



EFFECTIVENESS OF USING SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS IN ESL READING; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Introduction

English has become one of the most fundamental tools which is needed in order to communicate in the modern world. As a result, a significant escalation of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners can be seen worldwide. Thus, many countries including Sri Lanka consign a heavy credence on teaching English; and the Second Language (L2) teachers update the educational policies according to the demands of the learners. In the second language reading environment, the students should be provided with supplementary materials along with their reading lessons for the enhancement of the reading skills. Supplementary reading materials can be defined as; materials designed to be used in addition to the core materials of a course (Tomlinson, 2011). The supplementary materials should be carefully chosen by harmonizing with the objectives of the lesson and level of the class. The teachers can use books or other materials in addition to the course books as supplementary materials or supportive materials. The current study has focused the attention on the effectiveness of the use of supplementary reading materials giving special reference to the higher education structure in Sri Lanka. This study was conducted in relation with forty, first year, second semester students from the Department of Accountancy and Finance Management, Faculty of Management Studies in Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. The undergraduates are provided with two students' manuals for each course unit separately. The students' manual is compiled with the lessons correlated in the field of management along with a technical jargon where it has a series of activities and exercises. The study guide consists of twelve units where each unit is catalogued under four categories such as vocabulary, reading, grammar and writing. Hence, if the attention is paid for reading practices, each unit contains a business linked reading paragraph where the students are supposed to familiarize themselves with the technical words which they would likely to use in their academic studies. The issue relying here is whether only these paragraphs are adequate to fulfill the reading skill requirements of the undergraduates. In order to decode this predicament, some English as a Second Language lecturers tend to use supplementary reading materials for the reading lessons. Hence the current research was conducted to locate whether the use of supplementary reading materials is effective for the undergraduates in the process of gaining the second language.

Objectives

The central objective that the researcher expects to accomplish by carrying out this study is

To measure the effectiveness of using supplementary materials in ESL reading.

The researcher has noticed that the reading lessons in the 'Students' Manual' are not adequate to encounter the objectives of the reading strategies. Simultaneously, the research problem concentrated by the study was: whether the supplementary materials enhance the reading skills of the ESL undergraduates effectively in their reading sessions. In order to answer the research problem, the researcher built up the hypothesis whether: supplementary reading materials effectively enhance the reading skills of the ESL undergraduates.

Methodology

The data of this study was gathered using quantitative research methodology. The participants of this study were ESL undergraduates in Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. A pre-test and a post-test were used primarily for the purpose of comparing groups and/or measuring change resulting from experimental treatments. (Dimiter et al, 2003). The population of undergraduates was selected using convenient sampling method and a sample of forty (08 males and 32 females)



students aged between 21-23 years of age took part in data collection survey. They have this compulsory English course unit for four hours as two-hour slots per week. They are grouped according to their degree programs. Most of the time the lecturers facilitated only the reading activities given in the students’ manual for the reading sessions. The pre-test for the study was carried out when the supplementary materials were used less often or were not used for the reading lessons. The researcher employed the pre-test in the first week of the semester and the pre-test consisted with a passage related to the field of management studies with the topic of “Bank of America’s Investment Banking Cuts” where the students had to read the passage and comprehend. The paper comprised with ten questions including, multiple choice questions as well as comprehension questions. Time allocation for the paper was 30 minutes and the mark allocation was 10 marks. The post-test was conducted after three months subsequently the treatment in which; the use of supplementary reading materials, had been applied. The students were instructed to read a business-related newspaper article and write the summary of the particular article and at the same time they were instructed to maintain a portfolio for the collection of the newspaper articles. During the lectures the students were given a chance to present the summaries by reading them out to the class. The post-test with the heading “HSBC Bank Helped the Rich Hide Money” also comprised with ten questions where the respondents had to go through multiple choices, comprehension questions and referencing. The time duration for the post-test was 30 minutes and ten marks were allocated. By conducting these tests, the reading competence of the students and the students’ effectiveness on the use of supplementary materials for ESL reading were measured.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the pre-test

The marks obtained from the students for the pre-test paper with ten questions including, multiple choice questions as well as comprehension questions are mentioned below.

	Question	Marks 2/2	Percentage	Marks 1/2	Percentage	Marks 0/2	Percentage
1	MCQ	14	35%	22	55%	04	10%
2	Referencing	07	17.5%	26	65%	07	17.5%

Table 01: Marks obtained by the students for MCQ and referencing

	Mr k 6/6	100 %	Mrk 5/6	100 %	Mrk 4/6	100 %	Mr k 3/6	100 %	Mrk 2/6	100 %	Mrk 1/6 & 0/6	100 %
Comp rehens ion	03	7.5 %	05	12.5 %	08	20%	07	17.5 %	11	27.5 %	6	15%

Table 02: Marks obtained by the students for comprehension question

The above two tables illustrate the percentage of students who obtained marks for each question separately in the pre-test. The majority of the students were able to score only one mark for both MCQ question and the referencing question. In the comprehension question, only 7.5% of students were able to score all six marks provided. Majority of the students (27.5%) have scored only two marks out of six marks for this question. By examining the data presented in the two tables it was evident for the researcher that the learners were not much familiar with the technical jargon as well as the reading strategies and the techniques.

Analysis of the post-test



The marks obtained by the students were analyzed in the table below. The post-test was given at the end of three months in order to see how the students have improved their reading skills by referring supplementary reading materials.

	Marks 4/4	Percentage	Marks 3/4	Percentage	Marks 2/4	Percentage	Marks 1/4	Percentage	Marks 0/4	Percentage
MCQ	27/40	67.5%	8/40	20%	5/40	12.5%	0/40	0%	0/40	0%

Table 03: Marks obtained by the students for MCQ

	Marks 4/4	Percentage	Marks 3/4	Percentage	Marks 2/4	Percentage	Marks 1/4	Percentage	Marks 0/4	Percentage
Comprehension	24/40	60%	9/40	22.5%	6/40	15%	1/40	2.5%	0/40	0%
	Marks 2/2	Percentage	Marks 1/2	Percentage	Marks 0/2	Percentage				
Referencing	25/40	62.5%	14/40	35%	1/40	2.5%				

Table 04: Marks obtained by the students for referencing

Table 05: Marks obtained by the students for comprehension question

The above illustrated tables show the scores obtained by the students for the questions in the post-test separately. Majority of the respondents (67.5%) were able to gain all four marks allocated for the MCQ question. For the referencing question 62.5% of students gained two marks out of two questions. Simultaneously, more than half of the students (60%) were able to score full marks for the comprehension question. The scored marks demonstrate the fact that the students practiced the implemented reading activity effectively while enhancing their competencies.

Comparison of mean values of pretest and posttest.

	N	Mean Value
Pretest	40	4.8
Posttest	40	7.5

Table 06: Comparison of mean values of pretest and posttest.

The target group scored 4.8 of grade point average for the pre-test and the same group scored 7.5 of grade point average for the posttest marking a higher value. The difference between the two mean values is noted as 2.7 and significantly positive improvement of students can be seen through their performance at the post-test.

	N	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Pretest	40	4.8	1.6
Posttest	40	7.5	1.1

Table 07: Comparison of standard deviation of pretest and posttest.



When scrutinizing the dispersion of values in both pre-test and the post-test, a high standard deviation of 1.6 indicating a spread out of values over a wide range is clearly visible in the pre-test. In the post-test value dispersion, 1.1 of low deviation which closes to the values of the mean is found significantly marking a good improvement of the students after the treatment. According to the results obtained by the students for the pre-test, the target group scored 4.8 of grade point average for the pre-test marking passive performance in the pretest. For the post-test the same group scored 7.5 of grade point average marking a higher value. The difference between the two mean values is noted as 2.7 and significantly positive perfection of students has been marked through their performance at the post-test. Hence it is evident that students scored a high-grade point value after the treatment displaying the effectiveness of the treatment which had been employed.

A preliminary finding of this research was that the students were capable of scoring an effective grade point average after the treatment. The students' proficiency was not satisfied before the treatment was done, they were limited for the prescribed syllabus and their meager knowledge on vocabulary was decidedly visible in the dispersion of the pretest values. When the treatment was being done to the students, the students were exposed to the variety of language terms and expressions which are used in the real world, especially in the field of finance and commerce. This would lead them to grab the technical terms, words as well as the vocabulary from the materials which were used.

Conclusion and Recommendation

As the most vigorous finding of this study, scoring a good grade point average by the learners after the treatment can be depicted. The reading proficiency level of the learners before the treatment found to be in low-grade level. This particular study will inspire and persuade the students to learn the second language since the supplementary materials make the lessons more interactive where it breaks the conventions of the traditional class room environment and drive to the autonomous learning atmosphere. The learners are exposed to an abundant pool of new words and new terms. Smith (1985) affirmed that cognitive reading strategies will be fostered by providing culturally relevant texts for the reading comprehension. Thus, most learners can be actively interacting with the activities provided by the facilitators.

Further research was suggested to look at the adapting supplementary reading materials across proficiency level with a larger number of participants. It was also suggested to elicit the views of the learners on the use of supplementary reading materials for the reading lessons since the present study only concentrated on the competency of the learners. The study focused only on the strategies acquired by the learners during the implementation of the supplementary reading materials and their proficiency level in reading. The results reflect positive effects benefited to the learners. Thus, it establishes the fact that second language communicative needs of the students can be refined more effectively with the assistance of the supplementary reading materials

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