



FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO POOR READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN SECONDARY THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

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Article Received on 05/08/2017

Article Revised on 25/08/2017

Article Accepted on 15/09/2017

ABSTRACT

The present study discuss factors that contribute to poor reading comprehension skills in secondary third grade students. The aim of this study is to find out those factors and put appropriate solutions. To fulfill the aim of the study, the researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical approach in this study. The data of this study collect by test and questionnaire. Test given to students and questionnaire given to English teachers The results showed that there are many factors that contributed to poor reading comprehension skills and the most important contributing factors are the weak student's vocabulary and elicitation skills as well as their poor prior knowledge, grammar and motivation to read. The study suggested some recommendations to solve all these problems and stressed on encouraging the students and using different motivations to increase their interest in reading comprehension, as the desire to learn is the basis of success.

KEYWORDS: Reading, Reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, motivation, prior knowledge.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study concerns with exploring factors that contribute to poor reading comprehension skills in secondary third grade students and it goes on to suggest solutions that improve reading comprehension skills for student and how teach this skills.

Nowadays English learning is essential because English is the international communication medium. The language is necessary for different activities, including education, politics, and socio-economics (Medgyes, 1994; Mckay, 2002). In Sudan English language is the second commonest language. It has been studied in all stages of education, starting from primary schools up to university level. It is considered an essential subject, and in order to be well understood the students are required to master the four skills of language specially reading comprehension skills.

Reading is ability to read words by translating written symbols into the sounds of spoken language. Reading one of the single most important skills that a person can possibly acquire. It is generally taught at very young age, beginning before kindergarten.

Reading comprehension is considered a fundamental and indispensable skill in learning English as second language, but also in all other languages. Reading comprehension instruction helps students understand

written language, and also it develops the knowledge, skills and experience they must have if they are to become competent and enthusiastic readers. Without comprehension, reading is nothing more than tracking symbols on a page with your eyes and sound them out. Reading comprehension occurs when reader extracts and combines different types of information from the read text and makes a link between the new information and the already known ones (Koda, 2007). This process is so complex and requires multiple cognitive skills and stored memory. in this paper we will discuss the difficulties and troubles which face students in understanding the texts.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out the factors that contribute to poor reading comprehension.
2. To emphasize the importance of implementing modern effective methods to improve reading comprehension.
3. To improve reading skills of students.
4. To propose solutions for improvement.

Questions of the study

The study will provide answers for the following questions:

- What are the factors that contribute to poor reading comprehension?

- How can the use of modern methods improve reading comprehension?
- To what extent, the reading skills improve other linguistic skills?
- What suggestions can help to achieve improvement?

Hypotheses of the study

The following are the hypotheses of this study:

If the factors that contribute to reading comprehension are found out, the suggestions can improve the students reading comprehension skills.

Significance of the study

This study carries immense significance in different aspects. It will yield useful data relating to reading skills. Suggestions and recommendations from this study are expected to be very useful for improving reading comprehension and teaching reading methodologies. The research will go a long way to improve English reading skills in secondary schools. This study will help the authors of syllabus to add suitable reading materials in the books, which may prove helpful in improving reading comprehension. This study will also enable the authorities concerned to analyze the difficulties, problems and factors blocking the way of reading comprehension.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently, psycholinguists, educational psychologists, reading researchers, and theorists viewed that comprehension is multifaceted and complex process which is directly related to readers' cognition. According to Bormuth (1969) cited in Harris and Sipay (1980), "comprehension ability is thought to be a set of generalized knowledge-acquisition skills which permit people to acquire and exhibit information gained as a consequence of reading language."^[1] Reading comprehension is a complex process and no one has yet been able to identify the components of reading comprehension. However, in comprehending a text a reader first needs to associate correctly meanings with words, organization and retention of meanings, and ability to grasp the entire meaning of the text (Cain & Oakhill, 2006).^[2]

There are multiple reasons why some students have difficulty with reading comprehension. Some students have difficulties because they have not truly mastered reading fluently. When a student who is struggling to read words and focuses so hard on just saying the words correctly, they are not focusing on what they are reading. All of their cognitive ability is being put into properly calling out the correct words and little effort it put into the meaning of what is being read. by Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger (2010) states: Fluency combines accuracy, automaticity, and oral reading prosody, which, taken together, facilitate the reader's construction of meaning.^[3]

Vocabulary knowledge also plays an important role in reading comprehension. Reading a language and comprehending it require that one possess sufficient vocabulary. Martin-Chang and Gould (2008) find a strong correlation both between vocabulary and reading comprehension and between reading rate and primary print knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge is essential in reading comprehension because it has a similar function to back-ground knowledge in reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge helps students in decoding, which is an important part of reading (Qian, 2002).^[4] In the study by Bromley (2004) reports that vocabulary knowledge promotes reading fluency, boosts comprehension, improves achievement and enhances thinking and communication.^[5] However, if a student is reading does not understand what the majority of the words mean then it is going to be very difficult for them to understand what they are reading. Individuals who have comprehension problems generally have a more limited vocabulary than those who do not have comprehension problems (Joshi, 2005).^[6]

Poor reading comprehension may also be related to a lack of prior experiences. prior knowledge is an important aspect to successful reading. In second language research, there is evidence that having this prior knowledge plays a significant role in comprehension (Brantmeier, 2005; Hammadou, 1991, 2000; Johnson, 1982; Lee, 1986; Nassaji, 2003; Pulido, 2004, 2007). For example, Johnson (1982) finds that a lack of cultural familiarity in ESL students has a greater impact on reading comprehension of a passage on Halloween than the pre-teaching of vocabulary.^[7] Lee (1986) has studied the effects of background knowledge in reading, understanding and recalling of text in second language learners and finds that the learners' ability to recall is enhanced when they are presented with one of the three components of background knowledge, context, transparency, and familiarity.^[8] Anderson and Pearson (1984) demonstrate that readers who possess rich prior knowledge about the topic of a reading often understand the text better than their classmate with limited prior knowledge.^[9]

Another factor influence reading comprehension motivation to read, some of students have no interest in reading. A variety of studies have demonstrated that students who are motivated to read and engage frequently in reading activities have better reading comprehension skills and achieve at higher levels in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, Cox, Metsala 1999).^[10]

Cramer and Castle (1994) even suggested that attention to the affective aspects of reading, such as motivation, may help combat the increasing disaffection from reading.^[11] importance of motivation to read for adolescent readers is widely recognized, there is very limited research on unmotivated students, and tools and strategies that teachers can utilize with those students to encourage long lasting motivation to read (Guthrie,

2008). Secondary teachers who work with students with low motivation for reading in their classes can end up spending a substantial amount of time controlling behavioral problems. Due to high content area demands from teachers, secondary students rarely receive instructional support to increase their motivation and engagement in reading activities (Guthrie, 2008).

1.3 THE METHODOLOGY APPROACH SELECTION

To fulfill the aim of the study, the researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical approach in this study. The descriptive approach was represented in the theoretical framework discussed in previous chapters. In the analytical approach, the researcher has followed the quantitative approach in achieving data collection and analysis. The quantitative approach is believed to give an overall look at the phenomenon the study tackles.

Tools and Instruments

The main aim of this study is to investigate “Factors That Contribute to poor Reading Comprehension Skills” and to achieve this aim the researcher has designed a questionnaire for the teacher in Marawi locality secondary schools to give their responses. The researcher believes that the instruments used can give the desired indication of the problem being tackled.

The questionnaire

The aim of designing the questionnaire is to obtain some responses from the samples and get some overall findings about the study topic. The questionnaire consists of 20 items divided upon the three hypotheses of the research. The Likert Scale was used in designing the choices of each statement which range between (“Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree”). The statements of the questionnaire were designed carefully to focus on the problem being tackled.

The Test

The Reading comprehension skills test has been designed as another method of collecting data to suit the level of the student. It include diagnostic and achievement testing program in which the researcher wants to find out the strength and the weakness of subjects in addition to their level of achievement in certain course. The researcher prepares suitable place and time for the students to do the test in their own free will. The test for each skill (Reading comprehension, vocabulary, Sentence sequencing, Syntactic similarities), they are relevant to the spine series. It is written clearly in A4 papers together with the guidance statements which will help students to progress their Reading comprehension skills. Student are allowed to select the topic which they are able to write about. (Appendix B).

Population of the Study

The population of this study is the teachers and students of high secondary schools.

Study sample

The sample of the study consists of 30 teachers in Marawi locality, who actually take part in answering the questionnaire. The sample of the study also comprised 200 male and female students of the three secondary school- grade. Those students from eight classes, the male four classes and female four classes. In each class there is a control in order to students' enquiries if there is ambiguity in understanding of questions.

1.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of questionnaire

Table 1: Show frequency that researcher collected from sample study Questionnaire Answers (Part one: Curriculum and syllabus (Spine 6)).

| Statement | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 33 | 15.7 |
| Agree | 81 | 38.6 |
| Neutral | 15 | 7.1 |
| Disagree | 75 | 35.7 |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 2.9 |
| Total | 210 | 100 |

Table 2: Show frequency that researcher collected from sample study Questionnaire Answers (Part two: Learning and teaching environment)).

| Statement | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 23 | 25.5 |
| Agree | 50 | 55.6 |
| Neutral | 8 | 8.9 |
| Disagree | 8 | 8.9 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 90 | 100 |

Table 3: Show frequency that researcher collected from sample study Questionnaire Answers (Part three: Teacher).

| Statement | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 33 | 27.5 |
| Agree | 62 | 51.6 |
| Neutral | 8 | 6.7 |
| Disagree | 13 | 10.8 |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 3.3 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

Table 4: Show frequency that researcher collected from sample study Questionnaire Answers (Part four: Student).

| Statement | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 57 | 31.7 |
| Agree | 73 | 40.6 |
| Neutral | 15 | 8.3 |
| Disagree | 29 | 16.1 |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 3.3 |
| Total | 180 | 100 |

Table 5: Show Mean, Std. Deviation, Weight Cases, T. Test & Sig that researcher collected from sample study Questionnaire Answers.

| NO | Categories | Mean | Std. deviation | Weight Cases | T Test | Sig |
|----|----------------|------|----------------|--------------|--------|--------------|
| 1 | Category1 | 3.3 | 1.1 | 65.7 | 17.10 | 0.000 |
| 2 | Category2 | 4.0 | 0.9 | 79.1 | 24.12 | 0.000 |
| 3 | Category3 | 3.9 | 1.0 | 77.9 | 21.49 | 0.000 |
| 4 | Category4 | 3.8 | 1.1 | 76.2 | 21.55 | 0.000 |
| | All Categories | 3.8 | 1.0 | 74.7 | 21.06 | 0.000 |

T value Tabular at the level of significance of (0.05) and the degree of freedom (29) equal to (1.697)

Table 1: The analysis of this statement shows that (15.7%) of the respondents strongly agree with this item, beside (38.6%) of the respondents who agree with same statement. (7.1%) of the respondents are not sure about it. And (35.7%) of the respondents disagree with the above statement. And (2.9%) of the respondents Strongly disagree with the above statement. This shows that (54.3%) agree with this statement compared with only (38.6%) who disagree. The conclusion shows that: if the factors that contribute to reading comprehension are found out, the suggestions can improve the students reading comprehension skills.

Table 2: The analysis of this statement shows that (25.2%) of the respondents strongly agree with this item, beside (55.6%) of the respondents who agree with same statement. (8.9%) of the respondents are not sure about it. And (8.9%) of the respondents disagree with the above statement. And (1.1%) of the respondents Strongly disagree with the above statement. This shows that (80.8%) agree with this statement compared with only (10.0%) who disagree.

Table 3: The analysis of this statement shows that (27.5%) of the respondents strongly agree with this item, beside (51.6%) of the respondents who agree with same statement. (6.7%) of the respondents are not sure about

it. And (10.8%) of the respondents disagree with the above statement. And (3.3%) of the respondents Strongly disagree with the above statement. This shows that (79.1%) agree with this statement compared with only (14.1%) who disagree.

Table 4: The analysis of this statement shows that (31.7%) of the respondents strongly agree with this item, beside (40.6%) of the respondents who agree with same statement. (8.3%) of the respondents are not sure about it. And (16.1%) of the respondents disagree with the above statement. And (3.3%) of the respondents Strongly disagree with the above statement. This shows that (72.3%) agree with this statement compared with only (19.4%) who disagree.

The result of the students Test: The table below displays the results of the test of Reading comprehension skills which provided to the third class of the secondary schools in Marawi locality.

Table 6: Shows the Frequency & percentage of the male and female who distributed them to the test.

| Statement | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Male | 80 | 40.0 |
| Female | 120 | 60.0 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |

Table 7: Shows the percentage of students in each skill.

| Degrees | Reading comprehension | Vocabulary | Sentence sequencing | Syntactic similarities |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 100-90% | 0.5% | 66.0% | 22.5% | 25.5% |
| 89.9-80% | 7.0% | 0 | 2.5% | 0 |
| 79.9-70% | 5.5% | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 69.9-60% | 20.5% | 0 | 13.5% | 0 |
| 59.9-50% | 6.5% | 16% | 0 | 0 |
| Less than 50 | 60.0% | 18% | 61.5% | 74.5% |

Table 8: explore the mean and the standard deviation for each skill.

| Statement | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Reading comprehension | 200 | 38.8000 | 24.60870 |
| vocabulary | 200 | 74.0000 | 39.13641 |
| Sentence sequencing | 200 | 47.2500 | 34.78487 |
| Syntactic similarities | 200 | 25.5000 | 43.69550 |

The test was distributed to 200 students in different schools in Marawi locality. It includes four questions and

each question tests special skill. The first question tests the ability of students to understand directly from the context of passage, the second question is responsible for vocabulary or meaning of words. The third question tests their ability to organize the sentences and the last question is concerned with syntactic. In the first question, 0.5% of the total number of students achieved 90-100 degrees, 7% between 80-89, 5.5% between 70-97, 20.5% between 60-69, 6.5% between 50-59, 60% less than 50 degrees. The mean (m) of percentage of this skill is 38.8000 and Std. Deviation is 24.60870. In the second question 66% of the total number of students

scored 90-100 degrees, 16% between 50-59 and 18% less than 50. The mean of percentage of this skill is 74.0000 and Std. Deviation is 39.13641. In the third question 22.5% scored between 90-100 degrees, 2.5% between 80-89, 13.5% between 60-69, 61% less than 50. The mean of percentage of this skill is 47.2500 and std. deviation is 34.78487. In the last question 25.5 achieved 90-100 degrees and 74.5% less than 50. The mean of percentage of this skill is 25.5000 and the Std. Deviation is 43.69550.

After asking students questions related to the passage reflecting their ability of reading and comprehension and discovering the weak points, I asked them to write down the most difficult challenges that they encountered during their task specifically and the passages in spine^[6] in particular. Their answers to this questions differ from student to another. Most of them complained from difficult vocabulary, some of them experienced a problem with reading and pronunciation of some difficult words and some of them were able to read but they could not understand the context.

1.4 Findings of the study

This study has reached into the following factors that affected negatively on reading comprehension skills:

- Lack of motivation of students.
- Their poor vocabulary and reading skills.
- Weak elicitation skills of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encouraging students by using different methods to increase their desire to read.
- Selection of attractive texts suitable for their interests and allowing good opportunities for them to practice daily reading.
- Using cooperative (group discussion) to improve reading comprehension skills.
- Using of multi- media in presentations, will help both teachers and students.
- Encouraging students to read a lot of books in individual basis, which will improve their vocabulary and all other reading comprehension skills.
- The teachers should read the words or text properly and exploring the meanings of these words in an interactive manner with the students.
- Paying special attention to improve methods of teaching grammar.
- Adherence to teaching plan and proper management of time factor will help in evaluation of all students.
- Training students in certain strategies which help them in understanding the passage, like how to elicit the meaning from the general text.
- Using adequate pictures and diagrams which will aid the students to understand the passage.
- Reading drills should be of different varieties and including all reading skills.

- Provision of school books to all students in order to adhere to their home work and being supported at home by their parents or older siblings.
- Proper configuration of the internal (at school) and external (at home) environment for students.
- Improve training and qualification of the teachers so as to convey reading skills in a proper way.
- Integration teach reading comprehension skills with other language skills.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, we would like to present in summarized manner the results of this study. The study revealed that, they are a lot of factors that contributed to poor reading comprehension skills and the most important contributing factors are the weak student's vocabulary and elicitation skills as well as their poor prior knowledge, grammar and motivation to read. The study suggested some recommendations to solve all these problems and stressed on encouraging the students and using different motivations to increase their interest in reading comprehension, as the desire to learn is the basis of success.

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