



THE SPEED-READING TECHNIQUE TO BOOST ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' TEXT COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

Nowadays, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners still have problems comprehending the texts they are reading. This article aims at reviewing the speed-reading technique as one of the techniques to boost EFL learners' text comprehension. A qualitative descriptive research design was applied for the present study. The data were obtained through a documentation study and used state-of-the-art sources in the related studies. Furthermore, the literature review was used to elucidate the findings from the previous studies and related to the present review. The data were analyzed qualitatively by describing how the speed-reading technique can boost learners' text comprehension. It initiates with information about a brief of speed reading, the development, and trends of speed reading, then describes the speed-reading purposes and movement. The speed-reading techniques to be acquired by the EFL learners are described thoroughly. Besides, the benefits and several implications of speed reading for the Indonesian EFL learners in the classroom practice are highlighted. Finally, this article provides some conclusions and recommendations on what teachers, students, and government can do to boost EFL learners' text comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners can perform speed reading to increase their knowledge and skills. Readers would like to find out information and the intended meaning of words and sentences in the reading activities using their background knowledge (Anderson, 2008; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Nunan, 2003; Pang et al., 2003; Rayner et al., 2016). Moreover, in the reading process, readers figure out items in a text and translate them into images or ideas (Bennette, 2001). With the increasing number of scholarly manuscripts published each year, EFL learners have to read a lot and provide a particular time for reading several texts. To solve this problem, EFL learners may increase their reading speed to boost their comprehension of the texts.

Sutz (2009) defines speed reading as the process of seeing, decoding, and comprehending words. Meanwhile, Gunasekaran (2019) states that readers can get efficiency and attention through the printed line in speed reading. Furthermore, readers can use speed reading to increase their reading rate, comprehend a text quickly, and absorb information precisely and rapidly compared to their previous reading speed (Choirinintgyas, 2018; Rizkoh, 2014; Sirait & Hutauruk, Bertaria Sohnata Herman, 2020; Tanjung, 2017). The goal of readers is to read fast and comprehend the contents of the text.

Several studies revealed that speed reading could enhance readers' text comprehension (Bell, 2001; Dyson & Haselgrove, 2001). Walczyk et al. (1999) also found out that people who performed speed reading would improve their knowledge of sentence comprehension. Meanwhile, other factors like motivation to read, level of mastery of the text, age, and reading strategies can also affect text comprehension.

Furthermore, Tanjung (2017) found out that students' reading speed and comprehension have a close relationship. Abdullah's (2018) research findings confirm that comprehension can be improved in the reading platform and face-to-face. Moreover, Amir (2018) also demonstrates a significant relationship between reading strategies and speed reading towards students' reading skills.

The most recent study conducted by Hutauruk (2020) confirms that speed reading is one of the techniques that may help readers improve their reading ability in understanding a text. Furthermore, the previous related research findings show that the reading strategies could predict readers' reading comprehension skills and become an element in reading comprehension skills (Beglar et al., 2011; Chung & Nation, 2006; Kyung-Sook & Hey-Jung, 2004; Wainwright, 2007).

EFL learners' reading habits are varied. Since reading is personal, each person has their reading ability. However, EFL learners have to comprehend several texts, and they need to choose an appropriate reading technique to support their reading comprehension. Nowadays, EFL learners encounter some problems understanding the messages in the text messages because readers are still reading the text based on their habits (Peter Shepherd & Unsworth-Mitchell, 1997). Furthermore, several readers read much faster and try to remember more of what they have already read, while some try to comprehend the text by performing a slow reading.

This article reviews the speed-reading technique and delineates how the technique can boost EFL learners' text comprehension. Therefore, it begins with information about a brief of speed reading, the development, and the trends of speed reading, then describes its purposes and movement. Furthermore, the speed-reading techniques to be acquired by the EFL learners are described thoroughly. The implication of speed reading for the Indonesian EFL learners in the classroom practice is highlighted. Finally, it is ended up by providing conclusions and recommendations to the related stakeholders.

The present study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design. The data needed in the present study were obtained through a library and documentation study in the form of the state-of-the-art of previous related studies, which were utilized to gain more insights on speed-reading techniques related to EFL learners' text comprehension. The data were analyzed qualitatively by describing how the speed-reading technique can boost EFL learners' text comprehension. Since the present study aims to review the technique of speed reading and delineate how the technique can boost EFL learners' text comprehension, the researcher scrutinized the related previous findings and provided several related information about speed reading in the context of how the technique can be used can boost EFL learners' text comprehension. Moreover, the analysis was performed to explore its relationship with learners' text comprehension. Besides, the benefits and several implications of speed reading are highlighted.

DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEMES

A Brief History of Speed Reading

The United States Air Force was the first to introduce and develop speed reading by using the methodology behind the tachistoscope used during World War II. This methodology was used to assist fighter pilots in figuring out aircraft silhouettes and determining how quickly

they could read indicators and button labels (Ford, 2005). This tool was used to train pilots to promptly identify enemy planes while in the cockpit.

During the late 1950s, speed reading was introduced in the United States of America by Evelyn Wood. She coined the term “speed reading” before it became a conventional phrase. Upon completing a study on the habits of naturally fast readers, she developed a methodology and introduced it to the public at every academic event in the USA. She started teaching speed reading to college students in the late 1990s. Furthermore, Wood studied exceptional readers and found out people who could read between 1500 and 6000 words per minute, often by reading down the page rather than from side to side, reading meaningful groups of words rather than individual words, and avoiding rereading texts (regression). She also noticed that faster readers could obtain efficient and effective reading results.

Together with her husband, Evelyn Wood created a system that could help readers increase their speed in reading on average from a rate of 230 to 300 wpm (words per minute) by a factor of two to five times that, with increased retention. They named the system Evelyn Wood Speed-reading Dynamics. Having succeeded with the system, she taught the program throughout the USA.

The White House staff members and college students took her course until the late 1990s. She is credited with introducing the use of a ‘pacer’ (a finger or capped pen which encourages the eye to move quickly down the text), and she discouraged subvocalization. The technique of speed reading has been refined through the years, and readers may achieve the ability to read fast without ignoring the comprehension of the words and phrases they are reading by the absence of subvocalizing every word.

The Development and Trends of Speed Reading

Literature shows that speed-reading techniques saw some of the earliest references in the third quarter of the 19th century. Emil Javel, around 1878, a French ophthalmologist who is remembered for his work on correcting squints, conducted some experiments into how the eye is involved in reading. He established that the eye does a series of ‘jumps’ (called ‘saccades’) along the line and pauses to take in information at each ‘stop’ (‘fixation’). In addition, he also claimed that it was possible to take in information from either side of the fixation, that people could understand chunks of text rather than reading every word. Some six years later, articles began to appear in journals (including ‘The Education Review’) about enhanced reading skills acquired by reading groups of words without vocalizing (saying the words to yourself as you read).

In 1921, John Anthony O'Brien launched a book called 'Silent Reading.' This book provides an excellent reference for developing speed reading. A study in the psychology and pedagogy of reading' reiterated that it was possible to read groups of words without vocalizing. In the 1940s, Harvard University experimented with 'rapid' reading using a tachistoscope. This device, first described by A. W. Volkman, a German physiologist, in 1859, used to be used (before computers) for experiments that involved showing subjects visual stimuli for controlled durations. They have been used to encourage recognition speed and show items for too short a period for them to register consciously.

In 1940, a book called 'How to Read a Book' was published by American professor, philosopher, and educational theorist, Dr. Mortimer J. Adler. It was more about how books should be classified and how to read books in-depth than it was about reading faster. However, in the revised 1966 edition, he refers to 'syntopical reading' (the basis of the comparative reading of several books with one purpose at one time, which we refer to as 'synoptic processing'), which he defines as reading the whole pages, in contrast, reading through a single work.

The concept of speed reading by Tony Buzan was published in 1971. His greater contribution to the speed-reading system was the development of mind mapping to take non-linear notes, which he writes about in numerous other books. In his speed-reading book *Mind Map Organic Study Technique (MMOST)*, Buzan made up two sections; 1) preparation (setting a time for the study period, deciding on the amount of material to be covered, checking how much knowledge you already have, and setting down goals in the form of questions); and 2) application (Survey, Preview, Review, and Review). Buzan (2006) gives exciting insights into reading and some problems that hold back slow readers. Still, much of his book is given over to mechanical number-spotting exercises and textual comprehension tests. He recommends building vocabulary and, to that end, lists the meanings of 80 prefixes and 51 suffixes.

Nowadays, big businesses and governments have taken advantage of speed reading for years. For instance, giant companies like IBM, Microsoft, Xerox, and Hewlett Packard, trained their executives to perform speed reading. Furthermore, several presidents of America took the training in speed reading, including John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter. Speed reading is still relevant and needed in the current EFL learner situation and will grow significantly in the coming years. It is in line with Rizkoh (2014), who states that speed reading can influence students' reading habits to read at a speed rate. Students can increase their reading rates and save time without ignoring text comprehension. That is why speed reading will be developed significantly because students take advantage of their benefits to save time and comprehend

passages they are reading. As it positively affects the EFL learners, the training in speed reading is mainly needed for everyone at any time.

The development and trends of speed reading provide information and data that the speed-reading technique has been widely applied in education and the business industry. From the educational perspective, the speed-reading technique can help EFL teachers and learners to increase their reading rate, which in turn to save their reading time without ignoring the content of the text they are reading. In the business industry, speed reading has been performed by the employees in some big companies to save their time and reading materials.

The Speed Reading Purposes and Movement

The reasons for reading among the readers are varied. Generally, readers are willing to gain information from a text they are reading as much as possible in a very short time without ignoring comprehension (Buzan, 2006; Hutauruk, 2020; Martiarini, 2015). When reading, for instance, articles, newspapers, and books, readers would have their ways of comprehending the content of a text within paragraphs.

When readers start to read, they have some purposes, such as to achieve specific information, such as the main ideas, particular words, and phrases. According to Choirinintgyas (2018), speed reading is reading fast and paying attention to the necessary aspects such as comprehension, skimming, and critically reading. She went on to say that the speed reading technique is the reading by using the eye movement, brain, and voiceless. It is in line with Wainwright's (2007) findings that reading faster is conducted critically without loss of comprehension. This technique helps readers absorb specific information, find the main idea, and comprehend the text better. Some EFL learners perform reading at high speed to comprehend the general information about a passage in a short period. A good reading process would lead a better comprehension (Tanjung, 2017).

In an attempt to develop and increase their knowledge, EFL students are required to read learning materials and other reading texts as part of the classroom tasks. It is not a big surprise that many of them do not know speed-reading techniques, while at the same time, they have to provide enough time to do dozens of home works. Therefore, knowing speed-reading techniques is one of the best ways to absorb reading materials quickly and effectively.

Literature review shows that reading groups of words and a chunk of information are the tricks you can apply in speed reading. In other words, reading word-by-word is not recommended at all. It is in line with the University of Maryland & Coles Notes (2010) that there are seven strategies to increase the reading rate they are; first, make sure you have a good

eye checked, expand eye movement, never reread twice the words in reading materials, stay focus to the main idea of the text you are reading. A reader who performs speed reading should not read every word on the page. It emphasizes basic text information then readers will remember and review the important points later. Indeed, EFL learners can learn how to be speed readers.

However, the speed reading will not run smoothly if there are some inhibiting factors. According to Konstant (2010), some inhibiting factors affect the speed of reading, including the difficulty of the text, recognizing the subject, clarity of the purposes, mood and urgency, and stress level of the readers. Meanwhile, the University of Maryland & Coles Notes (2010) confirms that the inhibiting factors can reduce the readers' reading rate. The readers' eye movement and span of vision are necessary to become fast readers. Readers should not move their eyes only slightly to take in much information from a text. Readers are encouraged not to read each word separately but to read large groups of words simultaneously. It makes it possible for the readers to increase their peripheral visual abilities.

When readers conduct the speed-reading movement, they will experience two pleasant scenarios. First, readers can reduce markedly the time they are expected to perform the necessary reading. Second, readers would be able to read a text the same number of times (Cutler, 2003). The readers' eyes will move in a series of quick jumps and still intervals while reading. The students' reading speed at the slowest speeds of fixation would be less than 100 words per minute (wpm).

Furthermore, Beale & Mullan (2008) categorized the reading speed into four main groups, readers who can read more than 700 wpm are considered excellent readers; readers who can read 300-700 wpm are regarded as the above-average readers; readers who can read between 200-300 wpm are categorized into average readers; readers who can read between 100-200 wpm are classified into the slow readers.

The word familiarization is also essential to becoming fast readers. When they do not know words well, readers will waste their time reading a short text. Unlike a slow reader, a fast reader would have good memory and knowledge of words. Fast readers will combine their regular eye movements, make larger blocks of words, and perform reading silently. That is why those who can read faster gain good visualization and memory.

Speed-Reading Technique

In speed reading, readers may read passages that are available both in the printed media and electronic and learn how they view the words in the text they are reading. By so doing, readers will experience how their brain processes information. (Macalister, 2010) suggest that the activities of fluency reading must include a speed-reading course. Meanwhile, Nation (2009) argues that some factors affect speed reading, including readers' reading purposes and the text difficulty level.

According to Sutz (2009), some techniques can improve speed reading. They are; 1) Pre-reading: in this stage, readers need to set their reading goals and areas of interest; 2) Widen the vision span: readers should widen their vision to several words in the text (not a word per word); 3) Avoid vocalization: reading with vocalization will cause less concentration, focus, and comprehension the information in a text; 4) Read the main idea: the readers are getting the gist of what the author's mean and the main idea; 5) Use the eye swap: to increase the speed reading, readers need to swap the text with reading line go to the next line using eye swap; 6) Resist regression: readers no need to reread the previous sentence to ensure that they comprehend or not the sentences they have been read; 7) Vary the reading rate: in this stage, readers need to know when to slow down and when to speed up.

To overcome the difficulties in comprehending texts, readers must have the ability to read 250 words per minute (wpm). It is in line with Nation (2009), who states that the goal of second language learners who are experiencing unknown grammar and vocabulary in a text is around 250 wpm. To be able to perform speed reading, Spargo (1989) purpose the techniques such as; 1) previewing the main idea - this technique aims to help the reader to be a fast reader; 2) reading for the meaning - a good reader would read the text and look for meaning; 3) grasping paragraph sense - a good reader understand how to find out the main ideas of paragraph quickly; 4) organizing facts - a good reader organize facts and understand how the facts all fit together to deliver the author's message.

Abdelrahman & Bsharah (2014) suggest several tips for speed-reading techniques to help readers improve text comprehension. They are; 1) move the hand slowly straight down the page as the eyes follow, 2) move the card to be followed by the brain, 3) use the hand to help draw the eyes across the page, 4) hop-lift fingers and make two bounced on each line to catch sections of three or four words and then move on 5) take the hand and cut the text in a diagonal motion for two or the line.

Visual aids help readers' eyes on the text when readers read a text by performing the following; 1) Pointing: learners learn to read by moving their fingers along the text. This way is considered a great reading practice. Moreover, the way learners move their hand, or pen, under the line of a text in a smooth motion will help them a lot; 2) Downstrokes: moving the hand slowly on the reading page will assist in drawing the eyes down as reading. The eyes do not have to follow the hand exactly, but the motion will assist the reader in going faster.

According to Cutler (2003), there are five ways to determine the reading rate in words-per-minute (wpm) they are; 1) subtract the starting time from the finishing time; (2) convert whole minutes into seconds by multiplying by 60; (3) now add to this any extra seconds; (4) divide total seconds into, for instance, 1,306 (the number of words in this selection). Carry only to the largest single decimal place. The answer will be something like 2.7, or 3.4, etc. This number is the words-per-second rate; (5) finally, multiply the words per the second rate by 60 to determine the words-per-minute rate.

Literature shows that the more readers' eyes move, the slower the readers are because they struggle over the printed page. Generally, the slow readers will make more visual stops per line as there are letters in words on that line. The faster readers may stop only once every two or three words as they move forward. The fast readers seldom stop more than twice per line. It is highly recommended that readers reduce their eye movement.

The Benefit of Speed Reading

Speed reading provides many benefits to EFL Learners. For instance, by having speed-reading skills, students like to read more and more because they can inure the materials they are reading in a short time when performing speed reading. It makes them more like to read for pleasure. Abdelrahman & Bsharah (2014) confirm that having an appropriate technique of speed reading made it possible for students to comprehend a text easily and improve their academic achievement.

A reader will be able to overview texts or other reading materials by performing speed-reading techniques. A reader can do this in several ways to highlight and underline the important information by skimming the text. According to Beale (2013), in speed-reading strategies, readers need to figure out how to skim and scan information in a text. It is in line with Brown (2007), who states that the two most valuable reading strategies for readers are scanning and skimming. Moreover, Abdelrahman & Bsharah (2014) state that skimming and scanning strategies can help students enhance their speed in reading.

Literature reviews showed that several studies have shown that readers with knowledge and skills would perform better in college and have fewer behavioral problems (Ford, 2005). When readers read some texts, for instance, articles and books, but have minimal time to read them all, speed reading is highly recommended to gain the key information and save time. According to Klaser in Browning (2003), there are several benefits of EFL learners having the speed-reading skills; namely, EFL learners will save their time in reading the text (time-consuming), speed reading will help them to be more focused on the main information in a text, the EFL learners may improve their reading ability and academic grade.

Since reading is an activity to comprehend written text, it can improve readers' reading comprehension; Readers can boost our understanding by applying the speed-reading technique. Generally, readers would like to comprehend passages they are reading without losing the meaning of each word and concept they do not understand. Once readers experience difficulties in comprehending the messages or misunderstood words or concepts, then readers might encounter problems in comprehending a text. Besides, readers are distracted, making them bored (Peter Shepherd & Unsworth-Mitchell, 1997). Readers in speed reading may have better concentration and greater comprehension as they can increase their potential speed in reading and comprehension. Having had the technique, readers as English Foreign Language (EFL) learners can improve their reading achievement and academic grades.

The Implication of Speed Reading for Indonesian Efl Learners in the Classroom Practice

Considering the emergence of reading skills in learning the English language, speed reading is still very much needed by Indonesian EFL learners in classroom practice. Moreover, speed-reading can be taught to every language learner, even from an early age. The speed-reading technique can be used as an alternative way to help the students read quickly. Helping Indonesian EFL learners to develop their English language ability can be done by developing their effective reading skills (Swanson & Collett, 2016).

In classroom practice, teachers may apply speed-reading techniques in several steps. EFL learners are trained to use the technique of scanning, skimming, previewing, and predicting the main idea of the text. Then, students will be asked to follow the speed-reading technique to make them familiar with reading at a high-speed rate and being fast readers. EFL learners' ability to read and comprehend materials written in English is very important. It is one of the requirements to succeed in academic life and their profession after completing their study (Hidayati, 2019). She went on to say that speed reading should become a significant concern in the development of English teaching in Indonesia to prepare graduates to be efficient readers.

It is in line with Ratnasari et al. (2013), who state that speed reading makes it possible for EFL learners to gain accurate information thoroughly in a short period. Indeed, it is a great idea to train students to practice speed reading in the learning and teaching process within the classroom.

Readers' text comprehension can be excellent if the reader reads at high speed. It is in line with what Quinn et al. (2007) state that fast reading can help EFL learners to understand the text. Since speed reading is very closely related to reading comprehension, the more words readers can comprehend at one time, the better their understanding of the text they are reading. According to Konstant (2010), the readers' text comprehension will increase simultaneously as the speed increases.

The speed-reading technique should be applied by teachers when teaching reading skills in the classroom to familiarize the Indonesian EFL learners to read at high speed. Besides, teachers should train students to respond the question quickly. Then, EFL teachers may also provide several learning activities to increase learners' reading rates, such as self-paced reading, repeated reading, and rate-build-up reading. It is beneficial to alter from slow reading habits to speed-reading habits.

Since speed reading can increase the EFL learners reading rate, they must apply it to their reading habits. Speed reading can be used to improve the reading habits of the EFL learner to read quickly. According to Klaser in Browning (2003), there are four benefits of having skills in reading faster in the classroom; 1) speed reading may save learners' reading time; 2) readers may have better concentration which leads to greater comprehension; 3) readers' high skill of speed reading may increase their potential speed, comprehension, and academic grades; and 4) learners may enjoy their reading session and can promote greater extensive reading.

Having a bunch of reading materials makes it possible for EFL learners to possess knowledge in comprehending the overall structure of an argument of a text by performing speed reading. Indeed, speed-reading skills will make their schoolwork easier. Furthermore, if it is practiced appropriately in the classroom, speed reading can significantly improve EFL learners' reading achievement. Moreover, EFL learners should be given more reading materials to be fast readers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The speed-reading technique can boost EFL learners' text comprehension, saving learners time to read a wide range of reading materials. Therefore, it is still relevant and always needed

to the current EFL learner situation and benefits them from the technique of speed reading. There is a significant correlation between EFL learners' reading speed and reading comprehension. There are several strategies to increase reading rate, including expanding eye movement, never rereading twice the words in reading materials, stay focused on the main idea of the text you are reading. Moreover, the readers' eye movement and span of vision are the most important ways of learning how to read better and faster.

EFL teachers should provide several learning activities to increase learners' reading rates. The techniques that can be used include scanning, skimming, previewing, and predicting the text's main idea. There are several inhibiting factors affecting the speed of reading. They are the difficulty level of the text, recognizing the subject, clarity of the purposes, mood and urgency, and stress level of the reader. If the speed-reading technique is applied correctly, EFL learners will become fluent readers and improve text comprehension achievement.

Recommendations

Bearing in mind the benefits of the speed-reading technique to boost EFL learners' text comprehension and the emergence of reading skills in the learning and teaching process, the researcher would like to recommend EFL teachers who involve in English Foreign Language teaching apply the technique of speed reading to ensure the students read at a speed rate and ask them to answer the question quickly. Besides, teachers should prepare students to perform several activities to increase reading rates. Next, the researcher would also recommend EFL students perform speed reading to save time and improve their text comprehension. Besides, speed reading is one of the best ways to improve students' reading rate and absorb the reading materials quickly. Last but not least, the researcher would like to recommend the Indonesia Ministry of Education include training in speed reading in the school curriculum and train teachers to perform speed-reading techniques while teaching reading in the class.

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