A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND RECIPROCAL TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION AMONG POOR READERS

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of traditional and reciprocal teaching on reading comprehension of the poor readers. The research was conducted on experimental design method. The population of the study consisted on the students of secondary level. Twenty students were taken as sample through the diagnostic reading test. The tools of the research were English reading comprehension tests. The treatment span was fifteen days, two hours per day. After collecting the data, it was quoted and analyzed. The students, who had been taught through reciprocal teaching, showed improvement in reading comprehension. It was concluded that reciprocal teaching method was better than traditional teaching method.

Introduction

Reading is a skill that empowers everyone who learns it. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes; word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. The readers typically make background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help understand written text (Kamil, Pang, Muaka and Bernhardt, 2003). In Pakistan, students read English as a second language. Their primary language is not English, so they face a lot of reading problems. Educational

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success requires successful reading and it is said that those who fail in school usually have failed first in reading (Dechant, 1991).

There are different methods of teaching the reading habit. Traditional teaching method is the most common in our country. Mostly the teachers teach the students through this method. The teacher's ask one student to read the lesson loudly and the rest of the students to listen it. The student reads the lesson without understanding it. Generally the guidelines are given by the teacher. When the tests are used for diagnostic purpose, they are generally used only to establish grades for recall. The use of literacy tools (listening, reading, writing) in the traditional approach is restricted primarily to the individualized reading with minimal writing done often only in workbooks (Verghese, 1997). The purpose of a teacher is to complete the whole course during the short time. This method is being used since many years.

Reciprocal teaching is also a teaching method of reading comprehension. The purpose of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students as well as among students in the task of bringing meaning to the text. Basically, it is an interactive method used to improve reading comprehension. Using this teaching strategy, teachers and students take turns towards leading discussions regarding sections of the text using cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Reciprocal teaching is based on Vygotsky's theory of the fundamental role of social interaction (dialogue) in the development of cognition. Thinking aloud and discussion of thoughts aid in clarification and revision of thinking and learning, therefore developing cognition. Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is critical to identify appropriate text and scaffolding activities to support student success. Text must be at a level than can be effectively shared, not too easy and not too difficult. Appropriate support and feedback must be given to facilitate learning during reciprocal teaching activities. Reciprocal teaching was developed by Palincsar and Brown in 1984 for the purpose of helping the students from first grade on for improving their understanding during reading. Reciprocal teaching is a learning arrangement in which students take turns leading a small-group discussion (Santrock, 2004).

Reading is a constructive process which is linked with the reader's oral and written language. Reading is a very complex task. It should be viewed as the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text, and the context of the reading situation. Reading is a continuously developing skill which improves with practice. It is not mastered once and for all. At all stages of reading, from the beginning on, it is important

that the learner has sufficient opportunities to practice and engage in the process of reading. The teachers must search for strategies that will offer many reading opportunities.

Reading is the recognition of the printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli to the recall of meanings built up through the reader's past experience. New meanings are derived through manipulation of concepts already in his possession. The organization of these meanings is governed by purpose clearly defined by the reader. In short, the reading process involves both the acquisition of meanings intended by the writer and the reader's own contributions in the form of interpretation, evaluation, and reflection of these meanings (Babu, Prasad and Rao, 2004).

Poor Readers
The poor readers are those who have difficulties in reading. The poor readers start reading without thinking about the subject. They do not know why they are reading except that it is an assignment. They do not know whether they understand or not and do not monitor their own comprehension. They do not use any strategy for understanding the text during the process of reading. They read the text quickly and sometimes adept at phonic analysis, but do not go for understanding the meaning. They can say the words, but don't know what they mean. When they do not take interest in reading they get bore of it. At the end of the reading they do not know what they have read.

Reading Difficulties
There are a lot of reading difficulties. The more prevalent are the following:
- Faculty word identification and recognition.
- Inappropriate directional habits.
- Deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities.
- Limited special comprehension abilities.
- Deficiencies in basic study skills.
- Deficiencies in ability to adopt to reading needs of content fields.
- Deficiencies in rate of comprehension.
- Poor oral reading (Mercer and Mercer, 1985).

Reading Comprehension
In reading, comprehension means understanding the meaning of a printed passage by reconstructing the message the author intended to send. Reading comprehension is the process of determining meaning. In this process, readers

construct an author's intended message in their own minds (Savage, 1998). Comprehension is the consummation of the reading process; if a person does not understand what he/she reads, that person is not reading really.

Reading comprehension is a very complex process. It can be defined as constructing and reconstructing meaning from the printed material. It is an interactive process that required the use of the prior knowledge (previous experience) which the reader combines with the information on the printed pages. In most instances, prior knowledge is more important than the printed material. The more prior knowledge a reader possesses, the less printed material need to be used (Miller, 1993). Reading comprehension is composed of two equally important components. Decoding, or the ability to translate text into speech, is only part of the process of reading comprehension. The other component is language comprehension, or the ability to understand spoken language. All struggling readers have difficulty with either language comprehension or decoding or both.

Objectives

- To analyze the impact of reciprocal teaching on poor readers.
- To analyze the impact of traditional teaching on poor readers.
- To compare reciprocal and traditional teaching in terms of their outcomes.

Methodology

Population of this research were the poor readers studying at secondary level, 20 poor readers were selected from grade 6. Sample from 6th grade was chosen because at this stage student's age is 10 to 15 years. The children at this age increase their ability to think abstractly. They have the ability to use planning to think ahead and can recognize and identify a problem. They can state several alternative hypotheses, execute procedures to collect information about the problems to be studies, and test the hypotheses (Lin, 2002).

Purposive sampling technique was applied to extract the sample from population. The poor readers were initially pointed out by their teacher. The selected group was further given a diagnostic reading comprehension test. On the result of this test, the sample of 20 students was randomly taken. A checklist of characteristics of poor readers was prepared. And a reading paragraph was given to the students for oral reading. Then, three questions were made to assess the reading comprehension and three questions for assessing the

vocabulary. The students who had got marks less than 50 percent, they were selected as poor readers.

The English reading comprehension tests were the tools of research. The Pre-test and post-test were also administered. The contests of the tests were taken from the English book of the 6th grade. The tests were made related to reading comprehension. One passage was selected for test and fifteen questions were made from this passage. The students duly read the passage and answered the questions. The pre-test and post-test were used for data collection and some written and oral tests, were used for assessment of the performance of the students during their practical process. The pre-test was taken before starting the practical and post-test was taken after completion of the practical process. These tests were used to find out the difference in the performance of the students before and after the practical process.

Contents of the tests were discussed with the English teachers of grade 6th. Furthermore, the tests were given to two groups of children; one group comprised the poor readers and another as good readers. The poor readers and good readers were categorized on the basis of the diagnostic reading test. This diagnostic reading test was based on one paragraph and six questions. The paragraph was given to the students for oral reading and three questions were made to assess the reading comprehension and three questions were made to assess the vocabulary. Their performance was evaluated on the key prepared for assessment. The reliability of the tests was checked by taking these tests from different groups.

The sample of twenty students was taken. These students were diagnosed as 'poor readers' due to the results of the diagnostic. The sample was further divided into two groups (A and B) having 10 students in each. Both groups were having same characteristics. The pre-test and post-test were used for data collection. Both groups had the same physical environmental conditions during treatment. Group A was taught with Traditional Teaching Method and Group B was taught with Reciprocal Teaching Method. Both the methods were used by the researcher after being properly trained. The training was provided by the English teachers who were using these methods.

During the first week of the training, the researcher only observed the teacher who was using traditional method. After one week of observation, all characteristics of this method were compiled and practice was started. The same class was taught by the researcher where the training was being provided. This teaching process was done under teacher's supervision. After the training of two

weeks, the teacher evaluated the researcher's performance on the basis of specificity of teaching methodology which she was using and vetted to undertake the procedure with the participants of Group A. The process of taking training of reciprocal teaching was same as traditional teaching. During the first week, the researcher observed the teacher who was using reciprocal teaching in her class and compiled all characteristics of this method. After two weeks, the teacher evaluated the performance, then the treatment for Group B was started.

The Group A was taught through the traditional teaching method for reading comprehension. This group was taught through lecture method. The environment was teacher centered. The paragraph was read only and the students were not asked about their learning. The students were not allowed to ask any question. The researcher was the instructor and decision maker. The students were taught without using any strategies and activities. The lesson's content and delivery were considered to be most important and the students were learning through drill and practice (such as rote learning). The duration of this teaching was fifteen days. The students were taught by this method one hour per day. One paragraph was taught in two days. After completion of the fifteen days practical process, the post-test was taken from this group.

The Group B was taught through reciprocal teaching. The physical environment was the same for this group, however, the working environment was different. The students were allowed to ask different questions and the participation of the students was very important. Four strategies were used in this method. These strategies are taught to the students through modeling and thinking. After modeling the strategies, the students and the teacher used to discuss on the text using the strategies. First step was questioning. It is the strategy in which the students used to generate the questions about what they read. When they read the text, they were asked different questions from themselves. For example: what is this story about? Then the second strategy was clarifying. Clarification allowed the students to stop and think about a section of the text which is difficult to understand. It supported the students in monitoring their own comprehension; it got them thinking about what is confusing to them as they read. It helped the students to move away from just reading the words of the text correctly and they began to think more about the meaning of what they are reading. The third step was summarizing: It is the process that brings the whole process of reading together. It helped the students to move away from just reading the words of the text correctly and they began to think more about the meaning of what they are reading. The third step was summarizing: it is the process that brings the whole process of reading together. It helped the student develop an overall understanding of the text. The students were taught that how

they should make the summary of the text. They learnt that only important characters and events should make the summary of the text. They learnt that only important characters and events should be included in the summary. The last step or strategy was prediction. This strategy enabled the students to predict about the next part of the story. It allowed the students to activate background knowledge in order to make a prediction. This method of teaching was used with this group for fifteen days, one hour per day. Only one passage was taught in two days. After fifteen days, the post-test was taken.

Results

The data was collected, coded and analyzed using statistical method.

Table – 1
Group A
Paired Sample Statistics

Traditional Teaching						
Mean		SD		df	t	p-vlaue
Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test			
5.60	6.50	2.836	2.799	9	1.868	.095

The Group A was taught through the Traditional Teaching Method of reading comprehension. The data was analyzed by using t-test. The difference mean level is examined with a paired sample t-test.

The students in Traditional Teaching Group obtained higher marks in post-test, but the difference of mean of pre and post-test was not significant enough. As the mean of the Traditional Teaching Group in pre-test was 5.60 and their mean in post-test was 6.50. It showed that there was no significant difference in the performance of the Traditional Teaching Group in pre and post-test. The SD of the pre-test was 2.836 and in the post-test was 2.799. The value of t was 1.868 whereas the p-value was .095 with 9 degree of freedom. So the results showed that the method of teaching showed very little effect on the performance of the students.

Table – 2
Group B
Paired Sample Statistics

Traditional Teaching						
Mean		SD		df	t	p-value
Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test			
5.60	9.10	2.836	3.247	9	3.162	.006

The Group B was taught through Reciprocal Teaching. The students in Reciprocal Teaching group obtained higher marks in the post test. The results indicated the higher mean score obtained by the students taught through Reciprocal Teaching Method in the post test with the value of 9.10 as compared to pre test mean score 5.60. It showed that the performance of the students in the post-test was improved. The standard deviation in pre-test was 2.836 and the standard deviation in post-test was 3.247. The value of t was 3.162 whereas the p-value 0.006 at 0.05 level of significance with 9 degree of freedom. It was proved that Reciprocal Teaching was an effective teaching method of reading comprehension. The results depicted that there is a significant difference in the scores of the students in the post test. Nevertheless, the strategy used to teach this group of the student showed improvement in their scores.

Table – 3
Comparison of Post Tests of Both Groups
Paired Sample Statistics

Description	Mean	N	SD	t	df	p-value
Post test of Traditional Teaching	6.50	10	2.799			
				2.128	9	.062
Post-test of Reciprocal Teaching	9.10	10	3.247			

The mean of Reciprocal Teaching was greater than Traditional teaching; the mean of the post-test of Traditional Teaching Group was 6.50 and the mean of the Reciprocal Teaching Group was 9.10. The value of t was 2.128 whereas p-value was .062 with 9 degree of freedom. It approved that Reciprocal Teaching Method is more effective as compared to Traditional Teaching Method. However, the results are supporting the hypothe3sis of the study.

The results indicated that there was significant difference between students performance in pre and post test of Reciprocal Teaching and there was no significant difference between students performance in pre and post test of Traditional Teaching. The main finding, therefore, suggested that Reciprocal Teaching has been more effective in improving student's reading comprehension.

Discussion

This study was designed to compare the effects of two teaching methods of reading comprehension. The objective of the study was to compare the traditional teaching of reading comprehension with reciprocal teaching. In our country, many students have problems in understanding of the English because it is not their mother tongue. Although the English is taught as a compulsory

subject in all schools, but generally it is seen that students are not good in it (personal observation). The English is considered a difficult subject and students whose parents are uneducated in English, they do not get any guidance or home coaching for English. Generally, our education system, especially the classroom environment, is teacher centered and students are pushed more in rote learning. Lecture method is the most popular and practiced in the classrooms. This type of method restricts students own capacities, capabilities and initiative taking skills. The students are generally trained for memorizing the text rather disseminating the practice his/her own ideas. So, the main purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of the traditional teaching and reciprocal teaching. The traditional teaching method is used in our country since many years, but the reciprocal teaching method is not popular in Pakistan. The interest and enthusiasm of the students highlighted their likings for Reciprocal teaching method. This could be due to liberal and student centered environment.

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