

Reading - A Learning Strategy- Influences the Writings of Second Language Learners

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Abstract

Reading is a learning process which greatly influences second language learners. For writing any content second language learners require to have ideas relevant to the content, to know different grammatical forms, to possess vocabulary and the mechanics of writing. Familiarization of all these components is possible only through reading. An efficient reader comprehends the text and assimilates information very quickly. However for slow learners they struggle to comprehend. Schema or the background knowledge helps in this context to understand the text. A second language learner comfortably writes when the stored data in the mind is familiar with the given context. A set of 30 students belonging to SRM University (Engineering course) were tested to see how reading influences writing. The possibilities of read-write relationship to enhance background knowledge is identified. Background knowledge of struggling second language learners require more input to become familiar in grammatical and other forms for better acquisition in the language.

Keywords: Reading, writing, background knowledge, schema, read-write relationship

Reading is one of the communication skills in learning a language. For second language learners this learning strategy helps in processing information, learning grammatical forms, vocabulary and mechanics of writing. This happens when a second language learner visualizes the sentences. Visualization need not necessarily be a textbook; it can be on a computer monitor, mobile phone, advertisement boards, medicine bottles, tablet wrappers, etc.

Writing is a productive skill in contrast to reading which a receptive skill is. For a second language learner to write effectively requires ideas, grammatical forms, vocabulary and mechanics of writing. When these components are learnt a second language learner writes effectively.

According to R.C.Anderson's version of Piaget's Schema Theory "Organised knowledge is an elaborate network of abstract mental structures which represent one's understanding of the world". Also Schallert suggests that schema helps in understanding abstract concepts after concrete relevant information is established. Anderson further exemplifies that schemata always develops when an individual gains experience with more variables and specificity. Schemata change from moment to moment as information is received. Hence information would get reorganized when incoming data reveals a need to restructure the concept (Anderson, 1977: 418-419).

Relevant to this concept when a second language learner reads, the schemata has to develop, accept information and reorganize or restructure the concept. If this has been effective throughout either in their school education or in their environment, a second language learner would effectively have sufficient stored data to reproduce and write comfortably.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDENTS:

A set of 30 students belonging to Undergraduate program in engineering courses were chosen for further study. These students have English as their second language or as medium of instruction since their school education. These students have English for two hours a week in this course.

METHODOLOGY:

In the first week, students were provided with a reading material (from internet) for the topic "Terrorism and its impact". [See attachments at the end]

In the second week, another reading material (News paper articles) was provided for the same topic.

In the third week, the students were provided both the materials for the same topic.

In these sessions, students were requested to read the material (Silent Reading) and were instructed that they can use their own learning strategies to become familiar with the provided text. The duration of the reading session was 45 minutes every week. Also they were instructed that they had to write an essay on the same topic for 200 words.

FINDINGS:

The text provided relevant information like what terrorism is, types of terrorism, certain terrorist attack as examples and solution for this issue. The students are expected to read, comprehend and then write an essay. From the reading material given all the 30 students showed emotional involvement (Gaskins 1996) in the choice of accepting the reading text. This selective reading of students has made them remember the text with incidents more familiar to them. All the students showed familiarity with the text given in the second week. Their write-up focused on the bomb blast in Hyderabad. Out of 30, eighteen students narrated about the bomb blast. While five students wrote an essay, the other seven could not logically make up a relevant written content.

FORM FAMILIAR:

When content is drafted about a topic, second language learners need to write using their knowledge about the second language and the topic to be written. Since the given reading material focused on different grammatical tense forms the students could retrieve certain past tense structure in their writing (Krashen 2004 a, Rodrigo 2006; Mason2007).

PAST TENSE FAMILIAR:

Student 1 : Recently many blasts took place.

Student 2 : ...Two bomb blast occurred, ...took away.

Student 3 : This blast was against the hanging of the Mumbai terrorist attacker ...

Student 4 : ...Police alerted, ...so many died. ... was kept.

Student 5: ... many people were killed, ... one of the restaurant owner was trying to get out of the restaurant.

Student 6 : ... there was a lull before the blast, ...many victims lost their lives.

Student 7 : ... one of the witness said that Police came for investigation ...

PAST TENSE CONFUSED:

Student 1 : Such bomb blast which destructs nearly hundred of lives ... the police ... cannot find out the correct person.

Student 2 : Before to this blast in 2007, a blast was happened near the Saibaba Temple...

Student 3 : ... Police is saying that the bomb was kept in an empty bag...

Student 4 : ... the bombs shaken.

Student 5 : Terrorist attack was lull in Hyderabad.

Student 6 : ...so this bomb blast is taken as a revenge by the terrorist as one of their gang member had hanged.

Student 7 : ... one blast was taken place near Tarmac ... most of the people are admitted near the Government Hospital.

From the samples highlighted, for the same students few forms of past tense are familiar but not all. For example, Student 3 could write was against as a correct usage in one part of the sentence and in another has written is saying instead of said. Similarly, student 4 is unfamiliar with irregular forms of the verb shake which is shook. These students' familiarity with certain past tense structure is retrieved comfortably but not all other forms of past tense. The background knowledge of these students depicts familiarity in certain grammatical tense forms and require more exposure to second language learning.

VOCABULARY:

From the written scripts it is observed that students have also assimilated vocabulary (Stephen D Krashen) from the given reading material. It is retrieved either as an active vocabulary or a synonymous form. As Gee.N quotes on memory that "ambiguity resolution is

the process of selecting the context appropriate meaning of an ambiguous word”. Learners with more word associates is said could recall better. The memory of the students who could arrive at synonymous forms reflects that they have associated forms in their background knowledge and not the actual word. A few samples highlighted are:

Student 1: ...This bomb is attached to the cycle...

Actual Text: **Fastened**

Student 2: ...Sanctioned two lakhs for the family who lost their family members...

Actual Text: **kin**

Student 3: ...This blast was against the hanging of the Mumbai terrorist ... take revenge against the attack.

Actual Text: **avenge**

Student 4: ...Some died due to stamping of the crowd...

Actual Text: **Stampede**

Student 5: Everyone was on a rush to reach the safer places.

Actual Text: **Scurrying**

Student 6:

a. ...There was lull before the bomb blast...

Actual Text: **Lull**

b. ... Dilshuk Nagar was one of the bustling centres at Hyderabad...

Actual Text: **bustling**

Student 7: ...some of the deafening sounds of peoples heard and all were running for their life.

Actual Text: **Deafening**

From the samples we could analyze that from their background knowledge, they could either retrieve the active form of the word or the synonymous form. But some students have misinterpreted the words. For Example: Student 1 has interpreted the word ‘**renewed attacks**’ from the actual text as ‘**public renewed places**’. Student 6 interpreted the word ‘**avenge**’ as ‘**...this bomb blast is taken as an avenge....**’. The background knowledge of these students reflect that they do not have associated structure in their long term memory for certain words and hence predicted the meaning wrongly.

MECHANICS OF WRITING:

On Free Voluntary Reading, **Stephen D. Krashen** has elaborated that those who read more write better (Krashen 2004a, S.Y.Lec, 2004). These engineering students who have a good reading background could retrieve better organization of ideas. Out of 30 students, 5 students could present the information as an essay having coherence and cohesion. These students could not only synthesize the text but also assimilate information from it. The essays written had vocabulary taken from the given text. They could also retrieve relevant tense forms required for the context. The structural knowledge on second language could make these students write comfortably. Also they have made less error while writing.

From the findings, it is identified as Stephen Krashen (pg. X) states “Their reading comprehension will improve, they will find difficult academic style text easier to read. Their writing style will improve, they will be better able to write prose in a style that is acceptable to schools, business and scientific community. Their vocabulary will improve and their spelling and control of grammar will improve”. The students who have written with limited background knowledge require better reading skills. Bottom up and top-down processes while reading should be more effective to write better. Since reading is a systematic way of learning, influence of mother tongue or any other factor does not find any relevance. Attempts should be made not only to assimilate information but also the vocabulary, the sentence structure etc. Word recognition practice in improving cognition could find a way out in learning vocabulary. Also the reading time of these second language learners should increase to get a better exposure. If these attempts are made sure that the schemata of the second language learners would have more structured forms, which will improve their writing skill, become familiar with grammatical forms of English and have better style. This would directly or indirectly influence in making less errors when they write.

Attachment 1:

TERRORISM

Terrorism is just a word in English, but it is hazard for mankind. India faces the problems of poverty, population, hunger and literacy. But spread of terrorism is the most frightening of all. Be it in the small countries like Ireland and Israel, or in the big ones like Russia and USA, terrorism has become the main challenge to most of the governments today.

Terrorism has been described as ‘the use of international violence by group or individuals to achieve political goals’, by the experts in U.S.A. In simple words, it is the spread of terror. It has to be remembered that if destruction of people is taken by the behalf of an established government against another country, then it is known as war, not terrorism. It consists of a series of act planned to spread pressure, panic and destruction in a population.

Terrorism is not unthinking violence. Terrorist are very specific for what they want. Terrorist poses the greatest threats to mankind. They know no friends and recognize no rules. Although explosions and stray shooting are terrorist acts, flight hijacking has come to be their most preferred target of spreading terror among the masses of the countries. Previously it was assumed that terrorism in India would be limited to Kashmir only. But this belief has been proved baseless as terrorism has nearly spread of all over India. There are many types of terrorist groups depending on what their objectives are:

Terrorism is usually of two kinds: political terrorism which creates panic on a large scale and criminal terrorism which deals in kidnapping to take ransom. Political terrorism is much more dangerous than criminal terrorism as they are well-trained and it's become difficult for law enforcing agencies to arrest them in time. For example- hundreds of terrorist are being trained at the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK). And in Punjab, there is no doubt that the terrorist are receiving training and weapons from Pakistan. Assam has been the most unstable state in the last few decades. Assam remains the only state in the northeast where terrorism is a major issue. Terrorism is also spread at national level. But the Regional terrorism is the most violent of all. This is because the terrorist think that dying in a terrorist act is sacred and holy, so they are willing to do anything. All the terrorist groups are made with different purposes.

Terrorism is a world-wide problem. By now, the governments throughout the world are realizing that terrorism is a serious threat to dealt with. They believe in the power of bombs

and guns over dialogue. Terrorist acts are well planned. Every terrorist acts usually takes day and even months of preparation. Terrorist are usually young, but the brain behind them are old, seasoned politicians. Terrorists mostly recruit younger people in their group as it is easy to brainwash them. Freedom is the right to every individual. Our freedom is taken from us when terrorism strikes.

In the recent years, the most powerful country, the USA was shocked when Afghanistan-based terrorist organizations attacked on it. On September 21, 2011 a disaster took place in the New York City when two hijacked planes were flown straight into the World Trade Centre. 6000 people were killed. The bombing of the World Trade Centre is one of the most deadly terrorist episodes in the world. This violent act of terrorism was mastermind by AL-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden. After this attack, many challenges took place in front of us. Like the old security systems were replaced by new and more complicated (also costly) security systems in airports. And in India, government developed many security measures like making strict laws (like POTA – Prevention of Terrorist activity Act), cracking down on their centers and keeping an eye from where terrorist receive money. POTA is an anti-terrorism legislation enacted by the Parliament of India in 2002. This act replaced the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) of 2001. These measures hardly had any effect. These security measures had no effect on political terrorism but they had decreased criminal terrorism by ten percent. Due to these risks from terrorism but they had decreased criminal terrorism by ten percent. Due to these risks from terrorism, the security in various places like airports, railway stations and government offices are kept tightened.

One of the deadliest terrorist attacks in India was the 1993 Bombay Bombings. It was a series of thirteen bombs that took place in Mumbai. The attacks were the most destructive bomb explosions in the history of India. It is believed that the explosions were in coordinate of Dawood Ibrahim, the leader of a terrorist group which stood in opposition of India.

It takes months and sometimes years for the government to demolish a terrorist group. The best example for this can be the operation of Neptune Sphere. It took months of planning and investigation for the U.S.A to kill Osama. Finally on May 2, 2011, at night in Pakistan he was dead shot. The plan of this operation was not shared with Pakistan's government. The saddest thing is that India not only faces terrorism from outside but also from within. In many cases, the leader of a terrorist group was once in favour of that country. For example – Osama Bin

Laden who was once promoted by the U.S.A against Russia later became the greatest threat to the U.S.A Terrorism is like a war, which is neither openly fought nor in a fair manner.

Terrorism has become a global threat and needs to be controlled from the grass root level to the international level. It is also called that 'One person's terrorist, another person's freedom fighter'. This can be explained with the example of Osama Bin Laden. Terrorism cannot be controlled by the law enforcing agencies alone. The world has to unite in order to face this growing threat of terrorism. Let us hope that the world would be free from this hazard very soon. Without terrorism, the world would become a better place to live in.

(aaoorg.blogspot.com/2012_05_01_archive.html)

Dilsukhnagar a third time terror target

Attachment 2: TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Immediately after the blasts, phone lines got jammed and people left offices in a hurry, causing huge traffic jams all around. Many shops and business establishments downed their shutters.

Authorities were on high alert since Afzal Guru's hanging on February 9. Apart from Jammu & Kashmir, there were protests against the hanging in Hyderabad. The execution also triggered revenge threats from Pakistan-based militants and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) vowed renewed attacks on Indian cities. Members of the groups at a private gathering organised by the United Jihad Council in Pakistan, while paying tribute to Guru, had also vowed to step up their 'jihad' in Jammu & Kashmir.

It was the third time that Dilsukhnagar has been targeted by terrorists. In 2002, a bomb went off in a scooter parked near Sai Baba temple in the area, killing two people, while another bomb was defused near a foot over-bridge in 2007, extremely close to the spot where Thursday's bombs were placed.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh dispatched a National Security Guard team to the Hyderabad on a BSF aircraft to probe into the blast and immediately sanctioned Rs 2 lakh each to next of kin of those killed and Rs 50,000 each to those seriously injured. A National Investigation Agency stationed in Hyderabad also joined the probe.

Hyderabad: The twin blasts that rocked Dilsukhnagar on Thursday evening was waiting to happen as the city police were repeatedly ignoring alerts by the Centre about impending strikes at the very place where scores lost their lives.

In August last year, the Delhi Police, after busting a module of Indian Mujahideen (IM), had warned Hyderabad of possible terror strikes by IM, but the police did not act on it, said senior home ministry sources.

One of the arrested militant, called Maqbool, a resident of Nanded in Maharashtra, knew the topography of Hyderabad and had helped IM members in carrying out a rescue of Dilsukhnagar, Begum Bazar and Abids in on a motorcycle.

The information was passed to

Police ignored alerts from Centre,

Hyderabad's cops and they were told to beef up security but the local cops brushed the information aside saying these were "routine".

Maqbool, who began his career along with a criminal called Azam Gauri of Warangal, told police about plans to strike in Hyderabad as it was a soft spot.

"We had information of militants staying at the Old City and Hyderabad was definitely on their minds," said a senior official on condition of anonymity.

Last December, following reports of possible Taliban attacks to avenge Ajmal Kasab's execution in a Pune jail, the centre again warned the city police. However, police told report-

ers on November 30 that they had not received any intelligence inputs of a suspected terror attack in the city.

Anurag Sharma, the Police Commissioner said that police were prepared to shield the city and said pa-

rolling has been intensified as a part of precautionary measure.

"We have not got any such report from any intelligence agency. However, we remain alert to any such threat," he had said.

A Pakistani Taliban group had warned of attacks in Amritsar and Hyderabad to avenge Kasab's death within a month. Karnataka and Vaishno Devi were also on their target. Kasab, who was the lone surviving gunman of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, was hanged at Pune's Yerwada Jail on Nov 21. His execution along with Afzal Guru, is believed to have angered several terror groups who vowed to avenge their deaths.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

Jul 28, 2005 | Blast in Delhi-bound Shramjeevi Express near Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh. 14 killed and over 79 injured

Mar 7, 2006 | Three blasts at Sankat Mochan temple and Cantonment railway station, Varanasi. Twenty killed and over 100 injured

April 14, 2006 | Two explosions in courtyard of Jama Masjid, Delhi. Over 13 injured

Jul 11, 2006 | Seven blasts in first-class compartments of local trains in Mumbai. Over 150 killed and over 300 injured

Sep 8, 2006 | Serial blasts near a mosque in Malegaon, Maharashtra. At least 38 killed and over 100 injured

Feb 18, 2007 | Two blasts rip through coaches of Lahore-bound Samjhauta Express. 68 killed and 125 injured

May 18, 2007 | Blast rips through Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. 16 killed, including 5 in police firing, and over 50 injured

Aug 25, 2007 | Two explosions at a crowded park and a popular eatery in Hyderabad. At least 42 killed and 50 injured

Oct 11, 2007 | Blast at Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti shrine at Ajmer during Ramzan. Two killed and 17 wounded

Oct 15, 2007 | Massive blast at Shringar Cinema Complex in Ludhiana. 7 killed and 32 injured

Nov 19, 2007 | Serial blasts on Civil Court premises of Varanasi, Lucknow and

Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh. At least 13 killed and 40 injured

Jan 1, 2008 | Pre-dawn terrorist attack on CRPF Group Centre at Ramour, UP. At least 8 killed

Jul 25, 2008 | Eight blasts across Bangalore. 1 killed, 8 injured

Jul 26, 2008 | 56 people killed in a series of up to 16 explosions across Ahmedabad

Sep 13, 2008 | A series of five explosions within a few minutes in Delhi kill at least 30 people and leave 100 others injured

Nov 27, 2008 | Two people killed and 17 others injured in a blast at Mehrauli, Delhi

Sep 29, 2008 | Bomb blasts at Malegaon and Modasa (Gujarat) leave 6 people dead

Oct 30, 2008 | 90 killed and over 300 injured in serial blasts across Assam triggered by NDFB

Feb 13, 2010 | 11 killed and 59 wounded after a bomb goes off inside a knapsack at German bakery in Pune, across the road from Jewish Chabad house and abutting Osho Ashram

Sep 7, 2011 | 12 killed and 76 injured as a blast planted inside a briefcase went off outside the Delhi high court

Feb 13, 2012 | Four people, including a diplomat, wounded after a motorcyclist attached a sticky bomb to a Israeli embassy car in New Delhi

Aug 1, 2012 | One person wounded in four low-intensity blasts in Pune

TIMES OF INDIA

February-22, 2013

13 Killed In Twin Blasts In Crowded Middle-Class Locality Of Hyderabad

Terror Returns, Again On Cycle

Intel Sources Suspect Indian Mujahideen Hand

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: It proved to be a lull before a terrifying storm. Seventeen months after the last deadly bomb blast at the Delhi high court, two powerful bombs fastened to parked bicycles ripped through Hyderabad's bustling Dil-sukhnagar area on Thursday, killing at least 13 persons and injuring 70 others. While no individual or group has claimed responsibility so far, intelligence officers insist that the deadly operation bears the stamp of the Lashkar proxy Indian Mujahideen.

Thursday's bombs triggered back-to-back explosions near popular movie theatres, blowing bodies into the air, flattening shops and houses and triggering panic among scores of injured people, who were seen scurrying for cover in all directions with blood oozing out of their heads and legs.

The first bomb went off with a deafening blast near the Dilsukhnagar bus stop at 7.05pm, close to Venkatadri theatre. A minute later, another high intensity blast, near a snack shop close by, flung bodies into the air and left a crater on the tarmac, police and witnesses said. TV channels reported that an unexploded bomb was recovered from the area but there was no confirmation from the cops.

Six months ago, there were low-intensity blasts in Pune, which fortunately claimed no casualty. Since the last blast in which people died was in September 2011 in Delhi, a perception of ebbing terror threat had grown, which Thursday's Hyderabad bomb attacks have blown to smithereens. With fingers being pointed at IM, it seems that

British intel had warned of IM attack

The British intelligence had warned India about a possible terrorist attack by the homegrown terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM). The alert led to a general nationwide alert on Wednesday. The British intelligence alert is believed to have been received by Indian agencies just as British PM David Cameron was about to land in Mumbai on Monday. The input did not speak of any specific movements of terrorists or any particular module. Sources said it may have been based on inputs gathered by the heightened British intelligence gathering in the region ahead of Cameron's visit. On Wednesday, a general alert was issued by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) about a possible attack by the IM. The alert was based on the British input, and came after several weeks of silence about any IM activity. There are no dependable inputs with agencies until now about any IM module being active of late, sources said. However, investigations of recent times have indicated that the entire network of the homegrown terror group may not have been unearthed. The IM tentacles are not just limited to some Indian cities, but it also has very strong affiliations among the Indian diaspora. The activities of IM are believed to have regular funding from West Asian countries. **TNN**

Did Hyderabad police ignore intel alerts?

Hyderabad: The twin blasts that rocked Dilsukhnagar on Thursday evening were waiting to happen as the city police were repeatedly ignoring alerts from the Centre about impending strikes at the very place, where scores lost their lives.

In August last, the Delhi Police, after busting a module of the Indian Mujahideen (IM), had warned Hyderabad of possible terror strikes, but the police did not act on it, said senior home ministry sources.

7:05pm | First blast

behind bus stop near Venkatadri theatre in middle-class locality of Dilsukhnagar (east Hyd), about 16km from city centre. **Bomb planted on a cycle**, in the main road which is the area's commercial hub

7:06pm | Second blast

near eatery in Konark theatre lane (pic), about 100m from Venkatadri theatre. **Again, bomb placed on a cycle**

► Indian Mujahideen suspected to be behind blast
► **Last terrorist strike** in Hyderabad were twin blasts on August 25, 2007. Explosions at Lumbini Park and Gokul Chat in Koti, about 5km from Lumbini, killed 42. Three Indian Mujahideen

Members arrested, investigations still on

Last Terror Strikes in India

Aug 1, 2012: One wounded in 4 low-intensity blasts in Pune

Sep 7, 2011: 12 killed, 76 injured as bomb went off outside Delhi HC

The Andhra Pradesh chief minister (Kiran Kumar Reddy) told me that there was a similar blast at nearby Gokul Chat five years ago — Home minister Sushilkumar Shinde

sukhnagar on Thursday, terrified people ran from the blood-splattered area as glass shards and debris flew. They poured out into the narrow streets causing a stampede as people, including women carrying small children in their arms, ran for safety. Locals rushed to the aid of the injured, writhing and wailing with pain on the streets and sidewalks.

"For a second, I got blinded as there was smoke and darkness all around. Later, I heard women and children wailing around me," said Sudhakar Shetty who survived the terror blasts

with severe burns. "I was cooking in the kitchen of Mirchi Point (an eatery), and wanted to run out along with others but soon realized that I could not move as both my arms and legs were burnt," he said.

At least 25 people were initially rushed to the Osmania general hospital and 15 to the Yashoda hospital in Malakpet, police said. More were taken to two other hospitals. Two days of strike by nurses and group IV staff caught doctors at the emergency ward off guard and some patients even of

chine not functioning at the hospital, most of the injured could not be scanned for internal hemorrhage. The 108 ambulance service alone shifted 42 injured to various hospitals, an official said.

"I have counted at least nine bodies and many more are injured and crying for help," said a senior doctor at Osmania. Similar scenes were seen at Yashoda and Omni hospitals, where scores of injured were taken for treatment.

► Third time target, P 11

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