ELTI Journal

Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia

Volume 1 | Number 1 | Page 1—69

October 2010

The Department of English Education
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teachers Training
UIN Jakarta
English Language Teaching in Indonesia Journal

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WHY READING ALOUD?
Sunardi Kartowisastro

ENGLISH FOR ISLAMIC HISTORY STUDENTS: A MODEL OF ESP CURRICULUM
Mochamad Subhan Zein
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH IN INDONESIA  
*Atik Yuliyani* ............................................................... 1 - 6

GET SERIOUS! REDEFINING CRITICAL CULTURAL READING IN A LITERATURE CLASSROOM  
*Della Kartika Sari & Nicke Yunita Moecharam* ....................... 7 - 16

THE ROLES OF TEACHERS IN GIVING READING INSTRUCTION  
*Fahriany* ........................................................................ 17 - 27

CALL AND LANGUAGE LAB  
*Nida Husna* ........................................................................ 28 - 40

WHY READING ALOUD?  
*Sunardi Kartowisastro* ....................................................... 41 - 51

ENGLISH FOR ISLAMIC HISTORY STUDENTS: A MODEL OF ESP CURRICULUM  
*Mochamad Subhan Zein* ...................................................... 52 - 69
THE ROLES OF TEACHERS IN GIVING READING INSTRUCTION

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Abstract. In the process of teaching and learning reading, teachers play an important role of the students' success. The success of teaching reading, especially English reading much depends on teachers. Teachers can be viewed as managers that organize the process of teaching; in this case good teachers are the same as good managers. Teachers have some jobs that they must do to make the teaching and learning process run well and successfully. They make activities, specify the objectives, design a clear instruction, answer the students' question, and create a conducive classroom atmosphere for learning that may make the students feel safe.

Introduction

If the goal of communicative language teaching is to have students become communicatively competent, then what roles should teachers play in enabling the students to become communicatively competent in teaching reading? In this case there some roles of teachers in teaching reading. A teacher must be a manager/planner; a teacher must be social worker/counselor; a teacher must be motivator/stimulator; a teacher must be a language instructor; a teacher is a director; a teacher must be an evaluator. If teachers fulfill these roles in the reading class, students will become more efficient readers. In this way, the students will be provided with ample opportunities to use the language for a communicative purpose fulfilling the aim of communicative language teaching.

In relation to the teachers' roles, a teacher in conducting reading instruction has some jobs to do. In this case, Nuttall (1985, p. 30) indicates that teachers jobs are "(1) providing suitable text (reading materials), and (2) creating activities that will focus the students' attention on the text". Carnine, et al. (1990) further state reading teacher activities can be seen as occurring in two phases: beginning of the year activities and day-to-day implementation. Beginning-of-the-year activities include selecting material, setting up a reading program,
and testing and placing students in the material, while day-to-day implementation includes planning, having presentation, and conducting follow up activities. In this section, it will briefly discuss about selecting reading materials, developing activities, managing and organizing classroom, and conducting evaluation process or testing.

**Selecting Reading Material**

Selecting reading materials is one of the reading teacher tasks that must be done before presenting them in the classroom. In selecting reading materials, there are a number of factors to consider. Gebhard (1996) mentions at least three areas that should be taken into account: (1) level of linguistic difficulty, (2) cultural content, and (3) interesting materials for the students. Besides what Gebhard has mentioned, teachers must take into account the compatibility of the materials with the cognitive level of the students, and with the curriculum objectives. In this case, teachers when selecting reading materials must consider those aspects in order that the materials can motivate and attract the students to read. In this section, three aspects of selecting reading materials are discussed briefly.

The first aspect of selecting reading materials is the level of linguistic difficulty. The level of linguistic difficulty of the materials will influence the students' success in reading comprehension. Gebhard (1996) concludes that relatively easy materials are more appropriate than difficult materials. She draws conclusion based on her informal observation and on research evidence done by Cunningham. In Cunningham's report, she found that relatively easy reading materials (with a mean students-accuracy rate of 80 percent) results in gaining students' achievement. She further states that students will benefit from materials that contain target forms (vocabulary, style, grammar, rhetoric, and format) that are not difficult for them, but are slightly beyond their present comprehension, something that Krashen (1982) labels as "i + 1".

The second aspect to consider in selecting reading materials is the cultural aspect of the reading materials. Reading material reflects the cultural perceptions of the writer. In this case, Gebhard (1996) indicates that much reading materials, especially non-scientific reading, is
culturally biased and can cause comprehension problem for the students (Cunningham). In other words, the differences of culture between the writer and the reader will cause some problems in comprehending the text. Thus, teachers when selecting reading material must consider the cultural aspect of the reading materials to facilitate the students' understanding of the materials.

The third aspect of concern in selecting reading material is the interest the materials have for the students. Reading materials that have a power of attraction for the students will be able to motivate the students to read. By having motivation to read, the students will be able to comprehend the material more easily. Harris and Sipay (1984) assert that readers can know much and better from the attractive contents of the reading materials than those that are unattractive. Based on the research conducted by Asher, as cited in Gebhard (1996), indicates that the students' comprehension is greater when the material interests them. Thus, the attractive content of the reading materials for the students is one of the factors that must be considered for selecting reading materials (Gebhard, 1996).

Besides the three aspects of concerns in selecting reading materials, the materials selected should match with the curriculum objectives. Curriculum is a reference for the teacher in programming their instruction. Thus, teachers in selecting their instructional materials must always refer to the curriculum. In other words, curriculum is a guide for teachers in conducting their instructional program.

The objectives stated in the curriculum are general objectives. These general objectives can be spelled out in specific ones. These specific objectives must be achieved by teachers in conducting the teaching learning process. Based on these objectives, it is very important that materials must be closely linked to the curriculum they are designed to serve. When writing materials or adapting materials written by others, it is important for teachers to keep in mind that the goals and objectives of the curriculum are clear and obvious.

The last aspect to consider in selecting reading materials is the cognitive level of the students. This may imply that the materials that are too easy may not be appropriate for the students who have high proficiency, while the materials that are too difficult may not be suitable
for the students who have low proficiency. The materials should be compatible to the students' cognitive level. The suitability of the materials to the students' cognitive level may encourage them to read which in turn may make the students have good performance in reading.

In conclusion, in selecting reading materials, teachers can facilitate successful reading comprehension for the students by considering what materials their students read. The factors worth consistently considering when selecting materials are the level of linguistic difficulty, the cognitive level of the students, cultural content, curriculum objectives, and the interest the material has for the students. In other words, selecting reading materials that provide these aspects will be able to make the student enjoy and encourage them to read and are able to facilitate them to understand the text more easily.

**Developing Activities in Reading Instruction**

The next job a reading teacher does after selecting reading materials is developing activities for the students that will focus their attention to the text. It is the teacher's activity in presenting the reading materials. Generally speaking, activities in teaching reading can be classified into three categories, that is, pre-reading activities, guided reading activities, and post-reading activities. In relation to the activities in teaching reading, the three categories of reading activities are briefly discussed below.

*Pre-reading* activities are instructional activities carried out before students conduct the real reading activities. In pre-reading activities, there are some activities that can be done such as activating the students' background knowledge, telling the students about the objectives of reading class and learning activities, and motivating the students. Comparing to the stage of teaching reading, activities of pre-reading are basically the same as the preparation stage. In these activities, teachers try to activate the students' schemata related to the topic of the text. They can do this by presenting the key words that are in the text, asking some questions about the topic of the text, or explaining briefly the contents of the text.

Another activity teachers can do prior to reading is telling the student about the purposes of reading and learning activities. In this
case, the purposes of reading usually consist of remarks by the teacher intended to: (1) get the students thinking along with the lines of the story they are about to read, and (2) identify particular information the students should be alert to or questions the students should keep in mind as they read the selection. The activity of presenting objectives of reading provides the students with schemata that will help them recognize the important elements of the reading text, and connect the elements of the higher schemata.

Besides telling the students the purposes of reading and learning activities, another activity of pre-reading is motivating the students. Giving motivation in reading plays an important role to attract the students’ attention to the text. Students want to read if reading satisfies their desires to conquer their world and if reading feeds their interests (Harris and Sipay, 1984).

In motivating students, teachers can do some ways like using some attractive color scheme, a cartoon, a picture, or some other approaches to gain the attention of the students and show them what they will be able to do when finishing the reading class. Showing what they will be able to do is more than a statement of objective of the reading class. It is the teacher’s demonstration or illustration of what the students will be able to do. It is the initial part of the reading class that may consist of interesting fact of what it is to be learned. In this case, motivation functions to attract the students’ attention to the reading text. It is necessary to do it in order that they can understand it more easily.

The activities of pre-reading are activities aiming at facilitating the students’ understanding about the reading text. In order to do this properly, teachers can activate the students’ background knowledge and tell the students in the beginning of reading class. These can make the students aware of what they must do when the guided reading activities take place and what they will be able to perform and achieve after the reading class takes place. By these activities, the activities of learning done by the students will be guided and the students will be able to learn well to understand the reading text.

During/whilst reading activities are going on, whereas reading activities are lasting. In whilst reading activities, there are some activities that can be done to comprehend the text. According to
Greenwood (1981), there are five activities to do when reading takes place. First, readers identify the main idea of the text (readers can read the text to give a title, select the miss appropriate title from those provided, and identify the topic sentence through skimming). Second, readers find the details in the text (readers can scan the text to find the specific information). Third, readers follow a sequence (readers relate the items in a particular order or process). Fourth, readers infer from the text (readers try to understand the text by using their schemata and experience). Fifth, readers recognize the discourse pattern (readers try to apply all their linguistic and nonlinguistic knowledge to understand the text holistically).

Questioning technique has many purposes, that is, from prompting the retrieval of prior knowledge and focusing attention to check literal, inferential, and applied comprehension of information and predicting possible test items. Questioning plays an important role to improve reading comprehension. Questions that are asked during reading activity tend to guide and focus the students’ attention and improve their performance to the desired information. Thus, the students can become active readers; the questions can also be used to activate the students’ background knowledge which is not active yet. Then, predictions at the time of reading can also be used as the effective ways to get the students involve with the text.

Post-reading activities are instructional activities that the students and teacher do after reading takes place. In post-reading activities, there are some activities that can be done to check the students’ understanding. In this case, Flores and Cunningham point out that post-questions, feedback, and group and whole-class discussions are activities that can be done in the phase of post-reading activities. These activities can function to check the students’ comprehension about the text that has been read before. Post-questions reading activity is very important since information of both greater and lesser importance is learned.

In relation to questions of post-reading activities, indicates that the questions asked in the phase of post-reading activities should be directed to the development of students’ higher skill. The development of this skill can be done by using effective questioning strategies.
Teachers can do this by asking the students some opened-questions that ask them to summarize and to synthesize their conclusion. Thus, the students' understanding about the text can be clearly seen through their responses to the questions asked.

Besides asking questions, the activity of summarizing the contents of the text is also one of the post-reading activities that can be applied to the students. This activity can encourage the students to involve more actively with the text. The result of summary can be used as the basis of determining the students' level of understanding to the text. In this activity, the students also practice the writing skill.

The activity of post-reading can also be done in the form of discussions. In this case, students are asked to discuss the content of the reading text, the text structures, or the writer's ideas. In discussing the reading text, the discussion can be in a group or whole-class discussion. The discussion may depend on the class size. If the class is big, it will be better to have a group discussion. But, if the class is small, it will be better to have whole-class discussion.

In conclusion, developing reading activities is one of reading teachers' jobs that must be conducted before, during, and after the reading activities. Before reading activities, teachers can begin the instruction by asking the students some questions to activate their background knowledge, telling them the objectives of instruction, and informing the prerequisite skills needed to comprehend the text. During reading activities, teacher can ask students to find out explicit and implicit main ideas, find out the details of information presented, and ask some questions that focus the students' attention to the text. After reading activities, teachers can ask the students some questions to check their understanding, ask them to make summary, retell the story, and discuss in group or whole-class.

**Managing and Organizing Reading Instruction**

Classroom organization and management are activities that every teacher should do before and during the presentation of the materials for the students. In this case, the reading teacher should do this in order that the reading instruction will be effective accordingly. Classroom organization and management do not actually directly involve the
reading process or materials, methods or approaches to teaching reading. Yet, without good classroom organization and management, reading instruction may be totally ineffective. They must also know what organizational patterns and management techniques are conducive to learning.

It is no secret that students within a single class vary a great deal in chronological age, maturity, cognitive abilities, interests, and personal experiences. In view of the obvious need to provide the most appropriate instruction for each learner, teachers must give careful consideration to have plans that provide for both individual differences and a sense of community. Then, when learning English reading takes place, students can learn from one another as well as from the teacher and on their own. In this case, students should participate in small group, individualized, partner, and whole-class activities.

In many classrooms, students have opportunities to work in different kinds of groups that may vary in purpose, format, and materials (Burns and Caroline, 2001). Purposes for groups may be skill development or shared interest; formats may be teacher or student led with varying numbers of participants, and the materials may be the same or different for all groups according to levels and themes.

In conclusion, efficient classroom management and organization are important components of effective reading instruction although they are not directly involved in the reading process. For organizing and managing a classroom, a reading teacher may apply several techniques, including different ways of grouping students (e.g. small group, individualized, partner, and whole-class activities). Such techniques can give the students a chance to develop their comprehension and a sense of community.

**Evaluating Reading Instruction**

Evaluating reading instruction is the teachers’ task in order to know their students’ performance after the teaching learning process takes place. Evaluating student progress is very important because it enables the teacher to discover each student’s strengths and weaknesses, to plan instruction accordingly, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies (Burns and Caroline, 2001). Evaluating the students’ learning
is very essential for good teaching and should be an integral part of instructional procedures. In evaluating the students’ progress, there are two procedures that can be applied: formal and informal evaluation. A formal evaluation refers to the evaluation the teachers do by testing the students with standardized tests, while an informal evaluation refers to the evaluation the teachers do by observing the students’ involvement during the teaching learning process and the classroom (Burns and Caroline, 2001). In evaluating the students’ progress in daily reading class, the teacher can use informal evaluation. In informal evaluation, the reading teacher may apply observation strategies. This means that the effective reading teacher observes and records the students’ performance through informal techniques. Such techniques include listening to students by reading aloud, examining their daily works and noting patterns of individual needs, and watching students solve problems through reading.

Moreover, three aspects of informal evaluation and among others are observation, interaction and analysis. During observation, the reading teacher carefully watches the activities of a single student, a group of students, or the whole-class to evaluate language use. Interaction takes place when the teacher raises questions and responds to the students in order to stimulate further language and cognitive growth. During analysis, the teacher gets information by listening to a student reading or discuss and examine the student’s work. The teacher then applies knowledge of learning principles to analyze the students’ ability in using the language.

Besides evaluating the students’ progress by using informal evaluation, the reading teacher can use formal evaluation. In this case, the teacher can use standardized tests. The standardized tests provide objective data about reading achievement and areas of strength and weakness of each student within a classroom. The results of the tests are most commonly expressed as grade equivalents (or grade scores) and percentile ranks. A grade score indicates the grade level for which a given score was the average score in the standardization sample a percentile rank expresses a score in terms of its position within a set of a hundred score.
In conclusion, evaluation procedures are changing as teachers seek ways to measure student progress in reading that reflect views of the reading process. For the evaluation to apply, the reading teachers can use formal and informal evaluation. Informal evaluation can take many forms, and reading teachers can learn much about their students by using observation strategies. While formal evaluation consists of norm-referenced (standardized) tests that may indicate comparison scores among students.

References


