

A reading strategy for undergraduates with manifold objectives

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1. Introduction

Under graduates of the University of Kelaniya need varied proficiency levels in English Language depending on their respective academic pursuits. Those who offer it as a major, have to be highly proficient in it as it is an end by itself for them. Students in the faculties of Science, Management and Medicine need a reasonable proficiency level in English as it is the medium of instructions in those faculties. Rest of the students need English proficiency to pass E.L.T.U. Examinations. However there are 3 departments, namely Geography, Sinhala and Library science which administer department level English papers as compulsory units of the Degree Exam. Disciplines of the first two departments, which have been in existence on the university for a long time, and are conventional in nature, possess a large body of reading materials in both English and vernacular. Yet those of the Library Science which came into existence comparatively recently and having had only a brief history in the campus syllabus, don't have sufficient vernacular reading materials. This makes it necessary for library science students to read English medium texts available on the subject to collect input for assignments and exams. Often extracts from English texts are provided to students for this purpose.

2. Research Problem

Attempts made in the English Language classes to comprehend above printed matter using conventional strategies failed miserably repeatedly. On account of this written work related to the materials given was not possible either.

3. Hypothesis

On the basis of informal inquiries and personal observations, the inability on the part of the students to distinguish relevant data from

irrelevant data was hypothesized as being the main cause of the students' inability to understand the English printed matter. Secondary data available on reading strategies, confirm this assumption.

4. Literature Review

Berman's words: "reader must first and foremost recognize the basic parts of a sentence-what constitutes its main and subordinate clauses" prove this fact Berman, R.A. in Alderson (ed) 1984: 140. According to the same source "heaviness" in the text is a feature that "impedes" this recognition. As he points out, "heaviness" is a state caused by the addition of sub-parts to the "Kernel-Structure" which is a source of difficulty. Following citation from Berman's research: "I was so busy working out this part of the sentence. I forgot it was connected with something else" proves the significant bearing the long constructions have on comprehension. Though identifying the text's macro-structure, use of contextual clues etc. are strategies useful in comprehension, participants in this survey, being people who had not had a noteworthy exposure to them were not able to use them effectively. Following words of Malcom Cooper in Alderson (ed) 1984: 132 "unpracticed readers found it difficult to deduce word meaning from context, to understand lexical cohesion, and to understand the meaning relationships between sentences prove this inability to be a phenomenon common to inexperienced readers in general. Hence "parsing", a strategy which could be adopted "regardless of grade, level or skill of the reader" according to Wood 1974: 21 in Alderson(ed) 1982 was chosen to tackle the task. "Parsing" used in this survey, however, was significantly different from the standard one.

5. Significance of the Study (Present Technique)

Length and complexity of constructions being the factors that disorientate inexperienced readers a strategy whereby these constructions can be broken up into manageable segments and exhibited visually, it was thought would ease comprehension. It was with this aim, a grid was selected for the purpose. The grid consists of five columns named verb, subject, WH, Explanation and Details. Last 2 columns, are referred to as "Additional details" too. This column heading can be replaced by a question e.g. ("What do you know about, this") or a request: ("Can you explain it further") depending on the information needed. WH is an umbrella term covering the whole repertoire of WH questions. Each slot in the WH column is divided into two by a horizontal line, and the slot

above is allocated to write the question form for which the slot underneath provides the response.

6. Methodology

To begin with students are asked to identify the verb and write it in the first column. In the event of the verb being not decipherable students are encouraged to look for affixes, morphemes, syntactic order in the construction etc to identify the verb. If this strategy too fails to produce the desired effect, students are made to fill 2nd and 3rd columns selecting words through guess work from the sentence and formulate questions afterwards. If the response is still negative the teacher points out the verb. By the time the class has filled the first 3 columns the main clause is clear. Remaining parts of the construction are broken down to sense groups and tabulated in the grid next. Afterwards students are encouraged to frame questions and provide answers to them using the data found in the columns. Where the constructions dealt with in the grid, lend themselves for application students are made to construct statements and questions using new data.

Example :

Verb	Sub	WH	Additional Information	Additional Information
was enough	small quantity of DDT	for what? to kill mosquitoes	when? originally	kill how many? majority of mosquitoes
were enough	4 simple (A.L.) passes	for what? to enter the university	when? about 20 years ago	
was enough	a height of 5 feet	for what? to join the army	when? during war period	why? because people were afraid to join the army
was needed	a very long time	for what? to travel a small distance	when? before the discovery of steam power	

1. Was a small quantity of D.D.T. enough to KIU misquotes?
2. Yes.
3. When was that? Originally (at first)
4. When was a small height enough to join the army?
During the war
5. Why? because people were afraid to join the army?

6. When was a long time needed to travel?
Before the discovery of steam power.

Short question and answer of the above nature encourage students to use language for communication without elaborate planning or thinking which helps the teacher to inveigle the students to speech.

When students are sufficiently thorough with simple constructions. The grid is loaded with more data with the aim of exposing the students to complex constructions. Some of the constructions dealt with were as follows.

1. The library of the school which he now attends, after leaving his previous school where he studied up to O/L doesn't have a good lending library from where he can borrow books to write assignments.
2. Neighbourhood of Sarath's new house which he bought after selling his old and small house in town does not have enough people of his age group with whom he can keep company whenever he feels lonely.
3. Neighbourhood of the house which Nihal bought 2 months ago after selling his estate, has a lot of tutorials in the neighbourhood which coach students for almost all the exams to which Nihal can send his children for tuition which is a great relies for him.

Verb	Sub	WH	Additional Information	Additional Information	Additional Information	Additional Information
does not have	the library	what?	which library?	can you tell something about the school?	What do you know about the previous school?	What do you know about the library section?
		a good lending section	library of the school which he now attends	the school he attended after leaving the previous one	that the school where he studied up to O/L	lending section doesn't have books for him to borrow to write assignments.
does not have	neighbourhood of the new house	who? / who	which town	what do you know about the house in the town?	can you explain the neighbour-hood?	keep company with?
		doesn't have enough people of his age group	the new house which Sarath bought after selling old one in the town	it was old as well as small	it doesn't have people of Sarath's age with whom he can keep company.	Whenever Sarath feels lonely.
has	neighbourhood of the house which Nihal bought	what?	what do you know about the house?	explains the tutorials please	What are the advantages of the tuition?	Anything else?
		a number of tutorials	he bought 2 months ago after selling his estate	they coach students for almost all the exams.	Nihal can send his child -- the tuition.	is a great relief.

7. Participants

After a considerable length of time (on completion of roughly 2 semesters of teaching that is) a survey was conducted to gauge the impact of the strategy. Since Library Science is a small department in terms of student population, administering questionnaires to students of all the 3 academic years was thought to be necessary to obtain at least a reasonably sufficient representative sample for the survey. Hence, questionnaires were distributed among all the students of the Department at random. Distribution was done towards the end of the 2nd semester during which time students were busy with formalities connected with semester end exam. Due to this fact perhaps, the response rate for the survey was somewhat dismal. Only 44 questionnaires were returned out of which 17 could not be analyzed due to numerous flaws.

8. Format of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire consists of 3 segments and its first part elicits details such as name, academic year and details of attendance. Part 2 is a deficiency analysis which examines difficulties students encounter in relation to comprehension. Part 3 explains the characteristics of the grid and inquires about their significance to the students.

Part 2 Deficiency Analysis (Translation)

Problems that I face in relation to reading.

1. ignorance of vocabulary.
2. inability of distinguishing relevant words from irrelevant words.
3. Forgetting the first part of the sentence by the time I reach the middle of a complex sentence.

Part 3 The strategies the grid uses: (Translation)

Following are the characteristic of the grid used for comprehension. State whether it "helped" "did not help" or your "uncertainty" about it by writing x, y or z respectively in front of each statement.

1. Grid helps to distinguish relevant data from irrelevant data.
2. Grid helps to divide long sentences into short manageable segments.
3. Grid enables to see short passages as coherent wholes (entities)
4. Grid helps to frame questions.
5. Grid helps to form sentences by substituting new words.

9. Data Analysis

3 language deficiencies were provided in alphabetical order in the questionnaire and students were asked to rate each of them by writing the appropriate letter selected from a box given below them.

Summary of the Deficiency Analysis

X = 3	Y = 2	Z = 1	Raw Score	Percentage	Priority
3 x 8	2 x 10	1 x 9	53	65.43	2
3 x 3	2 x 12	1 x 12	45	55.55	3
3 x 10	2 x 10	1 x 7	57	70.37	1

Evaluation of the grid

Five of the benefits of the grid were itemized alphabetically leaving 3 columns in front of them to rate each one's contribution on a scale of . to 2.

No.	Grid helps to	Response:			Raw Score	Percentage	Priority
		Value:	Yes	Doubtful			
1	distinguish relevant data from irrelevant data	2x22 44	1x4 04	0x1 0	45	88.88	3
2	to divide long sentences into manageable segments	2x25 50	1x2 02	0 0	52	96.3	1
3	to see short passages as coherent wholes	2x20 40	1x5 05	0x2 0	45	80.33	5
4	to frame questions	2x24 48	1x2 02	0x1 0	50	95.9	2
5	to form sentences with new words	2x22 44	1x2 02	0x3 0	46	85.19	4

10. Observations

Primary aim of the questionnaire was assessing the grid's contribution towards solving reading problems, nevertheless, Deficiency Analysis, though illtimed, was also included in it to examine whether some of the language skills identified as needs "partly" on the basis of

researchers perception were correct. A survey of that nature was necessary. As there is a tendency for analysts to impose his or her perceptions and interpretations of needs on their learners which are unnecessary and unattainable (Halliday and Cooke in West (ed) 1992. However the statistics in the questionnaire dispel this doubt.

The most outstanding contribution of the grid: **"The assistance it renders to divide long sentences into manageable sense groups."** is the task which deficiency analysis too selects as its first priority.

The 2nd most useful contribution of the grid is **"the opportunity it affords learners to formulate questions."** This language area was not included in the Deficiency Analysis for comment, as the primary concern of that scrutiny was only identifying the impediments related to reading.

"Helping to distinguish relevant data from irrelevant data in constructions" which is another contribution of the grid is the 3rd priority according to the survey, incidentally this is the 3rd most difficult language task in relation to reading according to the Deficiency Analysis; As well 4th and 5th contributions of the grid respectively are: "providing a syntactic frame work to form new constructions" and "enabling the reader to see short paragraphs as coherent wholes." Despite the low priority score the latter received it is a useful language skill which can "wean away" students from "their obsession with words" and encourage them to exploit their innate powers of inference and prediction from linguistic evidence (Chitravely 1980 in Reading in a Foreign Language)

11. Conclusion

As can be seen from the facts above there is no significant correlation between some of the needs identified through the Deficiency Analysis and the competencies imparted by the grid. For instance problem related to vocabulary.

which is the 2nd priority of the Deficiency Analysis is not addressed by the grid. At the same time there are no references in the Deficiency survey to 3 of the competencies, namely to 3rd, 4th and 5th language skills which the grid helps to promote. Cause of this mismatch is the diverse aims. The researcher used the Deficiency Analysis to obtain data related to reading problems exclusively, and the aim of the other survey was getting as much information as possible about the grid.

However, with hindsight it is felt that questionnaire is not comprehensive, particular in relation to its range. Yet grid appears to have met participants needs in a large measure statistics in Data Analysis prove that.

පරිවර්තන සාහිත්‍යය පිළිබඳ අදහස් කිහිපයක්

චනාචාර්ය උපුල් ඩයින් හේවාචිනාන ගමගේ

පරිවර්තනයේ ස්වභාවය

‘පරිවර්තනය’ යන වචනය මූලික වශයෙන් ම ‘වෙනස් වීම’ හෙවත් ‘එක් තත්වයක සිට තවත් තත්වයකට පත්වීම’ යන අර්ථය දෙයි. සොබා දහම පිළිබඳ ව සිතා බැලීමේ දී එහි පැවැත්ම සිදු වන්නේ ඉහත කී ‘පරිවර්තනය’ හෙවත් ‘වෙනස් වීම’ අනුව බව වැටහී යයි. සොබා දහමට අයත් සියල්ලෙහි ‘මූලික ධර්මතාව’ මෙයයි. සියල්ල පවතින්නේ එම මූලික ධර්මතාවට අනුවය යන්න පිළිබඳ විවාදයක් නැත. මානව මානසික ලෝකයට අයත් ‘සාහිත්‍යය’ නම් විෂයයෙහි එන ‘පරිවර්තනය’ නම් කාර්යය ද මෙම ‘ධර්මතාවට ම’ අයත්ය යන්න මගේ වැටහීමයි.

මානව ශිෂ්ටාචාරය හා පරිවර්තනය

සොබා දහමට අයත් විශිෂ්ට අංගයක් ලෙස හැඳින්විය හැකි මානව ශිෂ්ටාචාරයෙහි ආරම්භයේ පටන් ම ‘පරිවර්තන’ කාර්යය සිදු වී ඇති බව පෙනී යයි. පරිසරයෙහි තමා දකින දෑ මානවයා කිසියම් ආකාරයක සංකේත රැසකට පරිවර්තනය කළේය. එය ගුහා බිත්තියක් මත, ගසක කඳක් මත, මැටි පුවරුවක් මත සටහන් කළේය. එය, එක් මානව කණ්ඩායමක සිට තවත් මානව කණ්ඩායමක් දක්වා ගමන් කිරීමේ දී තව තවත් වෙනස්කම්වලට භාජනය විය. භාෂාව නමැති මෙවලම සාදා ගන්නට පෙර ද මෙසේ යම් යම් ආකාරවල ‘පරිවර්තන’ සිදු නොවුණා නො වේ. එය, එක්තරා ආකාරයකට මානව කණ්ඩායම් සංවිධානය වීමේ දී අනන්‍යතා ප්‍රදර්ශනය කරනු වස් භාවිත වී ඇති බව පෙනී යයි.

භාෂාව හා සංස්කෘතිය

භාෂාව නමැති මෙවලම මානව ශිෂ්ටාචාරය නව මගකට යොමු කළේය යන්න විවාදයකින් තොර ව පිළිගත හැකි කරුණකි. කණ්ඩායම් වශයෙන් සංවිධානය වූ සමාජ රාශියක් තමතමන්ගේ ස්වභාවික පරිසරයන්ට අනුකූල ‘භාෂා’ සම්මත කර ගති. මුඛින් පිටවන ශබ්ද ‘අක්‍ෂර සංකේත’ බවට පරිවර්තනය කර ගති. එක් එක් කණ්ඩායම්