

# **The Effect of Teaching Reading as Whole Text Task and Paragraph Task on EFL Learners' Speaking**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of English teaching is to improve the students' four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with the base of necessary phonetics, large vocabulary and good grammar, but this is not the final purpose. The final purpose is to let students be able to use the language.

Why do we study English? If a person is only good at listening and speaking, can we say that he is good at English? Not necessarily. If one is only good at reading and writing, can we say that he is good at the language? Not again. But If a student is good at English, he should be able to use the language, both in speaking and in writing.

Usually most of the Iranian students in school EFL learning do better in reading and writing English than in listening and speaking. They can read and write, but they can hardly communicate. They can hardly express themselves with their own words. This is partially because of the examination system, and partially the teaching method. We are not able to change the examination system, but we can improve our teaching method. Most of the teachers like to provide the students

with a lot of knowledge-words, phrases, grammar, usages and so on. Their focus is especially on the grammar. Yes, the students do need these, but many teachers forget to teach them how to study English, and how to use it.

Reading is one of the four skills in teaching language to students. During the 1960's, reading specialists became disappointed by basic skills instruction(Chastain, 1985). Grammar Translation was a system of learning and that was just reading aloud from old books without really being allowed to talk about it. Research on reading in a second language was almost nonexistent by up to the 1970s even though first language reading research had been flourishing for a couple of decades (Brown, 2001).

But the system of teaching reading has been flourished in favor of speaking since World War II. There are two strategies to teach reading and speaking as a controversial issue, the debates are still continuing, between the proponents of the two, those who want to teach from whole-to-parts and those who want to teach from part-to-whole (Day, 2004).

Once students have phonemic awareness, the ability to identify the different sounds of a language and learn that these sounds are represented by letters of the alphabet, then reading helps them practice decoding and writing helps them practice encoding (Chastain, 1985).

Speaking is the second language art, and cannot be developed until the person knows the sounds of the language and has some understanding that these sounds represent things in the real world. Nuttall (2004) addresses that “The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it.” (p.128)

Teachers who followed Palmer's lead (Palmer and Redman 1932, pp. 65-73, 105) felt that facility in reading could not be developed unless the students were trained in correct pronunciation, comprehension of uncomplicated spoken language, and the use of simple speech patterns. The students could then read aloud to get help with comprehension, and "hear" the text mentally as they were reading silently. This oral approach to reading was more in tune with the convictions and practices of direct-method teachers and made the new reading courses more acceptable to them.

Learning is much more than encoding and decoding words, though. Students who cannot read can still do a lot of very "high-level" thinking about the meaning of a story, the causes and effects and the purpose of the story (Maril, 2011).

There is a need to understand the organization of a text at 2 levels, at the paragraph level and at the whole text level (Maril, 2011). Paragraph level understanding means understanding the organization of the sentences in a

paragraph and the links among them. There is also the need to understand the logic of the paragraph or group of paragraphs, for example by drawing a mind map of the organization of the whole text.

The whole text level is organized in different ways according to the type of document one is reading, for example a memo might have a situation, problem, suggested solution and a request for action. A report usually has a title page, abstract, table of contents, methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations sections.

Literacy tasks for coursework should afford diverse opportunities for interaction among students: In a discussion of academic discourse and collaborative learning, Bruffee (1984) borrows the Vygotskian concept of thought as internalized conversation to argue for "engaging students in conversation among themselves at as many points in both the speaking and the reading process as possible"--in short, for pedagogical practice that acknowledges and reflects the social and inter-textual nature of literacy and knowledge. This means that less emphasis on reading as a solitary activity and more on reading and talking with others.

Reading is an interaction between a reader and a text and it requires enough knowledge of language as well as of the world (Hayashi, 1999). Hall and Ramig

(1978) recommended the use of meaningful, context-rich text so that students actively learn to use the meaning they have gained while reading to interpret texts. They use responses based on reading materials and internalize them in their speech.

Once students are encouraged to read and respond, teachers can observe students' reading processes and evaluate their reading skills by checking whether they really do their reading or not. This means that the teacher finally moves from an outside observer to an active participant in students' reading experience (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 143). For more effective lessons, students are asked to get involved in the class orally. By having students present the answers or do pair or group work, they can participate in class more actively. They communicate through their participation in class. This communication satisfies the purpose of language.

The purpose of language is communication. Communication is a process of sharing knowledge, experiences, information, ideas and feelings. Communication through language involves webs of interaction between messages that are given and received. Because communication is essentially an interactive process, the oral, written and visual components of language are highly interrelated. The ability to read and present a play, for example, combines skills of reading and speaking (Hosenfeld, 1979).

Language is a multidimensional construct which consists of different levels of abilities and domains (Ellis, 2003).

The primacy of oral language is recognized with spoken language, being language in the true sense of the term. Children first encounter language and begin to learn to use and interpret it in its spoken form well before they commence formal education. The development of their language from fundamental beginnings through more sophisticated constructions requires increasingly rich and complex opportunities and interactions in personal, social, cultural and curricular settings. These experiences lead to understandings about the meanings, effects and consequences of what is said, and help children to gain greater control over what they say and how they say it (Bruffee ,1984).

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that concerns producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997).Speaking cannot be taught separately. Speech has its own skills, structures, and conventions different from written language (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Carter & McCarthy, 1995; Cohen, 1986).

Speaking skill is one of the major abilities that can be somehow troublesome for EFL learners. The ability to communicate in a new language –target

language—based on its grammatical, contextual, social, and cultural rules, and variations is always difficult for EFL learners (Shumin, 2002).

Many language skills tasks have centered on speaking or reading, but others interrelated those language components. The interrelated tasks typically involved reading some written material in conjunction with oral activity. Most of the interrelated tasks were assessed in only one domain. When a task involving both reading and speaking was being assessed for speaking only, any support necessary for the reading component was made available by the teacher administrator (Ringler and Weber 1984).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Students have many problems in reading when they learn English. Some students feel afraid of reading because the reading materials are too difficult for them. It makes students give up finishing a book. That is why reading materials are very important in teaching and learning English. Teachers help students improve their language skills, including reading, by providing some creative and communicative reading-related activities in and out of class. According to the researcher's experience as a teacher in many Iranian schools, students are also afraid of changing the reading text to a speaking activity by talking about what they have

read and discussing it. They do not talk otherwise they are being asked to answer the specific questions.

In the high schools in Iran, following a traditional method, many students have usually been asked to read their textbooks in detail, focusing on every single word, phrases and sentences rather than understanding the whole meaning of their reading using various context clues, inferences, and other reading strategies.

However, there have been some changes in English classes recently. Teachers have begun to focus on communicative and authentic functions. Hall and Ramig (1978) noted that sentence is the minimal unit of language for communicating meaning.

Successful reading is not about decoding sounds and words, but encoding sentences orally. To comprehend the whole text, the reader must first comprehend the sentence and use responses to reinforce their comprehension through speaking (Hall and Ramig, 1978).

The innovative method and useful trend is to teach paragraphs of a multi paragraph text separately and get the students involved in learning and use reading for speaking (Manning, Manning and Long, 1989; Morrow, 1992). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the difference between teaching the whole reading text and teaching the same text which is divided into several parts and the effect of reading on learners' speaking ability.



### **1.3 Statement of the Research Question**

In pursuing the purpose of the study the following research question was posed:

RQ: Is there any significant difference between the effect of reading as whole task and reading as paragraph task on EFL learners' speaking ability?

### **1.4 Statement of the Research Hypothesis**

To investigate the research question the following null hypothesis was proposed:

H0: There is no significant difference between the effect of reading as whole task and reading as paragraph task on EFL learners' speaking ability.

### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

**Reading:** "Reading is the activity of reconstructing a reasonable spoken message from written symbols to a form of language to which the person can already attach meaning "(Chastain, 1985, p. 7).

**Speaking:** Speaking is constructing and communicating meaning orally for various purposes (Peter Eimas 1985). Speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as literary skills, in both first and second languages .Our learners often need to be able to speak with confidence in order to carry out many of their

most basic transactions (Bygate, 1978). In this study, speaking was operationally defined as the scores the students gained in a PET picture description test.

**Whole Reading:** Whole Language dogma claims that the rearrangement of students' reading allows the teacher ample opportunity to discover, and remedy if necessary, how well children are progressing toward the acquisition of reading ability. Whole language learning stresses the flow and meaning of the text, emphasizing reading for meaning and using language in ways that relate to the students' own lives and cultures (Goodman, 1989). In this study, whole means all paragraphs of a single text to be summarized after reading in a group or discussed by students in details.

**Paragraph Reading:** "Provide instruction in a specific aspect of word identification that draws from or extends the literature selection" Trachtenburg, P. (1990). In this study the paragraph reading level means understanding the meaning and organization of the sentences in a speaking, and links between them orally and relate the text to the students' own lives and cultures.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

As a teacher, the researcher has seen that students can read the text but they cannot speak about their reading and what they have comprehended. Therefore, providing

a teaching strategy in which students are asked to read every paragraph of a reading text and explain it or provide oral answers to the questions about the text forces them to communicate and speak better. The researcher has noticed that students who are asked to read the whole text always have problems in remembering the text and as a result cannot use its vocabulary, grammar and syntactic structure correctly. Therefore, mistakes of the comprehension of text would arise. If students read paragraphs separately, they may be able to do all skills of language learning easier and speaking skill would be better practiced and would satisfy the learners.

Nowadays, there is no doubting the fact that English language is becoming something of a forerunner in global communication. It is the language of choice in most countries of the world. The researcher hopes that this empirical study can provide a link between reading and speaking in Iranian schools EFL classes and propose guidelines for EFL teachers who wish to enhance their students' proficiency in English.

### **1.7 Limitations and Delimitation**

Like any other study, the present research had some limitations and one delimitation. The limitations were as follow:

1. Classes had participants with different level of language interest, so their efforts would be different.

2. In Iranian school considering the constitution, males and female should be in separate classes males taught by male teachers and females taught by female teachers, so the results cannot be generalized to context for both genders. In this study just male students participated. They were in grade 4 of high school (pre-university) in Sa'eedi high school in Tehran.

The delimitation was as follows:

The researcher chose the participants from pre university classes who had at least six years of English instruction starting from guidance school therefore being competent enough to focus on speaking. They were homogenized by administering a piloted PET. The researcher chose pre university learners because he believed that their differences would be tangibly observable after the course.

## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter begins with a definition of speaking skills and their importance in learning English as a foreign language. The second section defines reading and how students enhance learning speaking through reading whole task or paragraph task. The researcher then reviews additional studies that dealt with definitions of task in learning English. The objectives, principles and advantages of TBLT are also mentioned in this section. The practical subsection consists of brief reports about relevant studies.

#### **2.1 Speaking**

Speaking in an L2 has occupied a unique position throughout much of the history of language teaching. It has begun to emerge as a branch of teaching, learning, and testing in its own right only in the last two decades has, but rarely focuses on the production of spoken discourse (Carter and Nunan, 2001). Due to the difficulty of studying speaking, it was easier for teachers, methodologists, applied linguists and linguists to focus on written than spoken language (Brown, 2006). Iranian students are no exception and have difficulty with the English language. This is reflected in their achievement in the matriculation examination; their scores are usually very

low in all English language skills, especially in speaking. Iranian students usually hesitate to speak English because they have problems using accurate, fluent and complex language.

Of the four language skills (listening ,speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important. People who know a language are referred to as 'speakers of that language, as if speaking included all other types of skills, and many, if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak (Ur, 1981).

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns and Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking.

Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary (linguistic competence), but also they understand when, why and in what ways to produce language (sociolinguistic competence) (Cunningham, 1999).

Swain (1985), an important contributor of immersion- based evidence, was led to consider whether other factors beside input might affect language

competence. In particular she proposed the “comprehensible output hypothesis”, that is, to learn to speak we have actually to speak. Swain argued that knowing that one will need to speak makes one more likely to attend to syntax when one is listening.

Levelt (1989) identified three autonomous processing stages in speech production: (1) conceptualizing the message, (2) formulating the language representation, and (3) articulating the message.

Wilson (1997) claimed that children who can translate their thoughts and ideas into words are more likely to succeed in school. Students who do not develop good listening and speaking skill will have life-long consequences because of their deficit. He also pointed out that speaking skills do not need to be taught as a separate subject. These skills can easily be integrated into other subject matters. This is because, students learn talking, clarify thoughts by talking, comprehend better with discussion of reading, write better after talking during writing conferences, develop confidence by speaking in front of peers, and provide a window to their own thinking through their talk.

Graham- Marr (2004) mentioned many reasons for focusing on listening and speaking when teaching English as a foreign language, not least of which is the fact that we as humans have been learning languages through our ears and mouth

for thousands upon thousands of years, far longer we as humans have been able to read. Although not a set curriculum in most schools, speaking skills have been found to be a fundamental skill necessary for a child success in life.

Brown and Yule (1983) began their discussion on the nature of spoken language by distinguishing between spoken and written language. They pointed out that for most of its history; language teaching has been concerned with the teaching of written language. This language is characterized by well- formed sentences which are integrated into highly structured paragraphs. Spoken language, on the other hand, consists of short, often fragmentary utterances, in a range of pronunciations. There is often a great deal of repetition and overlap between one speaker and another, and speakers frequently use non-specific references. Brown and Yule (1983) also pointed out that the loosely organized syntax, the use of non-specific words and phrases, and the use of fillers such as 'well' and 'ahuh' make spoken language feel less conceptually dense than other types of language such as expository prose. They suggested that, in contrast with the teaching of written language, teachers concerned with teaching the spoken language must confront the following types of questions:

- What is the appropriate form of spoken language to teach?
- From the point of view of pronunciation, what is a reasonable model?



- How important is pronunciation?
- Is it any more important than teaching appropriate handwriting in the foreign language?
- If so, why?
- From the point of view of the structures taught, is it all right to teach the spoken language as if it were exactly like the written language, but with a few 'spoken expressions thrown in?
- Is it appropriate to teach the same structures to all foreign language students, no matter what their age is or their intentions in learning the spoken language?
- Are those structures which are described in standard grammars, the structures which our students should be expected to produce when they speak English?
- How is it possible to give students any sort of meaningful practice in producing spoken English?(Brown and Yule, 1983: 3)

Brown and Yule(1983) drew a useful distinction between two basic language functions. These are the transactional function, which is primarily concerned with the transfer of information, and the interactional function, in which the primarily purpose of speech is the maintenance of social relationships.

Nunan (1999) mentioned another basic distinction when considering the development of speaking skills: distinguishing between dialogue and monologue. The ability to give an uninterrupted oral presentation is quite distinct from interacting with one or more other speakers for transactional and interactional purposes. While all native speakers can and use Language interactionally, not all native speakers have the ability to extemporize on a given subject to a group of listeners.

Brown and Yule (1983) suggested that language teaching is mostly concerned with developing skills in short, interactional exchanges in which the learner is only required to make one or two utterances at a time.

The interactional nature of language was examined by Bygate (1996). Bygate distinguished between motor-perceptive skills, which are concerned with correctly using the sounds and structures of the language, and interactional skills, which involve using motor-perceptive skills for the purposes of communication. Motor-perceptive skills are developed in the language classroom through activities such as model dialogues, pattern practice, and oral drills and so on.

Bygate (1996) suggested that, in particular, learners need to develop skills in the management of interaction as well as in the negotiation of meaning. The management of the interaction involves such things as when and how to take the

floor, when to introduce a topic or change the subject, how to invite someone else to speak, how to keep a conversation going and so on. Negotiation of meaning refers to the skill of making sure the person you are speaking to have correctly understood you and that you have correctly understood them.

Nunan (1996 ,p176 ) mentioned that one can apply the bottom-up/top- down distinction to speaking. The bottom up approach to speaking suggests that speakers start with the smallest unit of language, i.e. individual sounds, and move through mastery of words and sentences to discourse. The top- down view, on the other hand, suggests that speakers start with the larger chunks of language, which are embedded in meaningful contexts, and use their knowledge of these contexts to comprehend and use correctly the smaller elements of language.

Nunan (1996) claimed that a successful oral communication should involve developing:

- The ability to articulate phonological features of the language comprehensibly;
- Mastery of stress, rhythm, intonation patterns; an acceptable degree of fluency;
- Transactional and interpersonal skills;
- Skills in taking short and long speaking turns;
- Skills in the management of the interaction;

- Skills in negotiating meaning
- Conversational listening skills (successful conversations require good listeners as well as good speakers)
- Skills in knowing about and negotiating purposes for conversations;
- Using appropriate conversational formulae and fillers.

Brown (2001) asserted that a review of the current issues in teaching oral communication will help to provide some perspective to moral practical considerations as the following:

### **2.1.1 Conversational discourse**

Brown claimed that when someone asks you "Do you speak English?" they are usually implying: "Are you able to carry on a reasonably fluent conversation?" The benchmark of successful language acquisition is almost always the demonstration of an ability to accomplish pragmatic goals through interactive discourse with other speakers. The goals and the procedures for teaching conversation are extremely diverse, depending on the student, teacher, and overall context of the class. Recent pedagogical research on teaching conversation has provided some parameters developing objectives and techniques (Ellis, R.2003).

### **2.1.2 Teaching pronunciation**