

Original Paper

The Effect of Skimming on Educational Reading Texts

Mahmoud Kamal Ibrahim Mostafa^{1*}

¹ English Department, Faculty of Common First Year, Jouf University, Al-Jouf, Saudi Arabia

* Mahmoud Kamal Ibrahim Mostafa, English Department, Faculty of Common First Year, Jouf University, Al-Jouf, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effect of skimming on the learners' educational reading comprehension skills. In order to answer research questions, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used observation and questionnaires as instruments to collect the data. The participants were 28 students in the common first year at Al-jouf university for the academic year 2020/2021. The study lasted for four weeks. The instruments of the study included observation and a questionnaire. They were approved by a panel of jury. The result of the study showed that most of the students positively responded that the skimming technique was an effective way to understand educational reading texts and helped them to answer the questions attached to the texts easily and quickly. As such, it was concluded that skimming had a positive effect on developing EFL university learners' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords

reading comprehension, skimming technique

1. Introduction

Learning to read is very important to enable formal education in which reading to learn takes the central focus (William, 1998). Educational institutions today demand readers who are able to read and find the main ideas faster than before. There are now more media in which information is being conveyed which requires more effective instruction approaches to assist learners in effectively understanding the ever-increasing variety of textual formats (Morrow & Gambrell, 2003). The basis of it all is the ability to read which has been defined as; "the process of deriving meaning from print" (Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2002; Njuki & Nakitende, 2013, p. 12).

In addition, (Harris, 1981) defines reading as an interpretation of written word symbols through interaction between graphic symbols which represent language, and the readers' skills in the language

with an aid of cognitive and background knowledge. Alvermann and Moore (1991) investigate that students are assigned to read increasingly complex materials, but teachers spend little time showing them how to be strategic. Therefore, it is very important to encourage the students to create a different perspective on why the reading practice is important for them. Based on the researcher's colleagues' experience, students tend to be away from reading comprehension texts. They do not want to think about the main idea or particular features of texts. So, they need a creative way to encourage them to think to find the main idea. According to the topic of the researcher, educational reading comprehension texts are more suitable for high school students. They practice reading from time to time, and it is a smart way to include skimming techniques to improve their reading comprehension skills.

The main emphasis in this study is skimming as a technique used for improving reading comprehension, but it cannot be isolated from the other components of reading comprehension. Comprehension means the degree to which the reader is able to extract relevant information from a text. During the process of reading, an encoder gets involved in the sending and receiving of the message respectively. The encoder is the writer who acts as the sender of the message and the decoder is the reader who acts as a recipient. Vacca (2000) is emphasizing that teachers should be in a position of putting into practice the new approaches and skills in order to ensure effective reading comprehension. According to Pressley (2006, p. 35), "reading comprehension is about getting the meaning out of the text". At the same Goodman agrees that reading comprehension should be understood as making sense of print (Goodman, 1994; Pressley, 2006). So in this study, according to the researcher's point of view, skimming is a method of rapid reading which will help students to understand the overall theme or general meaning of the text. It is a fast reading technique that helps readers quickly identify the main idea of a text. The skimming technique is used to obtain the gist or overall sense of a text. The reader does not pronounce each and every word of the text, rather he focuses his attention on the subject matter, an overall view of the text, and prepares himself to summarize the given text, give points of the text, rewrite the subject matter in his own words, and give a suitable title to the text. Such points indicate that skimming is like global listening. The prior knowledge has been proven to have a positive effect on reading by many researchers (Roth, 2004). As such, it is very important to regard learners as individuals who have a foundation in them on which classroom instruction can build. Skimming is a systematic process of reading by which reading speed, as well as comprehension (understanding), can be enhanced throughout four stages:

In the first stage, the reader collects general information through a survey of the text. It is some sort of skimming in its nature. The reader looks at the layout, titles, sub-titles, tab of contents, and illustration to get a general impression of the text. In the second stage, the reader makes questions (in his mind) related to the text. It is to make sure that he is going to involve in a purposeful study and will try to find out answers to the questions arising in his mind. In the third stage, the reader begins reading the text.

This reading is an intensive reading in which the reader concentrates on the script, punctuation marks, variation in type (or compositing), the way paragraphs are formed, etc. In the fourth stage, the reader stops actual reading and recalls to his mind whatever he has read so far. He tries to bring back to mind what he has extracted from the text. In the fifth stage, the reader gets indulged in the process of “review”. So the reader practices four steps such as survey, questioning, reading, and recalling. The main aim of this study is to investigate how EFL learners’ reading comprehension is. The special focus will be on methods, resources, and assistance that teachers give to learners in an inclusive setting. Other areas of interest are the challenges that are encountered in teaching reading comprehension and suggestions on how these challenges can be overcome. Harrison (2004, p. 51), declares that comprehension is the process of getting meaning of a communication, as in a personal letter, speech, or sign language; the knowledge or understanding that is the result of such a process.

It means that reading comprehension is a kind of silent communication between the writer and the reader. The writer is the sender of information, and the reader is the receiver of information. Furthermore, the reader uses skimming to get the main idea by jumping from one paragraph to another. The recent research on reading comprehension is not focused on the degree to which the reader is able to extract relevant information from a text, especially educational reading texts. Reading requires the reconstruction of the message. It demands thinking and planning on the part of the reader. The reader must distinguish the text from the supporting ideas and at the same time, he has to recognize the hidden meanings. So, high school students need to be developed through the total act of reading the “decision making” process as the reader attempts to discover meaning according to his own sense.

Therefore, this study is set at enhancing the use of effective instructional strategies for reading comprehension. Reading requires the reconstruction of the message. It demands thinking and planning on the part of the reader. The reader has to distinguish the text from the supporting ideas and at the same time, he has to recognize the hidden meanings. The total act of reading is a “decision-making” process as the reader attempts to discover meaning according to his own sense. Therefore, from a skimming perspective, learners may be at different levels of understanding, but they should necessarily have the same understanding. By skimming the speed of reading can be increased. It is to go through the text quickly to get a general understanding. One of the easiest ways to skim-read is to look at the center section of a text and then run the eyes down the center area. It is not reading every word but reading very quickly to get general ideas about a text.

2. Method

The current study methodology includes the research design, the participants and sample selection, the research instruments (observation and questionnaire), and the procedures used for data collection as well as the data analysis. The study aimed to improve EFL university learners’ reading comprehension skills.

2.1 Research Design

The present study used quantitative and qualitative methods. Johnson and Christensen (2012) mentioned that quantitative research generally discusses the measurement of numbers. In survey research, it is usually measured by using scales (p. 376). The questionnaire usually provides statements with multiple choice allowable response categories. After getting the answers from the students, the researcher starts calculating the average for the groups of respondents. Therefore, this method is useful to investigate the effect of skimming on the reading comprehension improvement of EFL learners. This research took place at Al-jouf University. This research was conducted on Educational Reading Passages of the CFY (Common First Year) students' Headway intermediate book. The duration of every meeting was 50 minutes twice a week. This program lasted for two weeks with four meetings. It included the observation and the questionnaire which were the instruments used in the research.

2.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of this program were second-semester students of the CFY at Aljouf University, the academic year 2021/2022. There were 28 students in the Educational Reading class and the researcher focused on the effect of the skimming technique on the students' reading comprehension.

2.3 The Instruments and Materials of the Study

- 1) The Observation notes.
- 2) The questionnaire.

In order to collect the data of the research, the researcher used two instruments, the observation, and the questionnaire. According to Ary et al. (1979), there are two types of questionnaires, closed-form and open one. "The closed-form is used to make it easy for the participants because they just choose the available options, while the open form is used to obtain more information" (p. 75). This research used the closed-form of questionnaires to show the importance of using the skimming technique to improve EFL university students' reading comprehension skills.

The researcher observed the participants in four different sessions while educational reading classes from Headway intermediate level using skimming as a technique to generate the main ideas and main points of each educational reading passage in order to improve the students' reading comprehension skills. After the four sessions, the researcher gave the participants the questionnaire to respond to its components. All items of the questionnaire are related to the research problem formulated in chapter one. Every statement in the questionnaire is made based on theories related to the research topic. The questionnaire was set from the reading theories as follows:

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis took place after receiving the participants' responses for the questionnaire. First, the researcher analyzed the observation and made the descriptions of the observation. Next, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire that had been given after the observation finished. The questionnaire was counted by using a degree of agreement and disagreement on the item statements of the questionnaire

form. The researcher had given five degrees of agreement. After that, the researcher made the percentage and interpretation of the questionnaire that had been counted. After the researcher got the data from the questionnaire, the researcher made a description of each statement of the questionnaire. The data was presented in a form of a table (see Table 4).

3. Results

Based on the data collected, the researcher found out that the skimming technique gave students the chance to improve their reading comprehension skills. The following tables show the result.

Table 3. Statements & Theories

No	Statements	Theories
1	The skimming technique can contribute a valuable experience in reading comprehension research and give information and knowledge to the readers of how to get the main point of the text.	Skimming is a process of quick coverage of reading comprehension to establish its gist or main idea (Brown, 2004, p. 213)
2	Skimming allows us to have a general idea of what we are reading.	Skimming is a predictive strategy to give the reader a sense of the main topic and the purpose of the text, the organization of the text, the perspective or point of view of the writer, its ease or difficulty, and/or its usefulness to the reader (Brown, 2004, p. 213)
3	After the skimming technique has been applied, it is easier to answer the questions in a reading text.	The purpose of reading is simply to find the answer to a question. The students skim through the reading passage looking for just one thing, the answer (Fry, 1963, p. 61)
4	Skimming saves time while reading and understanding the text.	Skimming helps students to find the general idea without taking a long time (Fry, 1963, p. 60)
5	The skimming technique facilitates me to find the specific information from the text.	Skimming is a skill that requires concentration, superior vocabulary, and adequate comprehension skills (Simanjuntak, 1988, p. 55)
6	The skimming technique facilitates me to understand difficult words.	Skimming is a skill that requires concentration, superior vocabulary, and adequate comprehension skills

		(Simanjuntak, 1988, p. 55)
7	While reading, I need more time to read and understand the context of the passage.	It needs a high accuracy in determining the precise time for reading activity (Santoso, 2017, p. 24)
8	It is difficult for me to understand new vocabulary while using the skimming technique.	Skimming needs extra time to solve students' problems in reading skills (Sntoso, 2017, p. 24)

Table 4. Findings (participants' Responds)

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Skimming allows us to have a general idea of what we are reading.	10	10	6	2	0
2.	Skimming makes me aware of the benefits of the information available in reading materials both authentic and inauthentic.	4	14	6	2	2
3.	After the skimming technique has been applied, it is easier to answer the questions in a reading text.	4	19	5	0	0
4.	Skimming saves time while reading and understanding the text.	12	13	3	0	0
5.	The skimming technique facilitates me to find the specific information from the text.	6	14	6	2	0
6.	The skimming technique does not only focus on asking me to do reading text but also focuses on equipping me with the technique used in different texts.	1	12	11	3	1

7.	Skimming makes me aware of the reading strategy used to find the stated and unstated information in the text.	11	9	7	1	0
8.	It is difficult for me to understand new vocab while using the skimming technique.	2	6	18	2	0
9.	Skimming technique facilitates me to predict the content of the text.	4	19	5	0	0
10.	The skimming technique prepares me to be an independent reader.	7	16	2	2	1

Discussion

Table shows the results of the questionnaire about the effect of the skimming technique in educational reading comprehension texts as follows:

1) Skimming allows me to have a general idea of what we are reading.

In skimming, “the students attempt to get the main idea of every paragraph plus a few of the facts” (Fry, 1963, p. 53). Skimming is a technique that drills the reader to reads the keywords to get the main idea and then they would find a few of the facts or information in the passage. Therefore, students should be concentrated when they read a passage.

There were 35.72 % (10 students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 53.57% (10 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 21.43% (six students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 07% (two students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique allowed students to have a general idea of the reading passages.

2) Skimming makes me aware of the benefits of the information available in reading materials both authentic and inauthentic.

wase was 21.43 % (6 students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 42.9% (12 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 21.43% (six students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 07% (two students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 07% (two students) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique made students aware of the information available in reading passages both authentic and inauthentic.

3) After the skimming technique has been applied, it is easier to answer the questions on a reading text. There was 14.30 % (4 students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 67.85. % (19 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 67.85% (nineteen students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 17.85% (five students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement. Based on the result, it can be concluded that after applying the skimming technique, it was easier to answer the questions in the reading passage.

4) Skimming saves time while reading and understanding the text.

There were 42.85 % (12 students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 46.42% (13 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. None of the students of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 17.85% (three students) of the total number chose neutral to the statement and none of the respondents disagreed nor strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique saves time while reading and understanding the text.

5) Skimming technique facilitates me to find the specific information from the text.

There was 21.43 % (6 students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 50% (14 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. None of the students of the total respondents chose neutral. There was 21.43% (6 students) of the total number chose neutral to the statement and 07% (2 students) of the respondents disagreed and none of the students strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique saves time while reading and understanding the text.

6) Skimming technique does not only focus on asking me to do reading text but also focuses on equipping me with the technique used in different texts.

There were 0.035 % (one student) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 39.28% (11 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 42.85% (12 students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 10.71 % (three students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 0.035 % (one student) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique helped students to understand different texts.

7) Skimming makes me aware of the reading strategy used to find the stated and unstated information in the text.

“Skimming technique keep the students informed in their general field of interest without taking their time that average reading would” (Fry, 1963). Based on the questionnaire results, it showed that students who chose agree and strongly agree were almost equal. They were agreed and also strongly agreed that when the skimming technique is implemented in the teaching reading activity.

There were 39.28% (eleven students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 32.14 % (nine

students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 25 % (seven students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 0.035 % (one student) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 0.00 % (no student) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique helped students to be aware of the reading strategy used to find stated and unstated formations in the reading text.

8) It is difficult for me to understand new vocab while the skimming technique.

There were 7.14% (two students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 21.42 % (six students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 64.28 % (eighteen students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 7.14% (two students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 0.00 % (no student) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

“Skimming needs extra time to solve students’ problems in reading skills” (Santoso, 2017). One of the students’ problems in the reading activity understands the meaning of a new word in the passage. However, there were almost more than half of the students chose neutral in this statement. It showed that sometimes students can understand the meaning of a word when skimming technique and sometimes they cannot, it depends on the level of difficulties in a passage.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique did not help students to understand new vocabulary in the reading text. This is because skimming is different from scanning as it is searching for the main idea of a text. So, there is no time to find out the meaning of new vocabulary.

9) Skimming technique facilitates me to predict the content of the text.

This statement related to the theory that Brown (2004) stated that “skimming is a prediction strategy used to give a reader a sense of topic and purpose of the text, the organization of the text, the perspective or point of view of the writer, it eases or difficulty, and/or its usefulness to the reader.”

There were 14.28% (four students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 67.85 % (19 students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 17.85 % (five students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 0.00% (no students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 0.00 % (no student) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique helped students a lot to predict the content of the reading text.

10) Skimming technique prepares me to be an independent reader.

There were 25 % (seven students) of the total respondents strongly agreed and 57.14% (sixteen students) of the respondents agreed with this statement. There were 7.14 % (two students) of the total respondents chose neutral. There were 7.14% (two students) of the total number chose to disagree with the statement and 3.57 % (one student) of the respondents strongly disagreed with that statement.

5. Conclusions

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the skimming technique helped students to be independent readers and have the capacity to paraphrase sentences and add their own points of view while and after reading educational texts.

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