

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN EFL WRITING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Reading competency is a critical element to be success in learning in university level. This study aims to measure reading proficiency levels of first year students using five-component skills involving measures of (1) vocabulary knowledge, (2) drawing inferences and predictions, (3) knowledge of text structure and discourse organization, (4) identifying the main idea and summarizing skills, and (5) identifying supporting information. The participants are 117 freshmen undergraduate students, 73 students from Nursing Faculty and 44 students from Cultural Sciences Faculty majoring Japanese language enrolled at the Universitas Padjadjaran in academic year 2016-2017. The data are collected through a reading comprehension pre-test. The results of this study indicate that there is a mixed and wide variation of students reading competency levels when students' first enter the university and that a significant number of first year entrants are inadequately prepared for university reading.

Keywords: *reading competency, reading proficiency level, students of Unpad*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading competency is a pivotal element to success in university level. This critical skills enabling students to gain knowledge from textbooks and other material written in English (Ntereke & Ramoroka, 2016). Thus, reading competency becomes a compulsory learning outcome included in the English for freshmen undergraduate students course in Universitas Padjadjaran in 2016/2017 academic year. In order to measure students' reading proficiency, a reading test is administered to the first year students from two faculties, Cultural Sciences and Nursing at Universitas Padjadjaran. The participants of this study are 117 students. The test was held in the first week of the semester academic year 2016-2017.

The pre-reading comprehension test used in the present study is chosen from the third section of the TOEFL model test, the *Reading Comprehension section*. The test takers are required to read a three-paragraph passage followed by reading comprehension questions about the information given in the reading passages including main idea questions, directly answered detail questions, and implied detail questions and vocabulary questions to identify the meanings of vocabulary words. Each question has four suggested answers marked A, B, C and D. Therefore, the score of the test can reflect the students' reading proficiency in English. To avoid creating an advantage to individuals in any one field of study, sufficient context is provided so that no subject-specific familiarity with the subjects.

The reading pre-test should be finished within 10 minutes. There are altogether ten questions in the form of multiple choices and the total marks are 10. The participants will be classified into the high-proficiency level (Level H), the intermediate level (Level I) and the low-proficiency level (Level L) according to the scores they get in this test. The subjects whose scores are above 7 are categorized as high-proficiency readers and those who get the score between 5 and 7 are intermediate-proficiency readers. Those subjects who score below 5 are considered low-proficiency readers. Results also reveal that identifying specific information, vocabulary knowledge, and drawing inferences contributed greatly to the distinction of three proficiency levels.

The purpose of this study is to examine reading proficiency as EFL using five different comprehension component skills among EFL university undergraduates' students. This is a preliminary study for constructing a teaching model that will be applied in different faculties in

Universitas Padjadjaran. Different faculties have different knowledge background so that the focus of the reading skills component need to be adjusted based on the students' capabilities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Text Comprehension

The important component in mastering knowledge of a major in university is the ability of reading the sources most of which are written in English. According to Stanovich, reading comprehension covers the efficient application of lower-level processes consisting of “phonological awareness, word recognition skills, and syntactic awareness, all of which are crucial for the development of successful reading comprehension” (Stanovich, 1986). It also involves higher-level processingskills of “syntax, semantics, and discourse structures together with higher-order knowledge of textrepresentation and the integration of ideas within the readers' global knowledge” (Grabe, 2009;Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Therefore, readers need to integrate and combine a variety of cognitive,linguistic, and non-linguistic skills and processes for efficient and successful text comprehension.

There are several reading comprehension models, one of which is Construction-Integration (CI) model (Kintisch 1998; Kintisch & van Dijk, 1978) and it is considered as the most current and valid model. The CI model gives two kinds of models: a text model of reader comprehension and a situation model of reader interpretation. Comprehension in the text model happens at both local and global levels. In local level processes (micro-structure), readers gain knowledge from nouns, predicates, and modifiers to build sentence-level understanding. Meanwhile, in global level processes (macrostructure), they obtain language knowledge through cohesion and text structure to understand sentence-level relationships and finally to understand the whole text. In this process, inferences are made from the content of the text and then it can help readers in creating a text-based model of understanding.

These local and global level can strengthen or weaken the comprehension process. Readers can comprehend a text fluently when they build a text model of understanding the text and at the same time create a situation model of text interpretation, by inserting their prior knowledge on the topic to disentangle and infer the knowledge in the text so that they can develop their own interpretations of the text. This individual interpretations are also affected by other factors: “Based on a number of factors such as the readers' goals, prior knowledge, the purpose of reading, genre activation, evaluation of the importance of information, and attitudes toward the writer, readers construct independent interpretations of the text” (Grabe, 2009). In other words, this two-level text-processing model combines both what the author wants to explain and how the reader interpret the text information. To be able to get fluent text comprehension, readers also combines the lower-level and higher-level processing skills, so they manage to recognize words, syntactic parsing, and proposition formation and integration, along with identifying text structure, discourse organization, inference generation, and such (Kintisch, 1998; Grabe, 2009). These processes could be achieved by fluent readers only, and if they could not do this, they must get a more strategic process (Kintisch, 1998).

Vocabulary Knowledge

In a research, it is stated that there is strong relationships between vocabulary and the comprehension of the text (Qian, 2002). Word recognition and understanding the relationships of nouns, predicate and modifiers (the lower-level of text model or the microstructure/local level process in reading comprehension) give much contribution to find the main ideas of the text. Some researchers say that it is necessary for a reader to know 95% of the words on one page (Laufer, 2001; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000), and others state that a university student must have 10,000 (Hazenber & Hulstijn, 1996) to 20,000 word families (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

Identifying Main Ideas

In comprehending a text, readers need to know the main ideas in the text so that it will be easier for them to understand other information in details. To identify main ideas, readers require a lot of understanding in “vocabulary, basic grammar, effective comprehension strategies, strategic processing abilities to maintain a high level of comprehension, and an awareness of discourse

structure” (Grabe, 2009; Pressley, 2002). Understanding the main idea in the text assists the readers to draw conclusions and interpret the content of the text.

Drawing Inferences

Sometimes readers have to find some implicit information in a text. They need to ‘read between the lines’ for some writers do not state all information in detail. In inferring hidden information, readers may utilize their prior knowledge or general knowledge about the topic. Grabe states that “Inference generation is also involved in the text model of comprehension where readers identify different ways of making connections between ideas from different parts of the text to capture explicit meaning with the use of their prior knowledge”. (Grabe, 2009). In a situation model of reader interpretation, the reader has to disentangle, predict, or find causality from the information stated explicitly in the text (Kintsch, 1998). According to researchers in EFL context, inference generation is categorized as higher-level process and the most difficult skill for non-English learners (Collins & Tajika, 1996; Muramoto, 2000; Shimizu, 2002).

Identifying Specific or Supporting Information

Not only main ideas, readers need to identify supporting information as well. According to Grabe, comprehending supporting or detailed information to the main idea means that the readers require to know vocabulary, grammar, discourse and text structure, effective comprehension strategies, and effective strategic processing abilities (Grabe, 2009). Readers could find supporting information when they succeed identifying the interaction around a text.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

The results indicate different weights for the variables in characterizing the high, intermediate and low-level readers. These results indicate that these three groups are qualitatively different from one another. Results show a positive linear relationship between all five-component skills and the reading performance among the three groups indicating that as the readers became more skilled, there was a great match between their performance on the component skills and their respective reading comprehension performance.

In all the component skills of reading, the low-level group was found to score statistically lower than their proficient counterparts. Results reveal that both high and intermediate groups performed items on identifying specific information the best followed by the items on vocabulary and text structure and discourse knowledge. The items on specific idea identification are not as challenging for high and intermediate groups as they were skilled in locating where the specific information in the text was by engaging in the search process that usually includes scanning and skimming. However, the lower group still found it difficult to do so. Knowledge on vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure together with effective comprehension strategies and strategic processing abilities are required to locate the specific information related to the main idea. Therefore, lower-level students’ deficiency in these abilities would account for their low performance in these tasks.

Results also find that the lower level students perform best on vocabulary items followed by the items on main idea identification. Lower level students also perform comparatively better on main idea identification tasks than other higher-order component tasks. Even the intermediate and high-level groups perform better on these items than the low-level group as they could determine what the text is about by skimming under the time pressure. However, we should note here that items on summarization skills were included in this category. An in-depth analysis of individual items show that all three groups almost perform well on main idea identification items but perform very poorly on items on summarization skills. Summarization tasks given in the test involved compression processes together with attentional processes only within a paragraph; however, we should note here that these are multiple-choice items not meant to test their productive skill in summarization but test how they could condense the meaning of a specific paragraph or determine to label a specific paragraph with an appropriate subtitle.

Tabel 1. Percentage of incorrect answer based on topic questions

No	Reading skills	Mean percentage of incorrect answers (%)	
		Nursing Faculty	Cultural Science Faculty
1	Vocabulary knowledge	34.93	39.77
2	Drawing inferences and predictions	30.14	88.63
3	Identifying the main idea	26.03	0
4	Identifying supporting information	11.98	9.09

The results reveal that there is a significant different of skill weaknesses between the two group of students. They have better skills in vocabulary knowledge, identifying the main idea skills and identifying supporting information. They are excellent in in identifying the main idea skills. However, the cultural science students are poor in drawing inferences and predictions skills compared to the nursing students. This might imply that the different of basic knowledge impact on the reading skills component (Jamalipour & Farahani, 2015). Drawing inferences need more logical sequences thinking process. The nursing students performed better as they have dominant exact basic knowledge that helps them to think critically and logically, compared to the cultural science students who have social science background.

The data also implies that, for the instructional designer, emphasis should be placed on teaching critical reading for the social science students, especially to improve identification of main idea and supporting information skills (Gillet, Temple, Crawford, & Temple, 2011). The nursing faculty should concern on providing learning model to add more vocabulary drills. Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) stated that some teaching methods to be considered for enhancing vocabulary knowledge are the use of flashcard, smartphones. In addition, Asgari and Mustapha (2011) suggest learning strategies to be included for vocabulary knowledge for instance reading repetition, using dictionaries, applying new English words to daily speaking and use various media such as songs, movies and computer games.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the present study indicates an important relationship between the various components of reading skills and EFL reading comprehension. Identifying specific idea information shows the strongest contribution to the distinction of high-level readers from intermediate and low level EFL readers while drawing inferences show the strongest contribution to the distinction of intermediate-level readers from high and low-level readers. These latter findings suggest a clear link between the efficiency of these component processes and skills in EFL reading comprehension. These findings extend into EFL reading that both text model and situation model of reading interpretation are important and useful in EFL reading.

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