Yorio (1971) considers poor reading in a foreign language a consequence of inadequate knowledge of the target language. While research evidence from studies conducted by McNamara (1970), Hatch (1973), Barik and Swain (1975), Cowan and Sarmad (1976), and Clarke (1979) reveals that foreign language reading is both a language problem and a reading problem, Alderson (1984:24) suggests, with firmer evidence, that it is more a language problem for those with low levels of foreign language competence, than a reading problem.

This discussion has supported Alderson's stance that reading problems in a foreign language are both problems related to reading skills and problems related to language proficiency. The implication is that EFL reading classes should cater for the development of both language proficiency and reading skills. The question is how much time should be allocated for each?

Responding to the same question, Carrell's (1991) study, with L1 English/L2 Spanish readers and L1 Spanish/L2 English readers, concludes that L1 reading ability and L2 language proficiency are statistically significant predictors of L2 reading ability. Consistent with Alderson's (1984) stance, Carrell (1991) concludes that L2 reading comprehension is more a language problem at low levels of L2 proficiency.

3. Reading skills may be developed through training

A number of the authors (Block, 1986; Djiwandono, 1993; Sugirin, 1995/1999) support the need for strategy training in ESL or EFL reading instruction. This need has been reiterated by Brown, El-Dinary and Pressley (1996:177), who point out that when students are taught to use comprehension strategies, their comprehension improves. Block (1992:338) claims that teaching students that problems exist when reading and that there are ways of solving them may be more important than teaching the meaning of specific words, phrases, and concepts. Process-oriented strategy use seems to be an area of instruction, which would make students independent learners. In short, despite the fact that reading is an individual activity and a personal endeavour, strategy or skill training is necessary, especially for ESL or EFL learners.

4. Training should focus on selected skills

Bossers (1992:189) expressed doubt whether strategy training would enhance effective comprehension strategies for L2 learners. For instance, most L2 learners who finished their academic studies in the country of origin would presumably feel rather annoyed when confronted with exercises aimed at the development of effective reading strategies. However, it must be borne in mind that a great number of ESL and EFL learners, and the majority of EFL learners in Indonesia, in particular, who learn to read in English, have not finished their academic studies. Besides, learners who are annoyed by exercises aimed at the development of a certain skill might still need the skill. The problem might rest with the kind of exercises given, how they are given and the context in which they are presented. Consideration must be given to which strategies have been used successfully and which ones still need further development. This is consistent with Grabe's (1991:393) claim that a major problem with strategy training is that there are so many potential training strategies, interactions with student learning styles, and training contexts. Bossers himself obviously recognised this problem when he commented:

One problematic aspect of the type of reading instruction in which the development of linguistic knowledge and efficient data processing is the central aim, is that "the context of training should resemble the real world context of reading" in order to allow such training to generalize. (Bossers, 1992:189-90)

Therefore, training should focus on certain skills. Among the skills commonly selected for training are those used in intensive reading, critical reading and speed reading. Without undermining the importance of other skills, this paper will focus on the skills commonly employed in intensive reading, speed reading and critical reading.

Due to limited space, definitions, elaborations and further explanations on these three types of reading will be presented separately in transparencies. Examples of the materials and how they are presented can be seen in the handouts provided.

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Appendix 4: Example of Skipping Words in Reading:

Susan loves to cook. She cooks all xxxxx of food, but she likes best to xxxxx cakes. She says making cakes is very xxxxxxx. When she is cooking, she does not xxxxx about work or bad things. She xxxxx only about cake. She can make very beautiful xxxxx with fruit or with xxxxxxxxxx. On Saturdays, when Susan has xxxxx of time, she makes a xxxxxxxxxx good cake. After dinner, the xxxxxxx family sits down xxxxxxx to enjoy Susan's cake.

(Adapted from "Reading Power" by Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1998:184)

Affordable Avanza and Xenia hit RI streets

Japanese carmakers Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) and Daihatsu Motor Co. Ltd., together with their Indonesian partner PT Astra International, launched on Dec. 11 the much-awaited cheap, affordable, multipurpose van (MPV), sending warning signals to their competitors.

The importance of the latest move was signified by the presence of TMC senior managing director Akio Toyoda and Daihatsu president Takaya Yamada at the launch ceremony at Gran Melia hotel.

A mini concert by music groups Dewa and Ratu was added to give a more festive atmosphere to the launch of

the new MPVs, the Toyota Avanza and Daihatsu Xenia. Dewa even composed a special song for the occasion, which was adopted as the advertising jingle.

Novan Iman Santosa

The Jakarta Post
Jakarta

The Avanza and Xenia can be regarded as a further development of the Daihatsu Taruna, a low-end sports utility vehicle (SUV) that is quite popular among young people.

This is already the third time for TMC and Daihatsu

to work together in cobranding efforts in the international market.

Earlier in 2000, both companies launched the Cuore compact sedan in Pakistan, the production of which is carried out by Indus Motor Company.

The second cooperation started in 2001 in Venezuela in the form of the Terios MPV.

The Avanza and Xenia will be sold separately through Toyota's and Daihatsu's own car dealerships, although they will both be manufactured at Astra Daihatsu Motor (ADM) factories.

Astra International has a 37.81-percent share in ADM, while TMC holds a 51-per-

cent share in Daihatsu.

The MPV's body design has a strong link to the Taruna, although the MPVs are more of a family car, while the Taruna is sportier and more macho, with a strong line in the bumper, equipped with a rail guard.



Japanese carmakers Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) and Daihatsu Motor Company (DMC), together with their Indonesian partner PT Astra International, launched multipurpose vans (MPVs) on December 11, 2003. The vans are affordable; therefore, they are much awaited. The vans can be a threat to other car producers unless they can produce cheaper cars.

The TMC senior managing director Akio Toyoda was present at the launch ceremony at Grand Melia Hotel, Jakarta, which marked the importance of the occasion. A mini concert by music groups Dewa and Ratu was added to give a more festive atmosphere to the launch of the new MPVs: the Toyota Avanza and Daihatsu Xenia. Dewa even composed a special song for the advertising jingle.

The Avanza and Xenia can be regarded as a further development of the Daihatsu Taruna, a sports vehicle that is quite popular among young people, while the new MPVs are more of a family car.

This has been the third time for TMC and Daihatsu to work together in producing cars for the international market. They realize that it has been a new trend for companies in some countries to cooperate in producing and marketing their products.

(Adapted from the Jakarta Post)

18 Dec. 2003

Multiple-Choice Questions (for the ADAPTED text)

1. What is the text about?
 - a. The launching of the Toyota and Daihatsu companies
 - b. The arrival of new vehicles
 - c. The development of a new car
 - d. A new trend in car industries
2. What are Avanza and Xenia?
 - a. cars
 - b. sedans
 - c. trucks
 - d. jeeps
3. The word "affordable" most probably means
 - a. beautiful
 - b. large
 - c. expensive
 - d. cheap
4. From the first paragraph, it can be concluded that
 - a. no one wants to buy the vans
 - b. many people want to buy the vans
 - c. the vans threaten the safety of buyers
 - d. people are not sure about the quality of the vans
5. The sentence "The vans can be a threat to other car producers unless they can produce cheaper cars" means
 - a. other companies have to produce cheaper vans in order to be competitive
 - b. the new vans are too expensive for competitive buyers
 - c. people think that cheaper cars mean a threat to quality
 - d. other companies consider quality to be more important than price

6. The new vans are suitable for
 - a. young men b. any purpose c. public transport d. small families
7. Why were Dewa and Ratu at the ceremony?
 - a. to advertise the new product
 - b. to make the situation enjoyable
 - c. to compose a new song
 - d. to entertain the music groups
8. Why was Akio Toyoda present at the ceremony?
 - a. to give a loan to the company
 - b. to deliver an opening speech
 - c. to give a press conference about the company's development
 - d. to indicate that the moment was important
9. Which one is closest to the information in the text?
 - a. Students will probably like the Taruna better than Xenia
 - b. Young people will prefer the Avanza to Taruna
 - c. The Taruna and Xenia are of the same class
 - d. Elder people are more concerned with the model than the price
10. What will happen in the future?
 - a. The automotive industry will not worry about competition
 - b. Cooperation among companies will be common
 - c. The big companies will exploit the small ones
 - d. The Avanza and Xenia will be a threat to the market of sports vehicles

Open-Ended Questions (for the ORIGINAL text)

1. What is the text about?
2. did TMC, DMC and PTAI did recently?
3. What is special about the function of the new cars?
4. How is the response of the prospective buyers to the new cars? How do you know?
5. What is meant by "the latest move" in paragraph 2?
6. Is the latest move important? How do you know?
7. What was the purpose of presenting the mini concert by Dewa and Ratu music groups?
8. What is meant by "the advertising jingle"?
9. How are the new cars compared with the Daihatsu Taruna?
10. What is meant by "co-branding efforts"?
11. Who is going to manufacture the Avanza and Xenia?
12. What do you know about Indus Motor Company?
13. What happened in Venezuela?
14. etc.