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AN EFFECTIVE WAY ON UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSION TEXT:
READING ALOUD VERSUS SILENT READING

BIBIANA HENRY

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

APRIL 2010
“I hereby declare that I have read this thesis and in my opinion this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree Bachelor of Science with Education(TESL)”.

Signature : __________________________
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Signature : ...........................................
Name : Bibiana Henry
Date : 20 APRIL 2010
Dedicated to:

My beloved parents, Henry @ Jonik Jacob and Dorothy Muksin.

My dearest siblings; nana, mia, chon, popo and vyer.

My best friends…
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ABSTRAK

ABSTRACT

This study was designed in order to investigate the effectiveness of two reading strategies which are Reading Aloud and Silent Reading in comprehending reading texts. Both strategies were applied to the students and based from their performance; the data were compared for analyses. For comparative purposes, sixteen first year students from the Faculty of Built Environment were selected to be the subjects of this study. In order to balance the proficiency level of the subjects, students with intermediate proficiency level who gained band 3 and band 4 in their MUET were chosen. Apart from that, the subjects were grouped according to gender for the purpose of comparison on their performance based on gender. Subjects were instructed to read a reading text for each reading strategy and were later given a reading comprehension test. After the test, subjects were interviewed in group in order to see the subjects’ responses on both reading strategies. The result of this study showed that the Reading Aloud strategy was able to facilitate the subjects’ understanding during the reading comprehension process better than the Silent Reading strategy even between genders. The results were discussed according to the reading theories and approaches. Suggestions for future research were proposed in order to validate the study more.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MUET  Malaysian University English Test
SILL  Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SSR  Sustained Silent Reading
UTM  Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
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1.0 Introduction

Reading is one of the skills which are taught in a language classroom. Reading is about understanding written texts. Reading can be considered as a complex activity which involves a person’s perception and thoughts as well. Generally, the process of reading requires a reader to comprehend a reading text in reading comprehension. Comprehending is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text; meanwhile word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one’s spoken language. While reading, readers normally increase their vocabulary and reading skills (Musel-Staloch and Abe, 2004).

Learning to read is one of the main goals of education. Reading is not limited to children but for adults as well where it opens up a lot of opportunities. Through reading, we can gain new knowledge, enjoy literature and even do simple daily tasks
which involve our daily lives such as reading the newspaper, instruction manuals, advertisements and maps. That is why reading is the main goal of education because reading plays a major role in everyone’s daily life whether they are children or adults.

As language educators, it is important for them to find suitable or appropriate reading strategies in order to teach their students to read effectively. This study will focus on two main strategies which were frequently used by teachers and educators in order to help students understand comprehension texts. These strategies are Reading Aloud and Silent Reading. Both Reading Aloud and Silent Reading strategies are not new strategies applied when teaching reading comprehension. In fact, two decades ago, as cited by Lane and Wright (2007) in Anderson et al. (1985), reading aloud gained a new level of emphasis. It is called “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading” (p.23). Since then, teachers and parents realized the importance of reading aloud. Until today, teachers are still implementing the Reading Aloud strategy when they teach reading comprehension to their students.

However, to what extent does reading aloud help students in understanding reading texts? Does reading aloud really help the students in their reading comprehension? Another technique applied in teaching reading comprehension text is silent reading. Silent reading is also known as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) (Chow & Chou, 2000). In sustained silent reading, students will have to read silently when reading a text. The term Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading was introduced as early as 1960 (Chow & Chou, 2000). Since then, the Silent Reading strategy has been used widely by teachers in teaching reading. Based on the two strategies, a lot of researches have been done in order to determine its effectiveness in facilitating the students’ ability in comprehending a reading text.
This study will focus on the two reading strategies which are the Reading Aloud strategy and the Silent Reading strategy. How effective are these two reading comprehension strategies and which strategy is appropriate or suitable to be implemented during the reading comprehension activities in a language classroom?

1.1 Background of the Study

Since many years ago, teachers have implemented the techniques of reading aloud and silent reading in the classroom when teaching reading comprehension. The main question is which technique gives a better impact in enhancing students’ understanding of a reading text. Much research have been conducted by those who are related in the field in order to determine if reading aloud or also known as oral reading is much better in helping students to comprehend the reading texts given by teachers.

Some believe that students’ proficiency affect the students reading mode that best facilitates comprehension (Hale et al., 2007). Those who are considered as good readers will have different levels of comprehension than average and poor readers when using the two different strategies. As cited in Hale et al. (2007), beginning readers who read aloud had higher reading placements scores than beginning readers who read silently (Kagler, 1995). Miller and Smith (1990 cited in Hale et al., 2007) compared comprehension across silent reading and oral reading and found that (a) poor readers had higher comprehension scores when reading aloud, (b) average readers had higher comprehension scores when reading silently, and (c) there was no significant difference in comprehension across silent and aloud reading in students with stronger reading skills.
1.2 Statement of the problem

Language teachers always implement both strategies, which are reading aloud and silent reading when teaching reading comprehension. Both have their own pros and cons to teachers and to the students as well. Reading aloud helps students such as improves their pronunciation, word emphasis, reading intonation and so on but it is hard for the teachers to assure that students can comprehend on what they have read (Hale et al., 2007).

Jones & Lockhart; Juel & Holmes (1981 cited in Hale et al., 2007) said that reading aloud and silent reading may systematically impact comprehension differently. This means that reading aloud may be an effective way to ensure that students understand and can comprehend the reading text totally while silent reading affects the other way round or silent reading will help the students in comprehending the comprehension text more than reading aloud. Kragler (1995 cited in Hale et al., 2007) said that these theories suggest that reading aloud versus silent reading may have differential effects on comprehension, depending upon the skill of the reader.

Besides that, Hale et al. (2007) cited other studies which says that other research involved in this field have found evidence that individuals comprehend more information after they read the text silently compared to reading the text aloud (Jones & Lockhart, 1919; Mead, 1915, 1917; Pinter, 1913). Meanwhile, there are findings which pointed out that individuals comprehend more information after reading the text orally (aloud) when compared to reading silently (Collins, 1961; Duffy & Durrell, 1935; Rowell, 1976) in Hale et al. (2007). Therefore, we can see that both strategies have their own effects on different individuals where both strategies may give different results after the subjects undergo the two strategies.
1.3 Purpose of the study

Teaching students reading comprehension is not as easy as we can think of because it is hard for us to know their level of understanding of the text unless we give them a set of comprehension questions to identify their level of understanding on what they have read. We know that both reading aloud and silent reading have their own pros and cons where both help students to understand and comprehend the reading text in their own way. In order to determine which technique really helps the students to understand more or comprehend the reading text, this study will be conducted to investigate the issue further.

The study will focus on finding whether the Reading Aloud or the Silent Reading strategy is effective enough in facilitating students understanding during the reading process. The result of this study could be a reference for further investigations for those who will be doing the same study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of reading aloud and silent reading in understanding a reading comprehension text among UTM students.
2. To find out the differences between the two gender in comprehending the comprehension text.
3. To find out which reading comprehension strategies that students prefer in order to understand a reading text.