



Investigate and Evaluate Online Resources of Reading Comprehension Test

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Abstract

If the purpose of language learning is communication, then improving students' reading comprehension competence becomes an overall goal in language teaching.

This paper examines the online resources of reading comprehension tests with non-English major college students, and tackles the problem with the teaching method of integrating web-based study into class teaching. This paper investigates what Chinese EFL college students think about their study feedback in regard to their online reading comprehension test in order to find proper and effective ways to implement reading comprehension competence through Web-based environment.

Keywords: Online reading, Reading comprehension, Internet

Since online reading is apparently different from reading on paper, various knowledge and information on Internet provide language learners with rich authentic reading materials. Web-based environment gives students a great deal of independence for their own reading. It seems that the application of Web-based reading among college EFL learners is not only possible but also feasible. Based on all these ideas, the study focuses on the investigating and evaluating online resources of reading comprehension tests.

1. Instruction

1.1 Background

In China today, English reading instruction in most secondary schools still focuses on intensive reading. Based on certain textbooks, teachers' reading instruction mainly includes words explanation, text translation and grammar illumination. As a result, the reading amount of most middle school students is quite limited. Therefore, most middle school students, when they enter into colleges, urgently need to be provided with interesting reading materials, meaningful reading activities and chances of independent reading and collaboration. Only in this way can these freshmen get through the transition from secondary schools to universities smoothly and quickly, and acclimatize themselves to the reading instruction in colleges.

1.2 Importance of online reading tests

The importance of computer working and Internet to education and language learning has increased significantly during the last few years. Web-based language learning has already been promoted as a good teaching method and as an effective instrumental tool to improve students' language performance. In most Chinese colleges nowadays, CALL, as a new and effective approach of language instruction, has already been employed in various areas of language teaching, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teaching and learning seem to move more and more towards digital modes, and electronic books seem to be used to replace some textbooks, reference manuals, and professional publications. Online reading tends to become an important form of reading for some people (especially students and professionals). Therefore, online reading instruction might be regarded as one part of reading instruction in schools, and be used as a valuable addition to other reading instruction models in regular classrooms.

2. Purpose of the study

Reading comprehension is the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text. Till now, though some empirical studies concerning online reading had been conducted, little of them had been conducted in the context of colleges in China, let alone using some qualitative and quantitative methods to prove its effectiveness, validity and reliability. The aim of the present study is to find out whether the application of online reading has positive affects in promoting their overall reading ability.

3. Procedure of the study

A ten-week online reading experiment as a new extensive reading course entitled Online English Reading was conducted among a group of Chinese college freshmen (n=100) majoring in law. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study. Various forms of data were collected through students' feedback sheets. After analyzing the final data by the software Excel, we discussed and concluded main findings of the study. The following is students' feedback sheets.

Report: Online Reading Tests

Class: _____ No. _____ Name: _____

Deadline: Nov. 10 th

Suggested websites: _____ (at least 3 websites)

Text type: _____

(essay, story, news, letter, advertisement, lecture, etc.)

Difficulty level: _____ (easy, difficult, normal)

Items Count: _____

(MC, T-F; yes/no, Gap –filling, Short-answer, Guessing meaning, Inference, etc.)

Time Count: _____

Marks: _____

Evaluation: _____
 _____ . (website, passage, items)

4. Result

Analysis of the data reveals the following major results. About 80 websites are suggested among 100 sheets. As a whole, the research result from the investigation suggests that online reading has some advantages over teaching reading comprehension in class with the pre-taped materials in text. Most studies comparing reading on paper and reading on computer screen focus on the time variable and show that it takes subjects longer to read from the screen than to read the same material from paper (Askwall, 1985; Smith&Savory, 1989). A number of variables, such as the size, type, method, websites and quality of the screen, may have influenced the marks.

5. Evaluation

Online reading tests are a valuable learning method. It would only be feasible with a computer available); free teacher; link to outside the classroom; diversify teaching. Interestingly, less resistance to task-based learning on the Web appears to be reported than in the pre-Web era where students were often found to resist the use of technology, and to prefer to work with pen and paper (Felix, 1997; Gillespie&McKee, 1998). Major blocks to successful development of online reading tests: lack of time; level of expertise required; lack of agreed standards; level of acceptance in wider context; publishing problems; lack of information sharing; lack of suitable software.

In sum, online reading tests may have its own problems, but it can add a valuable dimension to face-to-face teaching by providing an environment for meaningful interactive tasks in authentic settings, or at least in settings that are rich in authentic language and culture. There is no sense in advocating online reading as the sole medium of instruction, but, used at its best; it can be seen as a uniquely valuable addition to already excellent teaching in the classroom.

6. Conclusion

The core of the modern educational technology, in a certain sense, means the development and application of computer technology, the terminal trend of which is the web-based multi-media, which, because of its technological advancement and functional powerfulness, is being exploited and applied quickly to teaching and represents the direction of modern educational technology development. However, the development of the educational technology application will not necessarily improve the teaching efficiency, for it must be answerable to reading comprehension may be affected by the difficulty of the text, the vocabulary words used in the text, and the student's familiarity with the subject matter, the operational processes, methods, the real-time class recordings and etc. The result part elaborates the virtues and disadvantages of the application of web-based reading. I hope my thesis will do some help, both theoretically and practically, the Chinese teachers learn how to apply the multi-media technology on reading.

Notes: The paper is one of the research results of Institute-level task "task-driven" model of teaching English in Higher Education, in Beijing Youth Politics College.

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