

Factors that influence students' Reading Comprehension achievement in the foreign language



Linguistics

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Irena Shehu

PhD Candidate, European University of Tirana, Albania.

Abstract

Reading comprehension is an important part of language learning and when we came to the results and achievements it turns out to be one of the most difficult process where students fail to achieve high points. Latest results of Matura State Exams in English Language in Albanian showed that students' achievement was not satisfactory, mainly in Reading Comprehension part. One, certainly, may ask for factors that bring out such results. Actually, there are a lot of factors but we are mainly focused on two categories, which influence the students' reading comprehension achievements and they are related one another, they are: internal factor and the external factors. The focus of internal factors will be on: motivation and interests. On the other hand some of the external factors discussed on the follow are: reading material, teacher of reading and questioning strategies. It is important to mention that the above hypotheses were tested in some of the high schools of Albania.

Introduction

When talking about Reading Comprehension Achievement we first think of these two, satisfactory and not satisfactory results. Certainly, one worries more when the results are not satisfactory, in this context there is a need to found out the factors that bring out such results, in this manner we would be able to find ways to have higher achievements.

As mentioned above the factors are divided in two groups:

Internal factors such as: motivation and interests.

On the other hand some of the external factors discussed on the follow are: reading material, teacher of reading and questioning strategies.

2. Methodology

Study case key points

Location: three different Albanian High schools

Method: quantitative in the form of questionnaires (see appendix 1).

Focus:

- students' opinions about motivation and interests on Reading
- the students' own opinions about factors influencing reading comprehension
- Focus group with English Teacher to highlight the questioning strategies used to analyse a text.

Sample

When selecting the students for this study, there were chosen students from three different high school of Albania,, "Havzi Nela" high school, Kukes, "Kostandin Kristoforidhi", Elbasan, "Qemal Stafa", Tiranë This was partly to minimize the risk of different schools having different policies of teaching, English level etc.

In each school there were a few students that could not attend when the questionnaire was handed out for various reasons. In total the questionnaires were filled in by 150 students.

Questionnaires

This study was done with the help of questionnaires hand out to the students in order they give opinions about the difficulties they face during reading comprehension.

The entire survey, the introduction as well as the questions, was written in Albania, This was because the questionnaire was not intended to test their understanding, but to get as reliable answers as possible by avoiding misunderstandings as some of the terms are difficult enough in the students' first language. A further reason was that at the end of the questionnaire there were two open-ended questions, and by being allowed to write in their first language, students would feel more comfortable writing and giving suggestions.

The questionnaire consisted of an introduction informing each student of the general subject of the survey, namely to investigate their opinions about motivation and interests on Reading and the students' own opinions about factors influencing reading comprehension.

In the questionnaire there were mainly two types of questions. The first type was multiple-choice questions, and here students were told to give the answer they thought agreed with their own opinions.. For the second type of question, the closed ones, there was rating using words, like *Every day, Often, Rarely, and Never*; The students were here asked to circle only the one option they thought was closest to their opinion.

Since these two types of questions were closed (and semi-closed), there was a need for the students to be able to say something in their own words at the end of the questionnaire. So in addition, as mentioned above, there were two open-ended questions at the end. In the first question, they were asked to give their opinion about any other reading comprehension factor they think have a great influence in reading comprehension.

3. The Internal Factor

The internal factor is defined as the factor which come from the reader himself. According to Kahayanto, (2005:13) this factor is usually known as personal factor, because the factor has existed inside the reader. This factor dealt mostly with self-motivation and interest. Let us first see Motivation.

3.1 Motivation

Motivation is regarded very important when analysing a text. It plays an important role in comprehending it. According to Brown (2001:75) the students will be motivated to read when they fell that they need something from the text. Furthermore he divides the motivation theory into two kinds, they are: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation is defined as follow:

“Intrinsically motivated activities are ones from which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward. It is aimed at bringing about curtaining internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination.”

While extrinsic motivation is defined by him as extrinsically motivated behaviours that carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self. Such as; money, prizes, grades, and even certain of positive feedback.

3.2 Interest

Another important internal factor is interest. It is being one of the important factors that influence in increasing the students' comprehension achievement in reading, for instance if a student has interest to read, it means that he or she will get a good achievement. On the other hand, if the reader has no any interest to read, it can influence his or her achievement. Thus we can conclude that it is impossible for the students to understand the text if he or she has no interest and motivation to read. So the good interest and motivation result the good achievement of the students.

4. The External Factor

The external factor is another factor that has a great influence on Reading Comprehension Achievement. It has a close relationship to reading material and teacher of reading. They are related one another.

4.1 Reading Material

The students' achievements' in reading depends on the level of the difficulty of the text. Some texts are considered to be more difficult such as texts which lack organization, have plenty of new words, scientific texts etc. Thus, it can influence students' achievement if the text given is not at the right level of the difficulty of the readers or the students.

4.2 Teacher of Reading

Another thing considered of a great importance is the teacher of reading. He or she should be careful in choosing the text and giving the tasks because they are related to the students' reading comprehension achievements.

4.3 Questioning Strategies

Question strategy is a very important external factor to teaching Reading Comprehension. Every teacher should know how to motivate students by using a strategy of questioning the text. When dealing with questions strategies we turn back to Brown. According to him the most important key to create an interactive learning is the initiation of interaction from the teacher by using question, Brown (2001:169). Appropriate questioning can fulfil a number of different functions, such as:

1. Teacher questions give students the opportunity to produce language comfortably without having to risk initiating language themselves. It is very scary for the students to have to initiate conversation or topics for discussion.
2. Teacher question can serve to initiate a chain reaction of students interaction among themselves.
3. Teacher questions giving immediate feedback about students' comprehension.

4. Teacher questions provide students with opportunities to find out what they think. As they are nudged into responding to questions about, say, a reading, they can discover what their own opinions and reactions are. This self-discovery can be especially useful for a pre-reading activity.

If a teacher lacks the above points, the results will not be at a satisfactory level.

5. Some important questioning strategies that help to easy Reading Comprehension process

5.1 Pre-questioning

Brown’s (2001) defined pre-questioning implicitly as some questions which are provided before the students read the whole text, in order to build the students’ interest and motivation, also their cognitive factors and pre-questioning is very useful to activate the schemata, thus the students can predict what will be faced by them in the reading text.

5.2 Kinds of Pre-questioning

According to Harmer (1985:153), there are some kinds of pre-questioning, they are: Pre-questioning before reading to confirm expectations, pre-questioning before reading to extract specific information, pre-questioning before reading for general comprehension, and pre-questioning before reading for detail comprehension. The explanations are as following:

5.2.1 Pre-questioning before reading to confirm expectations

The use of pre-questioning as a tool for placing great emphasis on the lead-in stage (where students are encouraged to become interested in the subject matter of the text), encourages students to predict the content of the text, and gives them an interesting and motivating purpose for reading.

5.2.2 Pre-questioning before reading to extract specific information

Pre-questioning as a tool to force the students to extract specific information from the text. They are going to answer before reading the text. If they do this it will be possible for them to read in the required way, they should see the text only to extract the information the questions demand.

5.2.3 Pre-questioning before reading for general comprehension

In this case pre-questioning used to build up the students’ prior knowledge.

5.2.4 Pre-questioning before reading for detailed comprehension

This kind of pre-questioning intends to give the students some detailed information that should be found by them in the whole of the text.

Results of the study

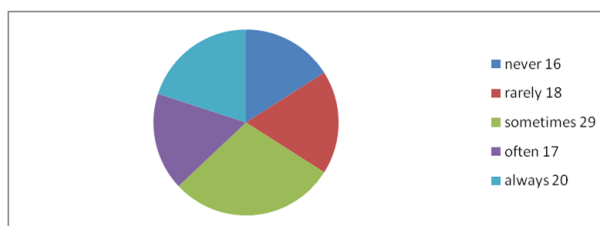
Let us see more concretely these factors reflected to the students.

Based on the questionnaires we did in some of the high schools of Albania showed that students were not fully motivated and interested in Reading in English Language.

1. There were asked 100 hundred students to rate from 0 to 5 the rate their desire and willingness to read in English Language. And they answered in this way:

Number of students	20	15	15	10	25	15
The rate	0	1	2	3	4	5

2. The results for the second question: How often do you volunteer to read or answer a question about a certain text in the foreign language class?



3. What do you consider as an important motive to encourage you reading in the foreign language?

For this questions the results were:

30 % The Text

20 % Mesuesi(The teacher)

50% Strategjia e te lexuarit dhe analizuarit(Reading and comprehending strategies)

4. Which are the factors that influence students' Reading Comprehension achievement in the foreign language?

Strangely students listed almost the same factors mentioned above.

Most of them listed these kinds of factors:

Motivation

Interest

Text

Teacher

Strategies and questions about the text

Based on the focus group discussion with 8 teachers and some students of English Language it was highly appreciated the role of pre questions in Reading Comprehension. Referring to their experience when the students are first given pre-questions they will find easier to comprehend a text and therefore giving better results, and higher achievements.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion we can say that high school students in Albania have not satisfactory outcomes in Reading Comprehension in the foreign language, this is due to several factors. The first factor to be mention is motivation. Students are not fully motivated. Based on the questionnaires we did in several Albanian schools the result was that they have not enough interests and motivation to read a text in foreign language. Most of them rarely volunteer to read a text in the classroom and they have no desire to do extensive reading. Another factor is strategy of reading and questioning. They are consider by students to be very important. Thus we can say that there are both factors, internal and external , that influence reading comprehension. In this context it is highly recommended to use better strategies as for instance Questions and pre questions, in this way the results would be better.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONARE (PYETESOR)

Pyetesor

Qarko nje nga alternativat e dhena me poshte. (Circle the alternative that best suits you)

1. Sa ju pelqen te lexoni tekste ne gjuhe te huaj? (How much do you like reading in English Language)

0 1 2 3 4 5

2. Sa shpesh lexoni material jashte shkollore ? Njehere ne: (How often do you read extensive materials? Once a :)

Cdo dite (everyday) Jave (week) Muaj (month) Vit (year)

3. Cfare ju motivon me shume per te lexuar ne gjuhen e huaj? (What do you consider as an important motive to encourage you reading in the foreign language?)

A. Teksti (The Text) B. Mesuesi (The teacher)

C. Strategjia e te lexuarit dhe analizuarit (Reading and comprehending strategies)

4. Sa shpesh ngrini doren per te lexuar apo per t'ju pergjigjur nje pyetje per nje tekst te caktuar ne klase? (How often do you volunteer to read or answer a question about a certain text in the foreign language class?)

Asnjehere (Never) **Rralle** (Rarely) **Ndonjehere** (Sometimes)
Shpesh (Often) **Gjithmone** (Always)

5. Sipas jush cilet jane faktoret qe ndikojne ne rezultatet e nxenesve ne Analizes se tekstit ? (Which are the factors that influence students' Reading Comprehension achievement in the foreign language?)