

## TESTING READING SKILL HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON LEARNING

Ziarkhan Satniyazovna Toreniyazova  
Perizat Karamatdinovna Jaumitbaeva

Karakalpak Institute of Agriculture and Agrotechnology

### ABSTRACT

The article about the communicative ways of teaching a foreign language with testing communicative competence of reading skill of learners and the types of introducing multiple tests in the teaching and learning English. Aim of the article is to prove that reading tests both in practice phase in the classroom and in real communication entail unique features that result in real contribution to overall language learning.

**Keywords:** Language-related ability, designing tests, testing, True/False questions, Yes-No Questions, WH questions, reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is not easy to do. In Asia, it indicated that the students in fourth graders were very low in reading ability and in comprehending a simple paragraph from a grade-level text. It is said that “many questions, controversies, and challenges remain regarding the most effective way of identifying children at risk for reading problems”.<sup>1</sup>

Testing reading is important to do in order to evaluate the aspects that can be used to arise the effective way of analyzing and identifying the needs to be put into account concern reading.

Testing reading seems to be confusing since no understanding what items to be tested. Reading comprehension, fluency, speed, includes making the text of the test, the validity, reliability, difficulty, and types of the test should be absolutely considered at all. The followings are the discussion on testing reading in the hope that teachers can understand how to do testing reading for the students.

There are some considerations to be involved when doing the test of reading and those should be put into account such as what to test and assess, types of test, how to test, and when to test.

### What to test and assess

Designing tests of reading in a second language, the aim is normally to test language-related ability, not intelligence (Alderson, 2000). Dealing with reading, the ability here refers to the capability in

<sup>1</sup> Language Testing & Evaluation Fernandes Arung 2013

decoding texts, reading fluently, reading quickly (speed), and comprehending text. Four types of ability will represent in what to test in testing reading and the first three types are the basics to reading comprehension.

Some of these techniques test reading in isolation (such as multiple choice questions) and some require other skills and knowledge to be used alongside reading skills (such as when learners write a short answer). Each test type has its own advantages and disadvantages and a discussion of these can be found in Alderson (2000). Research (e.g. Francis et al, 2006, cited in Geva and Ramírez, 2015) has shown that different test types can give different indications about an individual learner's reading ability. This is perhaps not surprising given that different test formats test slightly different aspects of reading. Therefore in high-stakes tests it is important to use a range of reading tasks so that a rounded picture of ability emerges. There are many question types that are commonly used in the testing of reading.

These include:

- multiple choice questions
- True/False questions – a modification of multiple choice questions, but with a single distractor (wrong answer)
- questions requiring a short written answer
- cloze tests, where a word is deleted at regular intervals, such as every seventh word, for learners to supply the missing item
- gap fills, where a word is deleted at irregular intervals, allowing the test writer to decide on where to place gaps
- using information from a text to complete a table, chart, or diagram
- putting sentences or paragraphs into a correct sequence
- inserting sentences or paragraphs into a text
- correcting errors in a text.

The main goal of reading comprehension tests is to measure reading mastery without stressing grammar or spelling. However, in assessing reading, failure to take errors in language use into consideration may lead to the perception that spelling, grammar, and punctuation are not essential to language learning. Therefore, reading comprehension assessment should target not only students' comprehension of a text but also the factors that facilitate or impede this comprehension.

**1. Yes-No Questions** These are questions that should be answered with either yes or no. However, teachers are recommended to follow up these questions by other types of questions to make sure that students have understood the text as Yes/No questions can be answered correctly by chance.

## 2. True or False questions

This is another type of a reading test that is familiar to most learners. It consists of a text accompanied by a series of statements. Learners need to decide and mention whether the given statements are true or false according to the text. This kind of reading comprehension questions provides learners with a set of sentences or statements. For answering these questions, learners are required to read the text and discover the true and the false statements without giving answers in a complex written response. They are good activities for memory of literal details in the text but they are limited in assessing specific comprehension skills such as making inferences and meanings. More importantly, teachers should not rely exclusively on them because, like Yes/No questions, learners can give right answers by chance without knowing why these answers are correct.

True or False questions need to be carefully designed because the false answers should target the potential misunderstandings of a text. Besides, the false answers that sound obviously incorrect do not help teachers assess learners' comprehension because learners do not need to understand the text to recognize them as incorrect.

## 3. Matching

This type is likely to be less familiar to learners, but increasingly common. They are used by many assessors. Some of reading comprehension tests designers may include more than one matching task in their tests.

For doing a matching task, learners need to choose from a list of prompts. These prompts may be statements, headings, or question completion. For instance, learners can be asked to match a description to the appropriate paragraph, or to match words and phrases to their meanings.

## 4. WH questions

Wh questions are questions that begin with Wh such as: "where", "why", "who", "when", and "how". These questions are useful in providing learners with literal understanding of a text and help them recognize information in the text and make evaluations and personal predictions.

Reading comprehension assessment has been a significant landmark in the educational landscape for just over 80 years. Its history is a remarkable story, one characterized by cycles of great hope and expectation alternating with periods of disappointment and frustration. Assessment is aimed to maximize and improve the teaching-learning process by providing copious opportunities for learners to discover their weaknesses and to raise their learning standards. This can be reached by linking assessment results to classroom instruction and by providing constructive activities that truly conform to learners'

needs. This report attempted to explore the importance of assessment in EFL classrooms.

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