Developmental Approaches to the Teaching of EFL Reading

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In the teaching of foreign language reading, there have been at least three distinctive approaches for communicative competence: grammar-translation method, comprehension-questions approach with an emphasis on reading skills and strategies, and extensive reading approach. This paper surveys a selection of recent studies that address important concerns in foreign language reading pedagogy, and discusses the current issues towards fluent reading for learners' communicative competence. And it is shown that how the efficient reading methodologies in EFL context are developed on a chronological basis. In addition, this study poses the reading issues for learners' reading proficiency and discusses the pedagogical implications from the perspective of language acquisition.

Key Words: EFL reading, learner-centered, extensive reading, sight vocabulary, meaning-based reading, integrative approach, humanistic approach

1 Introduction

A reading knowledge of a foreign language is very important to professional success, personal development, and academic studies in many parts of the world, like in EFL education settings. So, the ability to read in a foreign language is required of students and assessed by a test of reading comprehension for the learners' language proficiency. In this regard, a bunch of researches on improving foreign language competence have been done by language researchers and scholars. In this paper, I look into the current issues raised in the field of reading instruction and elaborate the linguistic developmental approaches to reading on a chronological basis. So I intend to come up with some practical ideas from a perspective of learner-centered humanistic approach and suggest the pedagogical implications of the efficient reading strategies for EFL learners.

1.1 Structuralism and its limitations in EFL reading

In the past, since 1940s lots of linguists and researchers have studied EFL reading with a focus on language form based on Structuralism. In this regard, the structuralist principle advocated by Fries and Bloomfield presumes that language is a set of habits to be learned systematically, item by item, using methods imitation, repetition, and reinforcement. The specific words and structures are learned at a time in a particular sequence. In EFL reading, the translation into L1 has been main activity in the classroom, and grammar and linguistic forms have been major concerns for improving reading competence.

This approach is derived from audiolingual positions from a linguistic point of view, and it stresses teachers' deliberate instruction on the specific structures and vocabulary. And the principle makes use of imitation, regular drills, dialogue, and controlled reading like Intensive reading. The audiolingual program requires skilled teaching to maintain high levels of motivation, because the students' tasks are not often genuinely communicative. So, reading instruction in the classroom is chiefly controlled by teachers.

In the structural approaches, the language teaching is concerned with comparing L2 with L1 and analyzing the differences between L2 and L1. In the course of the language teaching, most learners came to become passive towards their L2 reading and they could not be motivational in their reading.

1.2 Current issues in EFL reading

Over the long periods of learning L2 reading on a basis of language form, many learners have faced with some communicative problems. And lots of scholars and linguists have indicated that the problems came from language form-based instructions and they did not focus on the learners' thought from a viewpoint of the learner-centered language acquisition. So, currently a bunch of researches and experiments have been done for learners' communicative competence and fluent reading proficiency. The followings are current main issues posed by many language researchers.

1.2.1 Humanistic approaches to EFL reading

The humanistic principle is learner-centered and voluntary approach. In most cases, the students were exposed to various kinds of books. And they received large quantities of contents and information. They should be 'comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985) for language acquisition. Language and thought are interactive to facilitate the process of language acquisition. Learners' affective sides such as intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards reading are emphasized. The approaches could be categorized as 'Whole Language' or 'Natural Language' approaches, because it is assumed that acquisition occurs naturally through extensive exposure to interesting text-often self-selected- with minimal systematic instruction and few

linguistic controls on input. When students are reading a story containing elements of novelty, surprise, humor, or other interesting variables, they are more likely to learn positively and quickly than when they work only to please the teacher or to pass an examination. Furthermore, the learners are more willing to return to such interesting materials, and to make the contents the basis for further learning through follow-up activities. In the approaches, reading is the process of becoming 'Whole Person'.

1.2.2 Meaning-based approaches to EFL reading

The second issue is meaning-based approach which integrates the language contents and form. In the approach, reading is meaning-focused, not form-centered. Students are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can without the pressures of testing. Therefore, students are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of books is being read in the time available. Ideally, each class should have a class library of different titles, graded and color-coded by reading level. Students were more positive about starting new texts. Their imaginative responses improved, as did their personal engagement with what they read. Overall, they came to see reading as a pleasurable, rather than a stressful activity. Also, students showed a more positive attitude to studying in general. They developed a wider knowledge of the world and an increased understanding of other people. They used critical thinking skills more effectively and their imaginative activities were provided for better proficiency of reading.

1.2.3 Task-based approaches to EFL reading

The third one is task-based approach. From a task-based perspective, learners learn language in order to make functional use of texts. Teachers aim to stimulate learners' ability to understand and give instructions and they confront with functional tasks in which the learners are asked to produce and comprehend the instructions. Regarding the kind of language use that classroom tasks should give rise to, most of the tasks emphasize the primacy of meaning. So, the learner's attention should mainly be directed towards meaning exchange. And classroom tasks should facilitate meaningful interaction and offer the learner lots of opportunity to process meaningful input and produce meaningful output to reach relevant and obtainable goals. That is to say, tasks invite the learner to act primarily as a language user, and not as a language learner. Tasks are supposed to explain the kinds of communicative behavior such as negotiation for meaning that naturally comes from performing real-life language tasks. Such tasks can foster language acquisition. The task-based language teaching is mainly focus on

meaning, but it does not exclude a focus on form. In fact, the interaction of meaning and form constitutes the key features of task-based language approaches.

1.2.4 Integrative approaches to EFL reading

The fourth one is learner-centered voluntary extensive reading approach which has been a mainstream in EFL reading. What is important here is that reading should be meaningful to the learner in natural settings. In addition, the reading is beginning to be seen as a resource for communication. Meaningfulness and communicativeness are two poles of productive language use on the communicative basis. Learners try to find meaningfulness for themselves in texts and in relationships among words they encounter in texts. This view corresponds to the trend towards individualization and self-management in language learning. Currently, reading teaching is examined focusing on the learners' interest in the classroom as a learning environment and interaction with learners. Intensive Reading approach typically require accurate mastery of forms before learners' exposure to print or texts, while the Extensive Reading which deliberately integrates reading, discussion, and writing produces strong results in integrating reading and writing abilities.

2 Major Concerns in Teaching Foreign Language Reading

Most of current views of foreign language reading are shaped by research on first language learners. A primary goal for EFL reading theory and instruction is to understand what fluent L1 readers do, and then decide how best to move EFL students in that developmental direction. So, a description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing (Grabe, 1988). The following factors are major concerns in the teaching of EFL reading.

2.1 Vocabulary acquisition

 The relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is very crucial to prove the efficiency of foreign language reading. The factors involved in this relationship are language knowledge, background knowledge and skill in language use.

Nagy and Herman (1987) claimed that only a small percentage of vocabulary learning is due to direct vocabulary instruction, and the rest is due to the acquisition of words from reading. This suggests that traditional approaches to the teaching of vocabulary, in which the number of new words taught in each class was carefully controlled, is much less effective in

promoting vocabulary growth than simply getting students to spend time on reading the interesting books as many as possible. Learners incidentally gain small amounts of vocabulary knowledge from each meaning of the reading in an appropriate text. It is a gradual process of one meeting with a word adding to the small amounts of knowledge gained from previous meetings. This is very important for managing Extensive reading. So, for the learners' long term memory of vocabulary learning, learners have to get the opportunity to keep meeting words that they have met before. In terms of deciding how much Extensive reading learners at a particular level should be doing, there are two factors determining the necessary amount of reading: (a) the frequency level of the learners' vocabulary; (b) the length of time that the memory of a meeting with a word is retained.

As a cognitive process, extensive reading also produces the construction of meaning from printed or written material. The construction of meaning makes the learners get information from the written materials with their previous knowledge. In terms of cognitive reading, the extensive reading helps to begin with the automatic visual recognition of vocabulary. This reading process involves reasoning and prior knowledge of the topic to construct meaning. In this regard, automatic word recognition is the basis of the Extensive reading. This automatic, rapid, and accurate process of word recognition should not be confused with the strategy of slow, letter-by-letter, or syllable-by-syllable reading approach like Intensive reading.

In the extensive reading process, a printed word becomes a symbol for its phonological, semantic, syntactic, and orthographic information. As a result of multiple encounters, the word enters the reader's sight vocabulary. As we are familiar with the words, such words lead to automaticity. At this point, the level of the students' textbook must be level within their linguistic competence (Bamford & Day, 1998). The reason is that the goal of the automaticity training is developing a large sight vocabulary rather than the learning of new linguistic elements. According to Bamford and Day (1998), it suggests that there is a gradual but steady incremental growth of vocabulary knowledge through meaningful interaction with texts. Extensive reading not only increases the knowledge of meaning of words, but can also produce gains in background knowledge that can further facilitate reading comprehension.

2.2 Affective side of reading

Much classroom reading work has traditionally focused on the exploitation of short texts, either for presenting lexical and grammatical points or for providing students with limited practice in a variety of reading skills and strategies. However, a large number of students in EFL world require reading for academic purposes, and therefore need training in study skills and strategies for reading longer texts and books. However, there is also the

affective side of Extensive Reading. It seems that successful reading experiences promote positive attitudes toward reading which in turn motivate further reading. Materials selected for Extensive Reading must also be interesting and enjoyable. The reason is motivational; the more students are interested in and enjoy the reading, the more reading they are likely to do. A text may be within learners' linguistic competence for accurate decoding and interpretation. As suggested above, the emotional factors such as motivation, confidence, and attitudes are very important in teaching foreign language reading.

2.3 Meaning-based reading

Students acquire their new language incidentally from reading the books rather than from the planned direct instruction in vocabulary and syntactic forms. Students in the whole language context were flooded with interesting reading material, designed to be read, discussed, and shared in a variety of ways. The books were written, or chosen, to appeal to students and were well illustrated in most cases. The key concept here is comprehension or understanding. No one learns a different foreign language only by reading unintelligible contents. Learners must be able to draw meaning from the input they try to access (Krashen, 1988). With more and more such input, the learners are repeatedly exposed to words, expressions, structures, and aspects of discourse. With each exposure, the learners add to their mental mapping of these features and how they are used in the target language (Ellis, 1995). Krashen (1994) also makes a strong case for Extensive Reading as an effective and efficient path to obtaining input for acquisition.

3 Linguistic Approaches to EFL Reading

From a perspective of language acquisition, the reading approaches have developed with the cognitive principle, affective principle, and linguistic principle. The cognitive principle includes automaticity and meaningful learning. The affective principle is related with self-confidence, risk-taking, and language-culture connection. And the linguistic one means the development of communicative competence. Provided that communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom, the communicative goals are best achieved by giving appropriate attention to language use and fluency, not just usage and accuracy. And it also means authentic language and contexts. In this context, overanalyzing language and thinking too much about language forms and rules of language can impede the automaticity of language acquisition. Little by little focusing on content or meaning, the learner-centered approach in the foreign language reading becomes the current issue among language researchers.

3.1 Grammar-translation approaches to EFL reading

In the EFL context, as a means of studying the foreign language, students may be taught to read texts written in the foreign language by translating them into the native language. The teacher read aloud a short passage in the foreign language while the students follow along in their textbooks. Meaning is taken at the sentence level, not the whole text. The sentences must be translated from the target language to the learners' first language and vice versa. Learners are given explanations of individual points of grammar, and then they are given sentences which exemplified grammatical points.

3.2 Language work with comprehension-questions

This approach focuses on the textbook containing short passages that demonstrate the use of foreign language words or points of grammar. It consists of reading word-by-word, comprehension questions, and exercises. Various grammar and vocabulary exercises from the textbook are worked through.

From the two positions based on the bottom-up side of decoding meaning from the printed page above, readers must find recognize a multiplicity of linguistic signals such as letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, grammatical cues, and discourse markers. They use their linguistic data processing mechanisms to impose some sort of order on these signals. The data-driven processing obviously requires a sophisticated knowledge of the language itself. These two positions are based on the Structuralism mentioned before.

The teacher prepares students to read a one-or two-page passage from a textbook by providing or activating any background knowledge necessary for comprehension. Pre-teaching vocabulary items are sometimes provided. Students read the passage silently at their own speed, trying to answer the questions in the passage. After reading, the students share their answers to these questions in pairs or small groups. Students then complete various tasks or exercises containing particular reading skills or strategies such as the following: identifying the main idea ; making inference; guessing the meaning of an unknown word by using context clues; using graphic rules and patters; skimming; scanning; semantic mapping or clustering; vocabulary analysis; distinguishing between literal and implied meanings.

3.3 Extensive reading approach to EFL reading

The goal of this approach is for students to be willing and fluent readers in EFL reading. Students read at their own speed and their own purposes which are related to pleasure, information, and general understanding. Most of reading materials are well within the students' linguistic level and are self-

selected from a library containing various text types and topics. The texts are natural discourse which is written to communicate a message, not to exemplify language. The answering of a few questions and preparing a short oral or written book report or reading diary is provided in post-reading activities. Though there have been three distinctive approaches to EFL reading, **a**ctually the three approaches may be mixed in a particular classroom.

In the Extensive Reading approaches, the reader brings information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and culture to the printed world. Skills in reading depend on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world. These principles are conceptually driven, or top-down processing that brings a bunch of background information into the texts that learners use in the book. These studies include the following concepts: the effect of culture on reading; the role of cognition in reading; the conscious strategies in learning to read L2 language; effective techniques for activating schemata (Brown, 1994).

4 Component Skills in EFL Reading

Because reading is such a complex process, lots of language researchers try to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills. The aim of teaching reading is to reach a point where learners understand both the meaning of words and how they interrelate within a given text. In this context, syntactic decoding must be interacted with semantic factors. In addition, the correct perception of learners' grammatical and rhetorical interrelations is an important element of reading fluency. To improve the component skills in EFL reading, the following reading skills are currently studied.

4.1 Automatic recognition skills

Many cognitive researchers see the development of automaticity in reading, particularly in word identification skills which is critical to fluent reading (Adams, 1990). Automaticity may be defined as occurring when the reader is unaware of the process, not consciously controlling the process. In EFL reading contexts, the role of language structure in comprehension has been supported. Vocabulary knowledge has similarly come to be recognized as a critical feature of reading ability. Insights from cognitive psychology also showed that slow and word-by-word reading impedes comprehension by transferring an excess of visual signals to the brain because only a fraction of these signals need to be processed for the reader to successfully interpret the message.

4.2 Learners' schemata

Knowing how a text is organized influences the comprehension of the text. For example, good readers appear to make better use of text organization than do poor readers. It is formal schemata which deal with formal discourse structure knowledge.

On the other hand, prior knowledge of text-related information strongly affects reading comprehension (Willson, & Anderson, 1986). It is related with content schemata which treats world background knowledge. The content and cultural knowledge have been shown to influence reading comprehension (Pritchard, 1990). Fluent readers not only seek to comprehend a text when they read, but they also evaluate and compare the text information synthesizing it with other sources of information.

4.3 Metacognitive monitoring

Knowledge about cognition, including knowledge about language, involves recognizing patterns of structure and organization, and using appropriate strategies to achieve comprehending texts. These strategies are divided into cognitive strategies where learners apply directly to the language itself and metacognitive strategies where learners manage or control their own learning process. The former includes remembering texts more effectively, using all learners' cognitive processes, and compensating for missing knowledge. The latter includes organizing and evaluating learners' reading, managing learners' emotions, and cooperative learning. Regarding building the strategic techniques for efficient reading, Brown (1994) suggests ten kinds of techniques as the following: to lower inhibition; to encourage risk-taking; to build learners' self confidence; to help them to develop intrinsic motivation; to promote cooperative learning; to encourage learners to use right-brain processing; to promote ambiguity tolerance; to help learners to use their intuition; to get learners to make their mistakes work for themselves; get learners to set their own goals.

Among the metacognitive strategies, *prediction* helps readers anticipate later text development and the author's perspective with respect to the information presented. In this way, predicting information allows us to evaluate the information and take a position with respect to the author's intentions, and decide whether or not the information is useful. Little research actually exists on how readers evaluate texts. When it comes to *guessing*, learners should make use of all their skills using whatever clues are available to them.

Extensive Reading, on the other hand, facilitates the development of prediction skills. In that case, background knowledge is seen as providing a platform for readers to predict the content of a text on the basis of pre-existing schema. When students read, this schema is activated and helps the reader to decode and interpret the message beyond the printed words.

Through these processes, readers predict, sample, hypothesize and reorganize their understanding of the message while students read (Numan, 1991).

5 Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The quality of exposure to language that learners receive is seen as important to learners' potential to acquire new forms from the language input. In this regard, in EFL context, the materials selected for Extensive Reading should address students' needs, tastes, and interests so as to encourage and motivate them to read the books. In terms of Krashen's 'Comprehensible Input', he argues that Extensive Reading will lead to language acquisition, provided that certain preconditions are met. These include adequate exposure to the language, interesting materials, and a relaxed, tension-free learning environment.

Extensive Reading of high-interest materials offers the potential for reinforcing and recombining language learned in the classroom. For the Extensive Reading, the graded readers with learners' appropriate linguistic level have controlled grammatical and lexical contents for learners' foreign language reading. And they provide regular and sufficient repetition of a new language forms. Paran (1996) has emphasized the importance of Extensive Reading in providing learners with practice in automaticity of word recognition and decoding the symbols on the printed page.

On the other hand, many researchers have studied the integrated effects of reading on writing skills. Stotsky (1983) reviewed a bunch of L1 studies that seem to show the positive effect of reading on subjects' writing skills, indicating that learners who are prolific readers become better writers. And in the case of L2 reading, Robb and Susser (1989) showed more significant improvement in subjects' written work than in other language skills. These results back up the case for acquisition-oriented reading program based on Extensive Reading as an optimal means of making improvements in learners' writing.

6 Conclusion

From the end of the 20th century, the dominance of language skills and strategies and grammar-translation approaches is giving way to a more integrated, learner-centered, and voluntary reading approach in the teaching of foreign language reading. It is based on the humanistic and affective side of reading. And it emphasizes the meaning or contents in texts, not linguistic forms and language fluency, not language accuracy.

From the view of language acquisition, Extensive Reading supports the view, can also provide very effective platforms for promoting reading improvement and development from elementary to advanced levels. And the benefits in terms of language development for the participating learners far

outweigh the demerits required in the foreign language classroom. In this situation, the paradigm of foreign language reading pedagogy has shifted towards the learner-centered language learning and language use for learners' communicative competence. In addition, if Extensive reading program can be integrated into the curriculum so that it becomes agreed school policy, the Extensive Reading program will likely be a more dominant reading teaching paradigm in EFL context.

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