Textual Enhancement on Students' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract. Textual enhancement is a treatment to modify the appearance of a text (bold, underline, capitalize, italicize, etc.) in certain parts that are considered important. This recent paper aimed at reviewing the relationship between the action of implementing textual enhancement and the student's reading comprehension. In this paper, the writers tried to analyze and explain points related and their contribution to the student's reading comprehension. Several studies have shown that by modifying the appearance of texts, readers will find it easier to recognize, mark, and realize important things that need to be known from the text [1][2][3][4][5]. Related to scanning and skimming in reading, this treatment will give more impact on noticing important messages conveyed by the text. Once the reader can recognize and identify the important things in a text, the reader will understand the overall content of the text more easily.

Keywords: textual enhancement, reading, noticing, student's reading comprehension

1 What is textual enhancement?

Textual enhancement is a treatment to modify the appearance of a text (bold, underline, capitalize, italicize, color, etc.) in certain parts that are considered important. This treatment has emerged since 20 years ago with the term "input enhancement". 1][2] conducted two studies related to input enhancement as the answer to fossilized problems experienced by students who often ignored crucial parts in learning a language. [2] It was stated that students did not have adequate sensitivity to linguistic features of a language, and also the linguistic features were not saliently displayed. As a result, many students failed in learning a language.

Several decades ago, Schmidt presented the term consciousness-raising as the earlier term to raise the students' awareness [3]. About a decade later, Schmidt introduced the term input enhancement as an action that increased the saliency of linguistic details [4]. The definition may be interpreted that the saliency should be applied for both form and meaning, so that the

learners will gain more information from one text or input. This saliency is purposively made to aid the learners in learning a language consciously and unconsciously.

Input enhancement could be created by the learner himself (insider) or the teacher, or the author (outsider). Learners may underline and highlight important points in a text. Whereas the outsiders, teachers or book authors, may make some modifications on the text appearance before the text is distributed to the students

This recent study tried to review the previous studies in textual enhancement. Besides, this paper also tried to review the correlation between textual enhancement and reading comprehension. [5] claimed that previous research on textual enhancement was different in these attributes: 1) comparing minimal enhancements and complex enhancements, 2) comparing solitary word, sentence, and paragraph for stimuli, 3) comparing meaning-conveying enhancement against non-meaning, 4) employing student's schemata of the target language, 5) comparing many and one or a few-time enhancement of the target form, 6) comparing shorter and longer texts, 7) comparing one and many-sessions treatment, 8) comparing one and many types of enhancement, 9) delivering an explanation before treatment, and 10) giving instruction before the treatment.

2 Consciousness-raising, noticing, and acquisition

2.1 Consciousness-raising

Textual enhancement is a part of consciousness-raising. In 1981, Smith presented consciousness-raising as an effort to answer the problem in the teaching and learning of second or foreign languages. Specifically, this problem often emerged in the use of teaching approaches that focused on form [3].

Consciousness-raising is a part of learning process where the learners should often focus more on the target language. They should be conscious of the new language in the beginning. After that, they will notice and recognize it, and finally, they can produce it. This part of learning process is also known as awareness raising. Moreover, consciousness-raising is termed as any technique which may foster students to give more attention to the language form. This attention will produce awareness of form which leads to indirect contribution to language acquisition [6].

[7] states that the consciousness-raising is created by highlighting the input which will arise the learner's notice to the highlighted forms. Then, after the first step is successfully reached, the learning of target form should happen according to the hypothesis that attention is what facilitates input and intake. Thus, in this recent paper, it should be clear that the main purpose of consciousness-raising is to improve students' knowledge, and it is not the same as giving the knowledge directly [8].

2.2 Noticing

Noticing is one of the crucial steps in understanding a language. Many current studies have given substantial proof that noticing and learning are certainly linked [9][10]. The noticing

hypothesis is that input will not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed or consciously registered [4][11]. Yet, noticing and understanding are different. Noticing is a technical term limited to the conscious registration of attended specific instances of language. On the other hand, understanding is a higher level of awareness that includes generalizations across instances. Knowledge of rules and metalinguistic awareness of all kinds belong to this higher level of awareness. Therefore, the core of the issue appears to be consciousness as attention, whether it goes along with intention or not [11].

A study [12] reported that not all the textual enhancements done by the researcher were noticed by all the participants. Precisely, some learners focused on meaning over form despite the definite instructions to consider both meaning and form [12]. Moreover, similar findings suggested that learners had their own purpose to reach an agenda that mightnot be in line with the instructional guidance [13]. Yet, textual enhancement will ignite a sequence of cognitive processes initiated by noticing.

When learners are exposed to this input enhancement, there will be two possibilities, e.g., 1) learners may or may not detect the input enhancement, and 2) learners may detect it partially. Those two possibilities depend on whether the learners are ready for it or how much overlap there is between externally and internally generated salience [5]. Therefore, [1] still doubts to what extent the input enhancement might stimulate the learners' capabilities in processing the information in their linguistic domains and subsystems. However, input enhancement tends to give a significant effect on learners' ability to notice and acquire a language [14].

2.3 Acquisition

Common experts will agree that acquisition and learning are different. Yet, acquisition and learning are often included simultaneously in language teaching and learning. Many people claim that acquisition is better in longer retention, while learning can give a better outcome in a shorter period [15].

Recent studies about language acquisition focus more on examining the hypothesis that acquisition is obviously drawing learners' attention to the target language, so that the input may help the learners acquire the language [11]. Furthermore, one successful requirement in language acquisition is more exposure to meaningful interaction. Language acquisition needs more meaningful interaction in a certain language, in which people do not focus on form of their utterances but on the messages they are conveying and understanding [15].

Acquisition is related to textual enhancement. Most studies claim that textual enhancement gives a significant effect on noticing as well as acquisition [5]. As explained above, textual enhancement could draw learners' attention to the target form which leads to the further process of acquiring the language features. However, this mostly happens in a single treatment session of textual enhancement [16].

There is still doubt among experts to what extent the implementation of textual enhancement could bear a significant effect on students' language acquisition. Yet, many research results claim that textual enhancement could produce acquisition, where acquisition is mainly linked with better accuracy in production.

3 Textual enhancements on reading comprehension

3.1 Reading comprehension

Reading has many descriptions. First, [17] defines reading as a process of articulating the conventional way of the symbolized sound by printed or written markers through a text. Second, [18] describes reading as an active process of getting the meaning from a printed words or verbal symbols in a text. To get the expected meaning from the text, a reader must understand what he reads. Through this process, a reader combines his language skills and prior knowledge of the world to get the meaning. In addition, [19] states that reading is a process of negotiation of meaning. In this step, the reader conveys his early thought to the reading process to reach an understanding about the meaning of the reading text.

 [20] says that reading is a process of transferring meaning from mind to mind, transferring messages from an author to readers. Reading needs comprehension to understand the message being conveyed and get new information from the text. Therefore, comprehension cannot be separated from reading.

Reading comprehension is understanding a text. This understanding comes from the interaction between the written words and how the students trigger knowledge outside the text. With this skill, the reader can understand a text as well as comprehend the content of the text. [21].

Reading comprehension skill depends on the capability of students to notice words quickly and effortlessly. Therefore, many people say that reading can also improve vocabulary mastery. If the students struggle and have many obstacles to notice the words, they will use too much processing capacity to read words individually. This will affect their ability to comprehend what they read. Therefore, a good teaching strategy and teaching technique are needed to improve students' comprehension skills and to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning.

3.2 Textual enhancement on comprehension

Many previous studies reveal that textual enhancement facilitates language form recognition, and also aids the students' comprehension [22][23][24]. As mentioned in the previous chapter, input enhancement proposes a comprehension beyond just noticing. This theory says that textual enhancement is trying to develop comprehension as well as acquisition [16][25][26]. Yet, it needs more profound assessment in comprehension as well as noticing, and also acquisition, especially for longer period, because most of the previous studies disregarded the necessity to measure comprehension [23][27][28].

Hence, despite many proofs suggesting that textual enhancement can encourage noticing of some language features, it remains doubtful whether or not it develops a comprehension simultaneously. Previous studies [29] [23] indicate that input enhancement may reduce learners' attention to language meaning. And this proof should be another concern for future textual enhancement researchers.

On the other hand, some previous researchers have made a deliberate effort to create a setting which focuses on meaning. For example, [30] asked his research participants to answer comprehension questions before the beginning of the treatment. [31] provided vocabulary assistance instead of asking his research participants to answer comprehension only. Another strategy was done by Izumi [7]. He asked the participants to make a summary after reading the text. Yet, there has not been any research with a specific design for measuring comprehension.

So far, the best specific attempt to obtain students' reading comprehension score is, possibly, by having them make a summary of the reading texts [5][7][24][32]. Although none of these studies employed any pre- and post-treatment comparison of comprehension, they put a bit of focus on the effectiveness of textual enhancement on comprehension. Later, a better design to measure textual enhancement on comprehension should treat comprehension as a dependent variable to be measured both before and after the textual enhancement treatment [5]. This condition is a must to know the exact effect of textual enhancement on the participants' comprehension.

As the final statement in this chapter, measuring comprehension in relation to textual enhancement means that the focus should be on measuring certain comprehension rather than overall comprehension [5][27]. Certain comprehension focuses only on the part of the text that contains the enhanced form. Furthermore, [28] [33] reported that textual enhancement had a significant effect only at the level of certain comprehension rather than at the level of complete comprehension. Therefore, any future research which could control for certain and overall comprehension will give important insight on this issue.

4 Textual enhancements on techniques in reading comprehension

There are abundant techniques that have been innovated by experts to improve students' reading comprehension, such as skimming, scanning, SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review), SPE (Structure, Proposition, and Evaluation), etc. Among all the techniques to promote reading comprehension, scanning and skimming are the most popular ones.

4.1 Scanning

Scanning is known as a reading technique used by simply moving eyes over a text. This technique is usually used to find out a certain information based on certain key words. So, the most important ability when using this technique is noticing.

Noticing a certain form in a certain language is a requirement for its acquisition [12]. Therefore, learners' awareness is important, and textual enhancement can play a significant role in scanning. [5] state that it is crucial whether the learners can proceed upon the noticed features. This process may depend on whether the learners are able to perceive, store, and apply the salient information produced by textual enhancement.

4.2 Skimming

Skimming is also known as a technique to get the essence of the text. In skimming technique, readers often skim or glance over the text. This technique is usually used when the readers

already know the general idea of the text. Reader can also skim material before going for further reading.

The skimming technique requires more efforts than scanning. The after process takes greater part. Noticing is not the only part needed. Therefore, textual enhancement may not the only factor that can give significant effect on reading comprehension. it is stated [5] that enhanced forms may attract attention but may fall short of further processing. However, textual enhancement indeed encourages the learners' awareness in noticing some important input that should be taken into further processing.

5 Conclusion

Textual enhancement is a good technique to be used in supporting students' reading comprehension. Textual enhancement could improve learners' awareness to notice important points from a text. This benefit may help the learners to understand the messages of a reading text more easily. In other words, textual enhancement can give a huge contribution to the students' reading comprehension.

Students may use several techniques in reading to comprehend the author's intended meaning of a text, such as scanning and skimming. Thus, textual enhancement may help the students to develop their awareness in noticing the important parts of the text. Moreoverthey should process them into further processes to get a complete comprehension of a text.

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