

The Efficacy of Think-Aloud Strategy in Reading Comprehension

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Introduction

Students who are learning a particular language are exposed to many different strategies to improve their respective skill. Elementary students learn how to read but gradually their level becomes high, and the same reading skill requires much more modification to make it perfect. At this level they are not only supposed to read the lines of a text, but they are to discover the intended meaning of that text. For this, their reading skill and the ability to express their own viewpoints need to be sharpened. There are many students who have the talent to read between the lines but require the proficiency to express them. In reading, especially in critical reading, this scarcity becomes a barrier to successful learning process. To rise above this problem linguists suggest several ways or strategies to practice; among them we consider Think-Aloud strategies more striking. Think-alouds (Davey, 1983) are times when students stop to describe their thinking process aloud while they are reading something. It is a kind of process which facilitates students to scrutinize their thoughts while reading a particular text. This research investigates how the performance of the students who are exposed to Think-Aloud strategies and who are not, differs from each other.

1. Hypotheses

Students who are exposed to Think-Aloud strategies before going through a text, are more successful critical readers than those who are not.

2. Methodology

To enrich our research, we wanted to collect information from Newspapers, journals and relevant books and articles which might help to probe deep into this matter, but as the current research is a unique one, secondary sources of data were not available that much. As a result, we

had to depend on only primary data. We have managed 4 (four) students who belong to same educational background and same level with whom we have arranged a test to evaluate our hypotheses. Two of them were exposed to the Think-Aloud strategies and another two were not. They were given a long paragraph of Francis Bacon's Of Marriage and Single Life as their text through which we kept on testing their ability to express their thought. All the four students were graduate students. So, it was easier for us to monitor their performance. The main focus of this research was the responses from two types of students. So, to evaluate the students' responses we arranged a test for both groups. Before that, the first group of two students was given direction, how to apply Think-Aloud strategies while reading. They were exposed to five Think-Aloud responses:

- Imagery/visual responses
- Making connections to personal experiences
- Making connections to other texts
- Predictions
- Stating understanding or confusion (Laurie, n. d.)

Both groups were given 20 minutes to answer three questions. The questions were in a different form. There were three blank spaces in their given passage. They were asked to write down the thoughts what come first in their mind when they read those sentences. The first group had to include which Think-Aloud strategies they had followed to respond to those sentences. As they finished their task, they were asked to read out what they had written. Their responses to the given sentences made our observation more explicit.

3. Findings

The text we selected for this research was appropriate for undergraduate students. So, we have chosen the four students who are at this level. In Appendix 1 the text is attached and also Appendix 2 presents the activity sheet they would use. Students who were exposed to Think-Aloud strategies their responses to the given sentences were like their comment. They seemed much more liberal to their responses. For example, when they were asked to respond to the line - 'Nay more, there are some foolish rich covetous men that take a pride, in having no children, because they may be thought so much the richer'. One of them responded - 'a wife may also consider the responsibility to her husband and children as burden, but this type of men and women have no right to consider themselves as human being'. The student mentioned he was making connection to his personal experience. On the other hand, the responses from the other group were like they were explaining the meaning of sentence. One of them responded to the same sentence in this way - 'in order to be richer some people are against marriage and having children because they consider them as unnecessary source of spending money'. These two comments indicate the difference between the two groups of students. The first group took more

time than the later one. The responses came from the former were qualitatively different from the responses of the second group. If a reader wants to go beyond conventional reading, he has to be familiar with the Think-Aloud strategy.

4. Revision of Hypotheses

After analyzing the responses of the two groups of students it has been established that - Students who are exposed to Think-Aloud strategies before going through a text are more successful critical readers than those who are not, but the first group takes more time than the second one. But we need to consider also whether the students not exposed to Think-Aloud strategies are following or have followed any other reading strategies.

5. Limitations

This present study is limited to a number of factors. The number of students is limited in terms of size because of time constraint. Though we have tried to gather as much information as we could to prove our hypotheses, this study has got some limitations too. There was scarcely any secondary data found that could have been used in this study. Above all, the responses of a few students cannot be considered as the standard research findings to establish a hypothesis.

6. Conclusion

Though there are some limitations, there is scopes for further study. This study will definitely help students to improve their critical reading skills. For them it would be the basis of their study in a much broader area.

Appendix 1

Of Marriage and Single Life

- Francis Bacon

Courtesy:

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The Works of Francis Bacon/Volume 1/Essays/Of Marriage and Single Life](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_Francis_Bacon/Volume_1/Essays/Of_Marriage_and_Single_Life)

HE that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men; which both in affection and means, have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children, should have greatest care of future times; unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. Some there are, who though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences. Nay, there are some other, that account wife and children, but as bills of charges. Nay more, there are some foolish rich covetous men, that take a pride, in having no children, because they may be thought so much the richer. **(1. Space**

for Student's Think-aloud response ...)

For perhaps they have heard some talk, Such an one is a great rich man, and another except to it, Yea, but he hath a great charge of children; as if it were an abatement to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single life, is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters, to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away; and almost all fugitives, are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen; for charity will hardly water the ground, where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates; for if they be facile and corrupt, you shall have a servant, five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly in their hortatives, put men in mind of their wives and children; and I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks, maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more

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cruel and hardhearted (good to make severe inquisitors), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon **(2. Space for Student’s Think-aloud response ...)** Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses **(3. Space for Student’s Think-aloud response ...)** ...so as a man may have a quarrel to marry, when he will. But yet he was reputed one of the wise men, that made answer to the question, when a man should marry, - A young man not yet, an elder man not at all....


Appendix 2

Activity Sheet

References

Davey, B. (1983). *Think-aloud: Modeling the cognitive processes of reading comprehension*. *Journal of Reading*, 27(1), 44.

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