

The Effect of Reading Skill on the Students' Linguistic Competence

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Abstract

Reading skills is considered as one of the challenging problems in language. Despite the fact that reading skill is taught in three courses at the Department of English at the Faculty of Education Saber, University of Lahj, students of English still fail to read English texts. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the effect of reading skill on the students linguistic competence. The data collection instruments used to achieve the purposes of this study was a reading test was administered to 10 students in the department of English, faculty of Education-Saber. It consists of a passage and 5 questions. The finding of the study revealed that students had low proficiency level when reading, Thus, Some recommendations for enhancing and improving the students' abilities in reading skill were offered.

Key words: Reading Skills , Linguistic competence, .

المخلص

تعتبر مهارات القراءة من المشاكل اللغوية الصعبة. على الرغم من أن مهارة القراءة تُدرّس في ثلاث دورات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية صبر، جامعة لحج، إلا أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية يواجهون صعوبة في قراءة النصوص الإنجليزية. لذلك هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة تأثير القراءة على الكفاءة اللغوية لدى طلاب المستوى الثاني قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية- صبر، جامعة لحج. وكانت اداة جمع البيانات المستخدمة لتحقيق اغراض هذه الدراسة اختبار القراءة وعليه تم إجراء الاختبار لعشرة من الطلاب قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية التربية- صبر، إذ يحوي الاختبار قطعة تليها خمسة أسئلة، وقد دلت الدراسة أن مستوى إجادة القراءة منخفض لدى الطلاب وبناءً على ذلك اعطيت بعض التوصيات لتعزيز وتطوير قدراتهم في القراءة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارة القراءة، الكفاءة اللغوية.

1. Introduction:

Learning English is very important in life, because it has becomes the commonest language that is spoken and used in human communications in recent age. In non-native speaking countries, it is learnt either as English Second Language or English Foreign Language. It includes four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. These skills can be classified into two main classes: 'productive precedes receptive', which means that students cannot communicate anything without understanding it. Schleppegrell, cited in Alawadi (2017), Classified skills into : productive skills, which are speaking and writing, and receptive skills, which are reading and listening. The productive skills are those skills which produce speech while the receptive skills are those skills which receive

this speech. It can be said that the speech produced by speaking skill is received by listening skill and the speech produce by writing skill is received by reading skill (p.24).

The skills should be looked at as integrated skill to enhance the students' abilities in a language. Reading plays a role in learning English, because it enables learners to practise other skills of English particularly writing. In general, reading is one of the complex language skills in which students face a lot of difficulties. Thus, students should be taught how to use the reading effectively by practicing this skill to facilitate and develop their reading performance.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Reading is one of the four skills of English that cannot be ignored in teaching English as a Foreign Language. Thus, it is, like other skills, taught for the Bachelor of Arts B.A. Students of English in the university of Lahj, Yemen. Moreover, it is more taught than other skills especially in the faculties of education in this university. This may be because the curriculum planners and the designers in this university thought that reading skill is more important than the others. Heidari, Mohammadi, and Niry (2012) stated that reading is more essential than the other three skills (speaking, listening, and writing) since it has got great attention from both teachers and students in the EFL setting. They added that reading is the main activity in the classroom and it is important element to get general information and a piece of complete knowledge about any language.

3. Aim of the Study:

This study aims to shed light on the effects of reading on the students' linguistic competence. It tries to achieve the following aims:

- 1. To investigate the effect of reading on the Yemeni English Foreign Language students' linguistic competence.*
- 2. To what extent are the students of English able to identify the Instructors of texts of reading.*

4. Research Question:

This study tries to find answers to the question:

1. *What is the effect of reading skill on English Foreign Language students' linguistic competence?*
2. *What extent are the students of English are able to identify the instructors of text of reading skill?*

5. Literature Review:

5.0 Introduction:

This section is dedicated to surveying a review of the theoretical background of this research. These studies include issues and concepts related to reading; its definitions, importance, difficulties, Effectiveness of Reading Instruction and the linguistic competence.

5.1 Reading:

Reading is an important skill in language learning. All educated people need reading in many fields of life. But how can students understand texts? They use particular processes and ways to achieve specific purposes. Those processes and ways are called reading strategies such as intensive reading, extensive reading, skimming, Scanning, predicting and so on.

1.a Definitions of Reading:

Reading is one of English skills beside speaking, listening and writing. Nunan (2003), defined reading as "a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning. Richards and Platt (1985,p.306) offered two definitions for reading. (1) Reading is "perceiving a written text to understand its context ",which understanding is referred to as comprehension, and (2), Reading is "saying a written text aloud", which may not necessary involve understanding of its context (p.68).

Reading aloud which may reflect the learner's ability to pronounce words correctly. It is the way to understand written message. Goodman, (1988) identifies reading as "a psycholinguistic process in that It starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by aerator and ends with a meaning"(p.2).

2.a Importance of Reading:

Reading has become an essential skill for success in Faculty and beyond. Most University teachers, for example, assess their students level through their reading work. Beyond Faculty, students can succeed in a job interview, but if their application is reading sheet, they may not get the opportunity.

So, "reading skill is one of great Significance for any successful learning. The art of reading demands continuous reading activities to master it" Bose, (2003) "All educated people need reading in many fields of life. Reading in English, the foreign language (FL) in Yemen, is an important skill from the seven class in the essential school up to the last year in secondary school. It is most important skill in language from other language skills in acquiring language. If student are good in reading, they will be good in other language skills (writing, speaking, and reading. For this reason teachers of English should focus on this skill"(p.12).

3.a Reading Difficulties:

Reading plays a significant role in foreign language learning because it provides students with different aspects of language such as vocabulary, grammar, sentences, paragraphs, and text. However, many students face a lot of difficulties when they read.

Grabe and Stollar (2011) argued that students face some difficulties in reading when the comprehension process of higher level such as processing skills of syntax, semantics, and discourse structures together with higher-order knowledge of text representation and the integration of ideas within the readers' global knowledge and low level such as phonological awareness, word recognition skills, and syntactic awareness are not sufficient. This is because of three reasons: first, the difficulty of the text; second, the linguistics knowledge is in adequate; third, students do not practice how to improve their reading abilities.

4.a Maximizing the Effectiveness of Reading Instruction:

To maximize the effectiveness of my reading instruction, a teacher can firstly try to identify his/her students' needs and interests, their goals, their previous reading experience and their attitudes towards reading. This can be done by conducting a survey Celce-Murcia, (2001). Then he/she has try to present the reading materials that meet the students' needs, levels, interests and which are relevant to their real life (p.190). The teacher should not merely focus on reading activates inside classroom but he/she has to encourage the students to read outside the classroom as much as possible.

Moreover, the teacher is required to teach and train the students some reading strategies, like skimming, summarizing, predicting the coming information of a text, guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words from context, and so on Celce-Murcia, (2001). Another important thing that should be mentioned here is developing the students' motivation to read (p. 195).

5.2 Linguistic Competence:

We can define the concept of "Competence (also termed Competency) as the quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually. In linguistic Competence is closely related to the idea of linguistic Competence as it was decoded by Chomsky (1965), that is, the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by native speaker of a language. It is in contrast to the concept of linguistic performance, the way the language system is used in communication.

All human Competence contribute in one way or another to the language user's ability to communicate and may be regarded as aspects of communicative Competence (or intercultural communicative Competence). It may, however, be useful to distinguish those less closely related linguistic elements were emphasized by Savignon (1983) and Freeman (1986) cited in Ali, (2011) Therefore, it looks important to consider the relationship between linguistic elements and language use. Considering this relation, Krashen (1982) put a distinction between language acquisition and language learning, where the first occurs in consciously in spontaneous events and the second occurs I formal manner consciously. Richards (2006) compared between Communicate Competence (CC) and Grammatical Competence (GC). He stated that GC is important in language learning, but it is not sufficient since one can master the rules and elements of sentence formation but still not effectively able to use language for communicative purpose.

6. Methodology of the study:

This section includes the research design, the population and sample of the study, the instruments used to collect the required data and the data analysis techniques.

6.1 Research design:

The quantitative method is used in this study. The sample of the study was reading pretests to measure the participants' prior knowledge.

After implementing the treatment, the posttests of the instrument (reading test) was taken by the participants to gather information about reading skill that are frequently used by students as well as their attitudes towards reading skills in their academic studies and personal life.

6.2 Sampling:

Ten students of the second year in the English department at the Faculty of Education, Saber, University of Lahj sampling to be the representative sample of the study.

6.3 The Instrument of the study:

The reading test was used as the only procedure to collect the data required to identify the effect of reading in enhancing the sample of the study for answering the test. Davies and Pearse (2000), point out that "tests continue to be the main instrument for evaluation of learning in most teaching situations" (p:171).

The reading test consists of a passage then 5 comprehension questions below was chosen from a crescent course that is taught in the secondary school (pupils' book 3) Republic of Yemen (see Appendix A). The test was administered to the participants in the classroom and their evaluated by the researcher. These three categories can be considered as 'Mean', 'Standard Deviation', and 'Percentage' according to participants' level proficiency.

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Responses of participants were carefully analysed statistically by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations followed by explanation as shown below.

Table 7.2.2 The participants' level proficiency in Reading Test

Questions		Read the following topic to answer the following questions.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage
Marks	Q					
20	A	What are the three form of matter?	10	20.0	4.00	100
20	B	Does gas have a fixed shape?	10	3.20	2.14	80.00
20	C	What do we call the solid form of water?	10	2.30	1.90	70.50
20	D	Choose a suitable title for the topic?	10	1.63	1.21	40,83
20	E	Find the opposite of the following words from the topic, then give the transcription for them 1.Difficult: ----- 2.Big: -----	10	3.31	2.21	88,44
20	Total		10	30.34	2.74	70.33

As shown in Table 7.2.2, The researcher noted that:

Item A, through the students combined answers to it, achieved the mean 20.00, with 100% and a general grade of excellent.

Item B, through the combined answers of the students, achieved the mean 3.20, with 80% percentile, and a general grade of very good.

Item C, through the combined answers of the students, achieved the mean 1.30, with 32.5,% and a general grade of poor.

Item D, through the students combined answers to it, achieved the mean 1.63 with 40.83% with a poor general grade.

Item D, through the combined answers of the students, achieved the mean 3.31, with 88.44%, and with an excellent general.

Through the students combined answers, achieved the mean 14.06, with 70.33%, with a general grade.

It obvious from the above responses in most items that students' answer to these questions was unexpected, as a large percentage of the students' answered in the wrong way, despite the clarification of the questions to them.

8. Findings of the study:

The aims of the study is to identify the effect of reading on EFL students' linguistic competence and limit their challenge. Based on the analysis obtained in the study in relation to the research questions. The first question raised some inquiries about the effective of reading in enhancing the second level EFL students' linguistic competence.

Regarding the research question, the findings are as follows:

The findings obviously revealed that the second level EFL students' instructors perceive the importance of reading skills in developing the students' linguistic competence. It indicates their absence of motivation and self-disregard in improving their linguistic competence, Mailhac (1996) suggested that "to ensure that effective communication take place,....." (p.132). It seems that some students cannot understand what they have read differently and they cannot use their knowledge appropriately. In his study, Ali, (2011) said that "In the meantime, the students themselves are quite complaining about their competence and performance level of students"(p.97). Their responses supported the researcher with an insight information of how they read as well as their linguistic competence by some students for the questions.

9. Recommendations of the study:

To improve the students and to ensure a better situation of reading skill, also provide the students with some basic and important cues to help them learn the process of reading. Accordingly, this study presented some recommendations to address them involved in reading. These are as follows:

- Students should involve some instructions along with the reading tasks. This can raise their awareness towards the process of reading and the different types of reading strategies.
- Designers of reading materials should also take into account a variety of reading tasks representing different types of reading.
- Teachers of English should always give more opportunities to their students in each lesson or lecture to practice linguistic competence in reading.
- It is recommended that teachers should provide their students with a handout in order to prepare lessons and also they should provide their students with some pieces of advice, procedures and techniques of how to learn and read.
- It is recommended that teachers should always give their students diagnostic tests on reading, such as filling the gaps with their own words.

10. Conclusion:

Generally, learners lack the linguistic knowledge as well as awareness of use of strategies of reading skill, refusal appropriately according to native speaker's expectations.

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Appendix (A)

Read the following topic to answer the following questions.

In science, the word 'matter' is used to describe what thing are made of ? matter comes in three different forms, called states: solid, liquid and gas. Solid have affixed shape that cannot easily be changed, liquid have no affixed shape and can only be picked up in container. Gases are even less easy to hold. They have to be kept in close containers or they will escape into the air and spread very quickly. For example, you will soon be able to smell gas over your house even if their a small leak in the gas container in your kitchen.

Questions:

- A. What are the three forms of matter?
- B. Does gas have a fixed shape?
- C. What do we call the solid form of water ?
- D. Choose a suitable title for the topic?
- E. Find the opposite of the following words from the topic, then give the transcription for them:
 - i. Difficult: -----
 - ii. Big: -----

Good luck