

Investigating the Effectiveness of Using Intensive Reading in Promoting EFL Learners' Speaking Skills

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Abstract:

This study mainly aims at Investigating the Effectiveness of Using Intensive Reading in Promoting EFL Learners' Speaking Skills. To achieve the aims of the study the researcher has used the qualitative and quantitative or analytical method. The subject of this study consist of 30 teachers and 3 experts of English Language who have long experience in teaching English as a foreign language. To collect the relevant data, the researcher has used two tools a questionnaire which was designed for teachers and interview which designed for experts. Both of them were taken as a sample from different representative Sudanese Universities. To analyze these data, the researcher has used the statistical program (SPSS). After analyzing the relevant data, the researcher has come to the result is that more than 82.5% of teachers agreed that the intensive reading promote students' speaking skill. In addition to that all experts agree and believe that intensive reading can greatly improve and reinforce students' speaking skill. So, students should be exposed to more reading texts so as to increase their vocabulary which reflected in their real conversation.

Key words: Speaking skills, intensive reading, EFL learning/ vocabulary knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is not easy task to learn it. So, without intensive reading it is difficult to acquire it easily. Therefore, reading is a good way to reinforce students' speaking skill. A good reader is able to understand sentences and structures of a written text. Bright and McGregor(1970, p.53) assured that reading is 'the most pleasant route to command of the language', because it is via reading 'the student is most likely to find words used memorably with force and point.' It appears that reading is a key factor in language learning. According to Ur (1996, p.120), "of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important".

Therefore, reading outside the classroom is the most significant influence students on oral communication ability. Students who read a lot are more likely to speak English well. Students through reading can develop in both fluency and accuracy of expression in their speaking. Davies and Pearse (2000) stress the importance of communication as: "Real success in English teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, Speaking is a productive skill in the oral mode. It is like the other skills, but it is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words. So, students must be exposed to activities of language more so as to acquire it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Speaking

Speaking is the process of how to build and share the meaning between two or more through using the verbal and non-verbal symbols, and this can be used in a variety of contexts as

stressed by Chaney (1998:13). So, speaking is the most important of the four language skills in second language learning and teaching because students nowadays perceive communication with others as being so important and they realize the fact that this may open more opportunities for them to get acquainted with different cultures. Despite its obvious importance, for many years teaching speaking has been undervalued. Moreover, English language teachers have continued to teach their students speaking only through repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, nowadays the needs of the students require that the teaching of speaking must be with the aim of improving students' communicative skills. The reason for this is that the students need to express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriately in the different communicative events. So, the students must be exposed to more interactive situations in order to speak well in the target language. If they do not involve in the interaction with their teachers or among themselves and practice conversation inside and outside the classroom, they will never succeed to be more active to learn and acquire good speaking skills. And this is can be clear according to (Kaçar & Zengin, 2009; Kim, 1999; Songsiri, 2007) they had noted that" Students want to learn English, because their most desire to master English speaking skill among the four major language skills. For many years, teachers have been using the Audio-lingual Method in their teaching of speaking where students are forced to memorize and repeat conversations from the textbooks. What they did not realize was that textbook conversations were not realistic and not similar to everyday English conversations. Instead of memorizing, teachers must realize that the interaction between speakers in language learning should be more important, they must turn their views to more modern approaches such as the communicative language teaching method and created content-

task- based teaching methods and activities in the classroom (Nunan, 2003). In spite of the modernization and change in teaching speaking, traditional approaches in language learning and problems stemming from educational settings especially in EFL contexts have continued to dominate. Consequently, many learners remain far away from using language at an adequate communication level. As cited in Zawawi *et al* (2005), Littlewood (1992) points out that the classroom must provide a unique social environment and this view has been proven effective in developing L2. Learners who study L2 for educational or personal profits in places where L2 is not used in society cannot use it outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, opportunities to use L2 in classrooms are always limited because the target language is taught only as a subject and is not commonly used as a medium of communication outside the classroom. So, the students suffer a lot in order to learn the target language easily. Ellis (1994:214) noted that “formal learning takes place through conscious attention to rules and principles and greater emphasis is placed on mastery of the subject matter that was treated as a decontextualized body of knowledge”. Nowadays, along with the strong position of English as a language for international communication, the teaching of speaking skill has become increasingly important in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) context. Teaching of speaking skill is also important due to the large number of students who want to study English in order to be able to use English for communicative purposes. This point is emphasized by Richards and Renandiyas (2002:201) who state that "a large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking". Moreover, students of second/foreign language education programs are considered successful if they can communicate effectively in the language.

3. Reading

Reading is one of the most effective ways of foreign language learning. Reading simply is the interpretation of a written message. Walter R. Hill (1979, p.4) briefly defines reading as what the reader does to get the meaning he needs from contextual resources. There is an increasingly high relationship between intensive reading and speaking skills. This is very clear because there is no question that people who develop large reading vocabularies tend to develop large speaking vocabularies. Indeed, reading power relies on continuous improvement in vocabulary knowledge that provides oral communication and gives students self-confidence to practice English. The importance of word knowledge, which facilitates speaking skills, has been a major resource in the development of reading skills. Therefore fostering improvement in word knowledge through wide reading has the potential for fostering improvement in speaking skills.

Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning and the goal of reading is comprehension (Nunan, 2003, p.68). The ability to read requires that the reader draw information from a text and combine it with information and expectations that the reader already has (Grabe, Stoller, 2001, p.187). Alderson J.C. (2000) states that reading is built from two components: word recognition and comprehension. These two components gained through reading will foster learners' language competence. Krashen and Terrell (1989, p.131) point out that reading enables learners to comprehend better which is an important factor that can develop language competence.

Reading can be described as the process of extracting meaning from printed or written material. This is the ability to decode meaning from graphic symbols as illustrated by Goodman (1967.113) Reading is similar to listening where the

listener tries to decipher the spoken symbols to comprehend the speech. Reading however, involves a whole series of subsidiary skills. These include the recognition of the alphabetic system, the correlation of the graphic symbols with formal linguistic elements, as well as intellectual comprehension and mechanical eye movement. In addition to that intensive reading is a good classroom activity carried on under the guidance of the teacher. It is mainly concerned with texts and involves focusing upon new words, structures, expressions, functions, pronunciations, and on cultural insights. It is carefully guided so that thorough understanding of the content can be reflected in students' oral communication.

However, there are further roles teachers need to adopt when asking students to read intensively.

- 1- **Organizer**: teachers need to tell students what their reading purpose is, and give those clear instructions about how to achieve it, and how long they have to do this.
- 2- **Observer**: when teachers ask students to read on their own teachers need to give them space to do so. This means restraining themselves from interrupting that reading, even though the temptation may be to add more information or instructions. While students are reading teachers can observe their progress since this will give them valuable information about how well they are doing individually and collectively, and will tell teachers whether to give them some extra time or, move to organizing feedback more quickly than teachers had anticipated.
- 3- **Feedback organizer**: when students have completed the task, teachers can lead a feedback session to check that they have completed the task successfully. Teachers may start by having them compare their answers in pairs and then ask for answers from the class in general or from pairs in particular. Students often appreciate giving paired answers

like this since, by sharing their knowledge, they are also sharing their responsibility for the answers.

It is important to be supportive when organizing feedback after reading if teachers are to counter any negative feelings students might have about the process, and if teachers wish to sustain their motivation.

- 4- **Prompter:** when students have read a text teachers can prompt them to notice language features in that text. Teachers may also, as controllers, direct them to certain features of text construction, clarifying ambiguities, and making them aware of issues of text structure which they had not come across previously. Harmer (2001: 210-213).

3. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The paper aims to identify the possibility and effectiveness of intensive reading in promoting EFL learners' speaking skills. Moreover, this paper is hoped to provide information and to see if there is strongly relationship between intensive reading and speaking skills in promoting and improving students' ability in oral communication.

4. METHODS

One of the qualitative research designs, the case study, which is the most widely used approach in qualitative studies (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), and which helps researchers to understand a phenomenon in-depth regardless of the numbers of contexts and subjects for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) was adopted in the study. From Yin (2003)'s case study designs, multiple-case design with embedded unit of analysis was accepted as a model. Therefore, the study was designed to answer the following question;

1- To what extent can intensive reading promote EFL Students' speaking skills?

4.1 Subjects

The subjects of this study have included two groups the first group was composed from teachers of English language in some representative Sudanese Universities, they are teaching English as a foreign language at the departments of English language and linguistics. And the second group was some experts who have long experienced in the same field.

4.2 Sample

Thirty teachers and three experts were randomly selected from different Sudanese Universities. And all of them have been teaching English as a foreign language.

4.3 Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study, the first one is a questionnaire (five point Likert type scale) was designed for teachers, and the second one is an interview which was designed for experts and both of them were developed respectively. The questionnaire and interview were tryout and piloted before finalization. After tryout and piloting, the questionnaire and interview were reviewed by two experts and five doctoral research fellows.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection procedures include two sections. The first part is about the determination of teachers who answered the questionnaire. The researcher was distributed thirty questionnaires to the thirty teachers by hand and then he collected their questionnaires and analyzed them by using (SPSS) program. The second part is an interview; the researcher has made appointment with the experts to carry out

the interview. Interviews were conducted face to face and one by one to allow the experts to express their thoughts and ideas about the interviews' questions. Then, the answers which had given to interview questions were descriptively analyzed and presented in the findings below.

4.5 Findings and Discussion

Research findings are presented via two sub-sections based on the questionnaire and interview questions.

Variable 1: (Learners are exposed to intensive reading to promote their speaking skill).

Table (1)

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Strongly agree	21	52.5%
agree	12	30.0%
Neutral	1	2.5%
disagree	6	15.0%
Total	40	100.0%

As shown in the table (1) above 52.5% of teachers strongly agreed that when students are exposed to the intensive reading they can promote and develop their speaking skill and 30% of them agree, whereas 15% of the teachers disagree while 2.5% is neutral. This means that the majority of teachers have responded the alternative strongly agree and agree which represent 82.5% from the whole sample of the group assured that intensive reading promote students' speaking skill.

Variable 2: (Intensive reading influences the oral mastery of EFL students.

Table (2)

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Strongly agree	18	45.0%
Agree	17	42.5%
Neutral	4	10.0%
Disagree	1	2.5%
Total	40	100.0%

As displayed in the table (2) above 45% of teachers strongly agree and 42.5% of them agree. While 10% of them are neutral and just one is disagree which shaped 2.5%. From the above explanation it is quite clear that the majority of teachers which shaped 87.5% from the whole group agreed that when students practice intensive reading more and more this is can influence their mastering speaking skill. According to above interpretation of the table students must be trained well to practice intensive reading more so as to raise their speaking skill.

Variable 3: (The purpose of reading is to integrate a reading text to enhance students' speaking skills.)

Table (3)

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Strongly agree	16	40.0%
Agree	19	47.5%
Neutral	3	7.5%
Disagree	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%

According the table (3) above shows that 40% of teachers strongly agree and 47.5% agree this means 87.5% of teachers supported the variable which said "the purpose of reading is to

integrate a reading text to enhance students' speaking skills" while 7.5% of them are neutral and 5% of teachers are disagree with the variable.

Variable 4: (Teaching of reading is to develop the students' abilities to comprehend specific oral communicative information).

Table (4)

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Strongly agree	18	45.0%
Agree	14	35.0%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100.0%

As shown in the table (4) above there are 45% of teachers strongly agree and 35% of them agree this is representing 80% of teachers from the whole sample agreeing that teaching of reading is to develop students' abilities to comprehend specific oral communicative information. While 12.5% of them are neutral and 7.5% are disagree and this is very clear from the discussion in the table above that the majority of teachers agree with the view of variable.

Variable 5: (Reading inside the classroom influences significantly students' oral communicative ability).

Table (5)

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Strongly agree	17	42.5%
Agree	19	47.5%
Neutral	2	5.0%
Disagree	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%

As explained in the table (5) above 42.5% of teachers are strongly agree and 47.5% of them agree while 5% are neutral

and 5% are disagree this shows that the majority of teachers which are representing 90% from the whole sample agreed that reading inside the classroom influences significantly students' oral communicative ability'

Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire and experts' Interview:

According to the analysis and discussion from above tables of teachers' questionnaire the researcher has come to these findings: more than 82.5% of teachers strongly agree and stated that the intensive reading is very effective in promoting students' speaking skill; and this is can be obtained when teachers use intensive reading as a medium of oral communication. It means that teachers are promoting English in the classroom to reinforce speaking skill. It will benefit to students in their daily life speech. In addition to that about 87.5% of teachers agree that when students practice intensive reading more and more this is can influence their mastering speaking skill. So, intensive reading is very necessary for the competency in communication. It is fact that without having reading English communication may not improve up to desire benchmark. Because about 87.5% of teachers assured that the most purpose of intensive reading in the classroom is to integrate a reading text to enhance students' speaking skills. Whereas 80% of teachers indicated that teaching of reading is almost develop students' abilities to comprehend specific oral communicative information and this is need more efforts to reinforce intensive reading inside and outside the classroom so as to influence significantly students' oral communicative ability. Moreover, the all experts agreed and believed that intensive reading can greatly improve and reinforce students' speaking skill. This is obvious when they grasp the meaning of a reading text, that is to say the idiomatic expressions and

phrasal verbs which we formed in the written text can also be expressed in the oral communication. Moreover, they assured that intensive reading increases students' command of vocabulary which they need and enable them to develop the oral communication. Furthermore, they advocated that students must be exposed to a wide variety of literature books to raise their reading task, and this is should be a part of their academic syllabus. According to the Urrutia & Vega (2006) study, the majority of students considered that speaking is the most complicated ability to work out; also, the researchers noticed that students sometimes spoke English, but the majority of them did not speak during the English class. The study shows that the main factors, such as: vocabulary, timidity and fear of being embarrassed. And 58% of students expressed that they preferred games to be implemented in the English class to improve their oral participation. It is quite clear that there is strongly relationship between intensive reading and speaking skill. So, I can say that students must be exposed to many techniques of teaching reading skill to enhance and develop their speaking skill because nowadays students are suffering more from speaking among themselves or others because of lack of self-confidence.

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