

**THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING READING: IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL CONTEXT EMPHASIZED ON READING FLUENCY AND ACCURACY**

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**Abstract:** Current methods for teaching reading comprehension tend to emphasize the products of comprehension and neglect the processes of comprehension. Teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice English in teaching reading. During teaching reading in a class teachers may confuse to give exercises relate to fluency or accuracy. The correlation between fluency and reading comprehension showed a significant positive relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension performance. Therefore, automaticity of decoding fluency is essential for high levels of reading achievement. Assessing reading fluency, teachers need to listen to students read aloud to make judgments about their progress in reading fluency. In other side, teaching reading in accuracy exercises encourage a thoughtful use of language and the information is intended to help students understand how English works.

**Keywords:** reading, fluency, accuracy, and comprehension

**INTRODUCTION**

Problems in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) relates to both teachers and learners. This problem is partly affected by teaching methods. Lochana and Deb (2006), they state that most EFL teachers teach language by lecturing and focusing on grammatical rules instead of language use. It is much more effective to teach language from context and meaning (Ellis, 2003). Teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice English. To make the situation worse, both teachers and learners frequently use Indonesian language throughout English classes. According to Ruso (2007), learners do not like teachers who spend most of class time lecturing. Lecturing time de-motivates them because they do not like being passive in class. Consequently, learners have limited input to the learning process. Learners face various additional difficulties in learning English. Many EFL learners cannot effectively use English in conversation or correspondence with others. According to Xiao (2009), EFL learners avoid employing target language and cannot apply it in genuine communication. Hashim (2006) shows that learning a language flourishes most when learners are in a positive environment and are given opportunities to communicate in authentic situations.

Accordingly, it has been suggested that teachers abandon the traditional teaching

approach and replace it with communicative language teaching (Lochana and Deb, 2006). Current methods for teaching reading comprehension tend to emphasize the products of comprehension and neglect the processes of comprehension. There are two sets of skills that are particularly important to teach. The first set includes comprehension monitoring skills that involve readers' monitoring their continuing processing for possible comprehension failure and taking remedial action when failures occur. Comprehension failures can occur at various levels, including: particular words, particular sentences, relations between sentences, and relations between larger units. For each kind of failure, there are specific remedial actions readers can take. The second set of processing skills that can be taught involves using clues in the text to generate, evaluate, and revise hypotheses about current and future events in the text. In teaching these processing skills, the teacher should first model these skills by reading and thinking aloud and then gradually turn over the processing responsibilities to the students.

As defined by Alyousef (2005) Reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (through top-down processing).

## **DISCUSSION**

The Importance of Reading Fluency Fluent reading comprises three key elements: accurate reading of connected text at a conversational rate with appropriate prosody or expression (Hudson, Mercer, and Lane, 2000). A fluent reader can maintain this performance for long periods of time, can retain the skill after long periods of no practice, and can generalize across texts. A fluent reader is also not easily distracted and reads in an effortless, flowing manner. The most compelling reason to focus instructional efforts on students becoming fluent readers is the strong correlation between reading fluency and reading comprehension (Allington, 1983; Johns, 1993; Samuels, 1988; Schreiber, 1980). Each aspect of fluency has a clear connection to text comprehension. Without accurate word reading, the reader will have no access to the author's intended meaning, and inaccurate word reading can lead to misinterpretations of the text. Poor automaticity in word reading or slow, laborious movement through the text taxes the reader's capacity to construct an ongoing interpretation of the text. Poor prosody can lead to confusion through inappropriate or meaningless groupings of words or through inappropriate applications of expression.

Assessing reading fluency

Teachers need to listen to students read aloud to make judgments about their progress in reading fluency (Zutell and Rasinski, 1991). Systematic observation helps

assess student progress and determine instructional needs. Teachers observing students' oral reading fluency should consider each critical aspect of fluent reading: word-reading accuracy, rate, and prosody.

#### Teachers' Transferring Their Roles

With more and more attention being focused on improving students communicative competence, the roles teachers have to play must be redefined. The best teachers are usually the ones who impart an attitude or an orientation related to the acquisition of mental abilities, or who are associated with the particular values that one finds personally motivating and inspirational. Specifically speaking, lecturers should take on the following roles in modern

#### English classroom teaching.

First, instead of being the dominating authority in the classroom, lecturer must become learning facilitators to facilitate the communicative process between all participants in the classroom and between these participants and the various activities and texts (Breen and Candlin, 1980), giving guidance and advice when necessary. Lecturer should also act as interdependent participants within the learning-teaching group (Breen and Candlin, 1980), which means that Lecturer need to perceive students as having important contributions to make, and then Lecturer must continually seek potential and exploit and actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching with them. Lecturer must realize that any unnecessary intervention from us may prevent them from becoming genuinely involved in the activities and thus hinder the development of their communicative skills. However, this does not necessarily mean that lecturer should be passive observers. Instead, lecturer should develop students' potential through external direction and help them develop their distinctive qualities. Second, just as lecturer want students to be life-long learners, lecturer must exhibit a passion for learning, a desire and an aptitude to continue discovering new knowledge and exemplify by constantly refreshing educators' knowledge and skills to keep abreast with the latest developments in educators' area of specialization. Third, to keep pace with the times, lecturers also need to be creative and innovative in integrating educators' teaching with thinking and learning processes. Lecturer must give students more opportunities for expression and provide an environment where creativity can flourish. And lecturer must encourage students to question and to express their thoughts freely so that they will have inquisitive minds.

Teachers' Equipping Themselves with Knowledge and Appropriate Teaching Methods Lecturers must know something about linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, education and so on, and be able to demonstrate the target language with enough accuracy, but lecturer are also expected to know a variety of teaching methodologies, correct ways to research, and some basic principles of testing. Lecturer must realize that it is obligatory for lecturers to adopt different methods when dealing

with different teaching materials and when faced with students with different levels of English proficiency. To achieve the purpose, lecturer must enrich knowledge of English and improve educators' English skills by various means such as listening to programs in English, watching English programs on TV and surfing the English versions of various news items on the Internet frequently. In a word, to improve students' oral proficiency, lecturer should try every possible means to make ourselves walking encyclopedias so that lecturer can teach any student anything with skill and ease.

#### Attaching Equal Importance to Both Accuracy and Fluency Exercises

As is mentioned above, accuracy and fluency are so closely related that they are inseparable. Skehan (1998) proposed that because learners have a limited capacity of attention, there could be trade-off effects between accuracy and fluency. That is, when attention is paid to accuracy, fluency is likely to suffer and vice versa (Patanasorn, 2010). So attaching equal importance to both accuracy and fluency exercises is a must. Accuracy exercises encourage a thoughtful use of language and the information is intended to help students understand how English works, while fluency exercises invite them to take the parts of different characters when role-playing and to continue a dialogue in their own way, that is, the fluency exercises encourage free expression. Doing accuracy exercises does not mean 100% error-free, but a high degree of accuracy is required, and as a result, students are encouraged to make as few errors as possible and to manipulate the language as spontaneously and flexibly as possible.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with people's attention being focused more and more on the oral proficiency of English learners, teachers have realized the urgency of shifting their emphasis from form to use and communicative language principles are subscribed to. But the reality is that linguistic competence continues to be emphasized while there is no corresponding change in the classroom teaching modes and teaching methods. Hence, what educators should do now is conscientiously try to shift educators' attention from emphasizing the accuracy of students' oral presentation to developing their ability to express themselves both accurately and fluently in English, for which educators can employ various means such as combining grammar-translation method and communicative approach, transferring teachers' roles, and attaching equal importance to both accuracy and fluency exercises.

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