

TAXONOMY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING READING

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Abstract

English language teaching techniques have various categorization. Those techniques covering for main skills in English namely reading, listening, speaking and writing. The concept incorporates classification of type of activity that enables teachers to pick out the sequential activity within the lesson. Based on Behaviorism theory, language learning is a process of reinforcement repetition that proposed three stages of learning that are called presentation, practice and production (PPP). The three step PPP aimed at developing automatic habits largely through classroom processes of modeling, repetition, and controlled practice. Brown classifies the taxonomy into three broad categories: controlled technique, semi-controlled technique, and free technique. Teachers have a dominant control in controlled technique. In free technique, teachers are usually put into a less controlled role here, as students become free to be creative with their responses and interactions with other students. Semi controlled technique is the combination of the both categories.

Keywords: *taxonomy of language teaching, controlled technique, semi-controlled technique, free technique.*

A. Introduction

Reading is one of the main language skills. It is assumed as receptive skill like listening, which means that it involves responding to the text rather than producing it. In short it can be said that reading involves making sense of text. In many second or foreign language teaching situations, reading receives a special focus. There are a number of reasons for this. First, many foreign language students often have reading as one of their most important goals. They want to be able to read for information and pleasure, for their career, and for study purposes.

In fact, in most EFL situations, the ability to read in a foreign language is a pursuit that students ever want to acquire. Second, written texts serve various pedagogical purposes. Extensive exposure to

linguistically comprehensible written texts can enhance the process of language acquisition. Good reading texts might also provide good models for writing, and provide opportunities to introduce new topics, to stimulate discussion, and to study language (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, and idioms). Reading, then, is a skill which is highly appreciated by both students and teachers.

B. The Nature of Reading

Being a good teacher of reading starts with an understanding of what reading is. Johnson states that reading is a practice of employing text to form meaning¹. Serravallo explains that reading is thinking, grasping and receiving meaning from a text². Furthermore reading is a collection of skill that engages deriving meaning and making sense from the written word. In order to read, the reader must be able to decode (sound out) the printed word and also comprehend what we read³.

A long way from being merely a passive skill, reading is an active process in which readers relate information in the text to what they already know. Knowledge of the language allows readers to identify the printed words and sentences. Knowledge of the world allows them to comprehend these words and sentences. Good readers read for meaning. They do not decode each letter or each word. Instead, they take hunks of the text and relate it to what they know.

There are two main approaches that can be applied in the process of reading. The approaches are called bottom-up and top-down. Bottom up is a process of decoding meaning from the printed page. The main concept behind the bottom up approach is that reading is basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents⁴. In the process, readers recognize a multiplicity of linguistic signals (such as letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, grammatical cues, discourse markers) and use their linguistic data processing mechanisms to impose some order on these signals.

While, top down is a process that brings a whole host of background information into the arena of making decisions about what something mean. In this point of view, readers start with what is already

¹ Johnson. *Teaching reading and writing: a guidebook for tutoring and remediating students*. USA: Rowman & Littlefield Education. 2008.

² Serravallo. *Teaching reading in small groups: differentiated instruction for building strategic, independent readers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann. 2010.

³ Linse. *Practical English language teaching: Young learners*. New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc. 2005

⁴ Nunan. *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. Sydney: Prentice Hall. 1991

in their head. They use their background knowledge to make a prediction of what is likely to be found in the text and read to confirm that prediction. Readers will only need to read enough of the text to confirm or reject the prediction, not necessarily every word, and certainly not every letter. As the consequence, top down is also called strategy-base and bottom-up is called skill-based⁵.

In learning English as a foreign language, teachers usually use top-down or strategy based. They use it because the aim of reading is to understand the essence of the text not to understand each word of the text. In addition, it will be difficult to understand word by word especially for beginner students. It is because their vocabulary is still limited in this stage. Students need strategy to read English with lack of vocabularies. The strategy will be useful to help the learners to catch the idea, although they do not understand all words in the text⁶.

Some theorists have proposed a model that combines elements of both bottom-up and top-down which they call an interactive model. This model views reading as a complex interaction between the writer of the text and the reader, implying a balanced approach to the teaching of reading, drawing on both theoretical models. Better readers make less use of context because their recognition of words is efficient and automatic, but less skilled reader find such cues useful while they are learning to compensate for less automaticity⁷.

There are several types of reading. If someone read a text just to find a specific piece or pieces of information in it, she/he usually do *scanning* or reading for specific information. When someone scans, she/he doesn't read the whole text. She/he hurry over most of it until she/he finds the information she/he is interested in. For example, when someone look for a number in a telephone directory. Another type of reading is *skimming* or reading for gist. It is reading quickly through a text to get a general idea of what it is about. For example, somebody skim when she/he looks quickly through a book shop in a bookshop to decide if she/he wants to buy it, or when somebody go quickly through a reference book to decide which part will help she/he writes an essay.

The third type is *reading for detail*. If someone read a letter from her or his partner, parents, or friend who she/he has not heard for along

⁵ Brown, H.D. *Teaching by principle: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman Inc. (2nd ed.) (2001)

⁶ Fathonah. *The teaching of reading at SLTP Negeri 2 Ngimbang Lamongan*. Universitas Islam Negeri Malang. Published Thesis. 2006

⁷ Hughes & Schwab, *Teaching adult literacy: principles and practice*. New York: Open University Press. 2010.

time, she/he might reads like this, getting the meaning out of every word. Another type of reading is *extensive reading*. Extensive reading involves reading long pieces of text, for example a story or an article. As someone read, her or his attention and interest may vary. Someone may read some parts of the text in detail while she/he may skim through others.

Sometimes, especially in language classrooms, teachers use text to examine language. For instance, teachers ask students to look for all the words in a text related to a particular topic, or work out the grammar of a particular sentence. The aim of these activities is to make students more aware of how language is used. These activities are called *intensive reading*⁸.

Abbott et. al. in Fathonah adds two kind of reading. They are *reading aloud* and *silent reading*. Reading aloud is a good pronunciation practice. However, it is meaningless because the students do not have enough timeto comprehend what they have read. While, silent reading is the best activity to comprehend the idea of text. It gives the students a length of time to focus and understand what they have already read⁹.

C. Consideration to Teach Reading

There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teachers' job. Harmer mentions some of them. In the first place, many of them want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purposes or simply for pleasure. Anything teachers can do to make reading easier for them must be a good idea. Reading is useful for other purposes too. Any exposure to English is a good thing for language students. At the very least, some of the language sticks in their minds as part of the process of language acquisition, andif the reading text is especially interesting and engaging, acquisition is likely to be even more successful¹⁰.

Richard &Renandya add that reading texts also provide good models for English writing¹¹. When teachers teach the skill of writing, they will need to show students models of what they are encouraging them to do. Reading texts also provide opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way students construct sentences, paragraphs and texts. Lastly, good reading text can stimulate

⁸ Spratt, Pulverness,& Williams, Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., &Williams, M. *The TKT course*.United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. 2005. Hughes & Schwab.*Teaching adult literacy: principles and practice*.New York: Open University Press. 2010

⁹ Opcit, p. 18.

¹⁰ Harmer. *How to teach English*.Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited. 1998.

¹¹ Richard &Renandya. *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2002.

discussion, introduce interesting topics, excite imaginative responses and be the springboard for well-rounded and fascinating lessons¹².

D. Taxonomy in teaching Reading

Taxonomy of language teaching techniques is a categorization of various teaching techniques that used in teaching English covering for main skills; reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Chaudron and Crookes establish the concept of taxonomy of language teaching technique. The concept incorporates classification of type of activity that enables teachers to pick out the sequential activity within a lesson¹³.

Another theory of language learning is based on behaviourism which explains that language learning is essentially the formation of good language habits through repeated reinforcement. In its popularized form, audiolingualism, the three stages of learning are called presentation, practice, and production (PPP). The three-step PPP process is aimed at developing automatic habits largely through classroom processes of modeling, repetition, and controlled practice¹⁴.

Regarding with teaching reading, Medina divides the process into three stages. They are pre-reading activities, while or whilst-reading activities, and post-reading activities. Pre-reading activities are intended to prepare the students for a reading selection, or to give them the first step in order to develop skills in anticipation and prediction for the reading, activating background knowledge so they could later interact with the text. With this stage, teachers give students meaningful pieces of information that they would encounter in the reading¹⁵.

While-reading activities aim to help students to understand the specific content and to perceive the rhetorical structure of the text. In this stage teachers take the students through reading and they interact with the text. The last is post-reading activities which are intended to verify and expand the knowledge acquired in the reading. These last stages also lead the learners to discuss and analyze issues presented in the reading.

Brown classifies the taxonomy into three broad categories: controlled technique, semi-controlled technique, and free technique. Teachers have a dominant control in controlled technique. In free

¹² Ibid. p. 45

¹³ Crookes, G. & Chaudron, C. Guideliness for language classroom instruction. In Mariane Celce-Murcia (Ed), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*(3rded). USA: Heinle&Heinle. 1991

¹⁴ (Thornbury, *How to teach speaking*. London: Pearson Longman Ltd 2006)

¹⁵ Medina. (2008). The internet TESL journal: *A guide to teaching reading explained using a lesson about coffee*. Retrieved on 10 March, 2013, from itslj.org/Techique/Medina-Coffee.html.

technique, teachers are usually put into a less controlled role here, as students become free to be creative with their responses and interactions with other students. Semi controlled technique is the combination of the both categories¹⁶.

Furthermore, he gives a few generalizations that differentiate “controlled” and “free”. The “controlled” is teacher-centered, manipulative, structured, predicted student responses, pre-planned objective, and set curriculum. The “free” is student-centered, communicative, open-ended, unpredicted responses, negotiated objective, and cooperative curriculum (Brown, 2001)¹⁷. The taxonomy of language teaching techniques is as the following:

1. Controlled Techniques

- a. *Warm-up*: Mimes, dance, songs, jokes, play. This activity gets the students stimulated, relaxed, motivated, attentive, or otherwise engaged and ready for the lesson. It does not necessarily involve use of the target language.
- b. *Setting*: Focusing in on lesson topic. Teacher directs attention to the topic by verbal or nonverbal evocation of the context relevant to the lesson by questioning or miming or picture presentation, possibly by tape recording of situations and people.
- c. *Organizational*: Structuring of lesson or class activities includes disciplinary action, organization of class furniture and seating, general procedures for class interaction and performance, structure and purpose of lesson, etc.
- d. *Content explanation*: Grammatical, phonological, lexical (vocabulary), sociolinguistic, pragmatic, or any other aspects of language.
- e. *Role-play demonstration*: Selected students or teacher illustrate the procedure(s) to be applied in the lesson segment to follow. Includes brief illustration of language or other content to be incorporated.
- f. *Dialogue/Narrative presentation*: Reading or listening passage presented for passive reception. No implication of student production or other identification of specific target forms or functions (students may be asked to "understand").
- g. *Dialogue/Narrative recitation*: Reciting a previously known or prepared text, either in unison or individually.
- h. *Reading aloud*: Reading directly from a given text.

¹⁶ Brown, H.D. *Teaching by principle: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman Inc. 2nd ed. 2001.

¹⁷ Ibid.

- i. *Checking*: Teacher either circulating or guiding the correction of students' work, providing feedback as an activity rather than within another activity.
- j. *Question-answer, display*: Activity involving prompting of student responses by means of display questions (i.e., teacher or questioner already knows the response or has a very limited set of expectations for the appropriate response). Distinguished from referential questions by the likelihood of the questioner's knowing the response and the speaker's being aware of that fact.
- k. *Drill*: Typical language activity involving fixed patterns of teacher prompting and student responding, usually with repetition, substitution, and other mechanical alterations. Typically with little meaning attached.
- l. *Translation*: Student or teacher provision of L1 or L2 translations of given text.
- m. *Dictation*: Student writing down orally presented text.
- n. *Copying*: Student writing down text presented visually.
- o. *Identification*: Student picking out and producing/labeling or otherwise identifying a specific target form, function, definition, or other lesson-related item.
- p. *Recognition*: Student identifying forms, as in *Identification* (i.e., checking off items, drawing symbols, rearranging pictures), but without a verbal response.
- q. *Review*: Teacher-led review of previous week/month/or other period as a formal summary and type of test of student recall performance.
- r. *Testing*: Formal testing procedures to evaluate student progress.
- s. *Meaningful drill*: Drill activity involving responses with meaningful choices, as in reference to different information. Distinguished from *Information exchange* by the regulated sequence and general form of responses.

2. Semi-controlled Techniques

- a. *Brainstorming*: A special form of preparation for the lesson, like *Setting*, which involves free, undirected contributions by the students and teacher on a given topic, to generate multiple associations without linking them; no explicit analysis or interpretation by the teacher.
- b. *Story telling (especially when student-generated)*: Not necessarily lesson-based, a lengthy presentation of story by teacher or student (may overlap with *Warm-up or Narrative recitation*). May be used to maintain attention, motivate, or as lengthy practice.

- c. *Question-answer, referential*: Activity involving prompting of responses by means of referential questions (i.e., the questioner does not know beforehand the response information). Distinguished from *Question-answer, display*.
- d. *Cued narrative/Dialogue*: Student production of narrative or dialogue following cues from miming, cue cards, pictures, or other stimuli related to narrative/dialogue (e.g., metalanguage requesting functional acts).
- e. *Information transfer*: Application from one mode (e.g., visual) to another (e.g., writing), which involves some transformation of the information (e.g., student fills out diagram while listening to description). Distinguished from *Identification* in that the student is expected to transform and reinterpret the language or information.
- f. *Information exchange*: Task involving two-way communication as in information-gap exercises, when one or both parties (or a larger group) must share information to achieve some goal. Distinguished from *Question-answer, referential* in that sharing of information is critical for the task.
- g. *Wrap-up*: Brief teacher- or student-produced summary of point and/or items that have been practiced or learned.
- h. *Narration/exposition*: Presentation of a story or explanation derived from prior stimuli. Distinguished from Cued narrative because of lack of immediate stimulus.
- i. *Preparation*: Student study, silent reading, pair planning and rehearsing, preparing for later activity. Usually a student-directed or -oriented project.

3. Free Techniques

- a. *Role-play*: Relatively free acting out of specified roles and functions. Distinguished from *Cued dialogues* by the fact that cueing is provided only minimally at the beginning, and not during the activity.
- b. *Games*: Various kinds of language game activity not like other previously defined activities (e.g., board and dice games making words).
- c. *Report*: Report of student-prepared exposition on books, experiences, project work, without immediate stimulus, and elaborated on according to student interests. Akin to *Composition* in writing mode.
- d. *Problem solving*: Activity involving specified problem and limitations of means to resolve it; requires cooperation on part of participants in small or large group.

- e. *Drama*:Planned dramatic rendition of play, skit, story, etc.
- f. *Simulation*:Activity involving complex interaction between groups and individuals based on simulation of real-life actions and experiences.
- g. *Interview*:A student is directed to get information from another student or students.
- h. *Discussion*:Debate or other form of grouped discussion of specified topic, with or without specified sides/positions prearranged.
- i. *Composition*:As in *Report*(verbal), written development of ideas, story, or other exposition.
- j. *A propos*:Conversation or other socially oriented interaction/speech by teacher, students, or even visitors, on general real-life topics. Typically authentic and genuine.

E. Reading Comprehension

There are several definitions and explanations of reading comprehension. Pardo defines comprehension as the process which readers interacting and constructing meaning from text, implementing the use of prior knowledge, and the information found in the text¹⁸. Lapp, Flood, and Farnan present the definition of comprehension from The International Reading Association which states that comprehension is (1) an active, constructive process; (2) a thinking process before, during, and after reading; (3) an interaction of the reader, the text, and the context¹⁹.

In a number of circumstances, reading comprehension is frequently tested, but is rarely taught. In the past, reading instruction focus on teaching decoding skill while comprehension consisted of simple question and retelling. It is essential that students are taught the important of getting meaning from reading. They must aware that the reading process is more than just decoding words²⁰.

Prior to the 1970s, the process of reading comprehension was viewed as the reader's ability to restate the text. Historical strategies include worksheets, which do not engage students, resulting in not much being gained by these activities. Today it is known that skillful readers use

¹⁸ Pardo. *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About Comprehension*. Retrieved on 8 March, 2013, from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1598/RT.58.3.5/abstract>. 2004

¹⁹ Lapp, Flood, and Farnan. (Eds.). *Content area reading and learning: Instructional strategies*. (3rd ed.). NY: Erlbaum. 2008.

²⁰ Carnine, Douglas, W., Silbert, J., Edward J., Kame'enui, Sara, G. Tarver, & Jungjohann, K. . *Teaching Struggling and At-Risk Readers: A direct instructional approach*. Columbus, Ohio: Pearson. 2006, ;Ekwall& Shanker. *Locating and correcting reading difficulties*. New York: Merrill. 1992

prior knowledge, make connections, visualize, infer, ask questions, determine importance, and synthesize the materials that they read²¹.

Serravallo explains strategies that assist students to get better comprehension as the following²²:

1. *Activating prior knowledge before, during, and after reading a text.* Proficient readers think about what they already know about a text's structure or topic before they read; they make connections to their lives, other books, and the world as they read; and they think about these connections after they are finished reading.
2. *Determining the most important ideas and themes in a text.* Proficient readers understand the most significant events in a fiction story and use the significant events to retell, and when reading nonfiction can determine the main idea of a passage, section, or chapter.
3. *Creating visual and sensory images before, during, and after reading a text.* Proficient readers have a "lost-in-a-book" feeling when reading and are able to describe the multisensory experiences they have across the course of reading the text. It is not simply about visualizing, but also hearing, seeing, smelling, and feeling what is described in the text.
4. *Asking questions.* Proficient readers read with curiosity. They question the text, often including the characters' actions or motivations, their own reactions to what's in the book, and even the author's decisions of what to include and what not to include.
5. *Drawing inferences.* Proficient readers constantly read beyond what's literally in the text. They are able to form judgments, make predictions, and determine the theme or message of a story, and they have their own ideas and critiques about a text.
6. *Retelling and synthesizing.* Proficient readers can figure out how parts of a text fit together. One way to use that knowledge is to retell a text in sequence, chronicling what happened first, next, and finally. Readers can also put parts of the text together to understand cause and effect, character change, or how all of the nonfiction features on one page fit together under a single main idea.
7. *Using fix-up strategies when comprehension breaks down.* Proficient readers monitor their own understanding as they read and have

²¹ Brooks et. al., 2004; Grimes, 2004., *Improving Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Development in At-Risk Students*. Retrieved on 8 March, 2013, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED410535&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED410535, Brownell, Intervention in School and Clinic, *An interview with Dr. Michael Pressley*, 36(2), 105-107. 2000.

²² Serravallo. *Teaching reading in small groups: differentiated instruction for building strategic, independent readers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann. 2010.

strategies to fix confusion as it arises. These strategies include the ability to understand new vocabulary.

Regarding with the reading standard for students in university, Ohio research center provides a good standard for a 12th-grader²³, that can be a standard for students in Indonesia as the following:

1. Apply reading comprehension strategies, including making predictions, comparing and contrasting, recalling and summarizing and making inferences and drawing conclusions.
2. Answer literal, inferential, evaluative and synthesizing questions to demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate print texts and electronic and visual media.
3. Monitor own comprehension by adjusting speed to fit the purpose, or by skimming, scanning, reading on, looking back, note taking or summarizing what has been read so far in text.
4. Use criteria to choose independent reading materials (e.g., personal interest, knowledge of authors and genres or recommendations from others).
5. Independently read books for various purposes (e.g., for enjoyment, for literary experience, to gain information or to perform a task).

Related to the discussion above, Wolf explains that learners whose main language is not English may have different reading level that vary from beginning to advanced high²⁴ as the following:

1. ELL Reading Stage 1 -- Beginner

English Language Learners who are labeled "Beginner" either cannot read or understand English, or they have a very limited ability to do so. In academic and social situations, these students are sometimes able to understand or read words that they have recently heard or memorized, or those that are used commonly or often. They understand some of the writing that can be found in their environment, such as signs and labels, and can sometimes recognize simple words that can be illustrated with pictures. These students rely heavily on visuals to support their ability to recall words. If they are able to read, they do so slowly and with little comprehension, as their decoding skills are minimal.

²³ Ohio research center.(2013). *Ohio's academic content standards in English language arts*. Retrieved on 20 March, 2013 from <http://www.ohiorc.org/standards/ohio/item/englishlanguagearts/gli/36.aspx#1>

²⁴ Wolf. (2010). *Characteristics of reading stages for ells*. Retrieved on 4 April, 2013 from [Characteristics of Reading Stages for ELLs | eHow.comhttp://www.ehow.com/info_8688188_characteristics-readingstagesells.html#ixzz2PWfdZVsO](http://www.ehow.com/info_8688188_characteristics-readingstagesells.html#ixzz2PWfdZVsO). 2010.

Younger ELLs in kindergarten through first grade cannot understand what has been read to them unless the stories include images that illustrate what is happening in the story. The differences in sounds between their primary language and English make it difficult for them to decode grade-level words and texts.

2. ELL Reading Stage 2 - Intermediate

Intermediate ELLs read and understand more words than beginners. These words are mostly those used often in social and academic situations. They read and understand new vocabulary better than beginners, and their understanding of these words is deeper. They can memorize both the pronunciation and meaning of academic vocabulary words and can follow as the English language is spoken in both conversational and academic settings.

When beginners read one word at a time with little or no comprehension, intermediate ELLs can read phrases and can understand simple sentences as they read. They still read slowly, and they still rely on visuals to support their understanding of what they read. These students will often struggle with independent reading assignments and textbooks that are written on their grade level. They can, however, demonstrate basic comprehension skills when reading selections that have been adapted for second-language learners.

Intermediate ELLs in kindergarten and first grade can understand stories read to them better than beginners, especially if these stories are about topics that are familiar to the student or that follow a common storyline, or if the sentence structures in the story are simple. They rely on illustrations to support their understanding.

3. ELL Reading Stage 3 - Advanced

Advanced ELLs in second through 12th grade can read and understand grade-level texts that have been accommodated for students whose primary language is not English. With support, they can read and comprehend new academic and social vocabulary, but they still struggle with less frequently used words. While intermediate ELLs tend to understand only the literal meaning of words, advanced ELLs comprehend non-literal meanings of words, and they understand that some words have multiple meanings.

Their reading speed is faster and better paced than intermediate ELLs, and they depend less on illustrations for understanding. Advanced ELLs demonstrate both basic and some higher-level comprehension of grade-level texts, especially when these texts are accommodated for second language learners.

Younger advanced ELLs in kindergarten and first grade demonstrate similar comprehension skills as older ELLs when stories are read aloud to them. They can read and understand basic English words, especially those that are used frequently in conversation. Their ability to decode while reading grade-level texts is more advanced than their intermediate and beginner peers, especially when the texts have been accommodated for second language learners.

4. ELL Reading Stage 4 - Advanced High

ELLs labeled "Advanced High" has reading abilities close to those of their peers whose primary language is English. These ELLs still need some second language acquisition support when reading grade-level texts, but they demonstrate better comprehension skills than those labeled as "Advanced." Unlike lower-level ELLs, these students can read grade-level texts with expression and at a speed comparable to their non-ELL peers. They understand what they read, but might still require assistance with uncommon words.

Younger ELLs who are labeled "Advanced High" understand both the main message and supporting details of stories that are read to them in English. They recognize commonly used words, can decode new words and can understand grade-level texts similar to those students who are not ELLs.

F. Conclusion

Reading is one of the main language skill. In many second and foreign language teaching situations, reading receives a special focus. Meanwhile, in the classroom, English language teaching technique have various categorization. Those techniques covering four main skill in English. Those are classified into three broad categorization: controlled technique, semi-controlled technique, and free technique. Teachers have different role eof ach category.

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