

The Impact of D. M. & T. M. on Teaching Reading-Comprehension to Iranian High-School Students

Dr Hossein Vossughi;
University for Teacher Education

Mahmmad-Jafar Kandi
Tarbiat Modarres University

Introduction

A debate on teaching methods has evolved particularly since the turning over of the present century. This debate provided the main basis for recent interpretation of language teaching methods.

Two of the most prevalent models of foreign-language teaching in Iran are the Grammar Translation Method (T. M.) and the Direct Method, (D. M.). The primary purpose of the T. M. from 1930 to 1950 was to prepare the students to be able to study the L2 literature. A secondary objective, however, was to gain greater understanding of the grammar of their native language. Still some other unspecified goals were to be obtained in T. M., too (Chastain, 1988; Rivers, 1981; Stern, 1983). On the contrary, since the middle of the present century,

advocates of active classroom methods have insistently emphasized on understanding FL by intensive listening to it. All the movements toward establishing a procedure of natural and direct language teaching or learning were called "Reform Movement" (Howatt, 1983). The movement was a remarkable display of international and interdisciplinary co-operation in which the professional phoneticians took as much interest in the classroom as the teachers did in the new science of phonetics.

The other reason for the emergence of such a movement was the need for direct understanding of FL. The most prominent method developed in that period was termed the "Direct Method."

A direct-method class procedurally provides a clear contrast with the grammar-translation class. The course begins with the learning of the target-language words and phrases for objects available in the classroom and for the actions that students can perform. In this method, grammar is not taught explicitly or deductively as it is handled through T. M.

The main purpose of this study is to compare the impact of the D. M. with that of the T. M. on teaching reading and words to high-school students

The reasons why these two methods were selected to be applied to the task of teaching reading and then their effectiveness to be compared were as follows:

- 1) The researchers intended to test the prevalent methods used for teaching reading passages of the present English textbooks at the high-school level.

2) The researchers could learn through observation in different classes that most teachers are consciously and insistently inclined to make use of translation for teaching the reading of the textbooks.

3- With regard to the type of materials and drills incorporated in the textbooks, it seemed that direct presentation of the reading portions would be the most appropriate way for the task of teaching.

In order to design an experimental research on the basis of the aforementioned assumptions, the two following research questions were raised:

1) Is there any significant difference between translation method (T. M.) and direct method⁴ (D. M.) in teaching reading comprehension to Iranian high-school students?

2) Which method, T. M. or D. M., is significantly more effective in teaching / learning new vocabulary?

To be on the safe side of finding the crucial answers to the research questions, the following null-hypotheses were developed:

1- There is no significant difference between D. M. and T. M. in teaching reading comprehension to Iranian high-school students.

2- In the task of learning new words by high-school students, there is no significant difference between D. M. and T. M.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were randomly selected through the process of cluster sampling from the high schools of Terharn. A pre - test was administered to all the subjects to capture homogeneity. A

questionnaire was also given to the subjects to control the effective variables.

Fifty-eight subjects out of seventy were found to be susceptible for the purpose of the study. They were assigned into two groups: one group was randomly determined as the control group (C-froup), and the other was regarded as the experimented group (E-group).

Design And Procedure

Two lesson plans drawing on the principles of T. M. and D. M. were prepared. According to the lesson plans, lessons seven and eight of "Book Two" from high school teatbook were taught to both groups. In order to control different variables involved in the study, only one of the researchers instructed both groups.

After the treatment, three types of posttests were given to the subjects: (a) the Nelson test, (b) a standardized vocabulary test, and (c) a cloze test. It is worth mentioning here that the subjects had once taken the Nelson test in the form of the pretest before. The underlying principle for the choice of an identical test as the pretest and posttest was that there were few standardized proficiency tests at the level of Iranian high school students available. In order to produce a standardddized cloze test and a vocabulary test, all the required procedures were performed.

When the test papers were corrected, the raw scores of the pretest and posttest were collected. The mean score, standard deviation, and the percent rank of the scores were estimated, using SPSS. Seeing that

the best and most dependable way for comparing the mean scores is using the t-test formula, the researchers applied it to all pairs of mean scores. The result of applying t-test formula to the pretest mean scores, however, demonstrated that there was no significant difference between proficiency level of the C-group and that of the E-group. Therefore, it was concluded that the samples were likely to have been drawn from the same population.

To be assured that there were no other controllable variables involved in the selection of the subjects, the average point of the subjects during the school year and the subjects' answers to a questionnaire were considered in choosing the subjects. Twelve out of seventy students were found to be atypical and were excluded from the experiment.

Results And Discussions

In order to confirm or reject the first null-hypothesis, the mean scores of the subjects in the Nelson test and cloze test were compared. The result of applying t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the E-group and the C-group. The results of comparison were $r < 0.06$ for the Nelson test and $P < 0.09$ for the cloze test.

1-The t-test for posttest in two groups

	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
<i>E-group</i>	29	9.9770	2.097	.389
<i>C-group</i>	29	11.2414	2.915	.541

F	2-Tail	Pooled	Variance	Estimate	Separate	Variance	Estimate
Value	Prob.	t	Degrees of	2-Tail	t	Degrees of	2-Tail
		Value	Freedom	Prob	Value	Freedom	Prob.
1.93	.087	-1.90	56	.063	-1.90	50.85	.064

The McNemar test for significance of change was also applied. The rationale behind using this test was as follows:

1) The difference between the predicted value ($P < 0.05$), on the one hand, and the t-observed value in the Nelson Test ($P < 0.06$) and the cloze test ($P < 0.09$), on the other hand, was not so much.

2) The subjects were taught just two reading-comprehension passages, and it seemed too limited to enhance their reading ability significantly.

3) Both the E-group and the C-group took the same type of pretest and posttest (the Nelson test). Therefore, the McNemar test was used to show the posttest (the Nelson test).

The results of the McNemar test revealed that there was no significant change between the scores of the C-group in the pretest and those of the posttest, but there was such a difference between the E-group scores in the two tests.

In addition, a t-test confirmed the results of the McNemer test and revealed the same level of difference between the E-group and the C-group.

2-Paired sample t-test for C-group

	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
<i>pretest</i>	29	10.1149	2.055	.382
<i>posttest</i>	29	9.9770	2.097	.389

(Difference) Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	2-Tail Corr. Prob.	t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
.1379	2.935	.545	.001 .997	.25	28	.802

3-Paired sample t-test for E-group

	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
<i>pretest</i>	29	9.7931	2.168	.403
<i>posttest</i>	29	11.2414	2.915	.541

(Difference) Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	2-Tail Corr. Prob.	t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
-1.4483	2.806	.521	.421 .023	-2.78	28	0.10

The mean scores of the two groups in the vocabulary test were compared by applying the t-test. The results showed that there was a

significant difference between the mean scores of the E-group and those of the C-group ($P < 0.01$). It can be concluded, therefore, that in learning new vocabulary by high-school students, there was a significant difference between the application of D. M. and T. M. in the classroom.

4-T-test for mean scores of groups in vocabulary test

Independent samples of the Groups

Group1: GRO EQ 1.00

Group2: GRO EQ 2.00

	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
<i>C-group</i>	29	9.0000	3.454	.541
<i>E-group</i>	29	13.4483	3.785	.703

F	2-Tail	Pooled	Variance	Estimate	Separate	Variance	Estimate
Value	Prob.	t	Degrees of	2-Tail	t	Degrees of	2-Tail
		Value	Freedom	Prob	Value	Freedom	Prob.
1.20	.631	-4.67	56	.000	-4.67	55.45	.000

Conclusion

The research centered around two main points, i.e., teaching reading and new vocabulary which were discussed in the previous sections. The findings of the study regarding $P < 0.05$ were as follows:

- 1) There was no significant difference between the use of D. M. and T. M. in teaching reading comprehension to Iranian high-school students.

2) In learning new vocabulary, there was a significant difference between the mean of the experimental and control groups. Therefore, the subjects who were instructed through the D. M. improved more in learning of new vocabulary than those who were instructed through the T. M.

In any case, in the course of the study researchers came up with some peripheral results as follows:

1) The study on the readability of present textbooks showed that the readability levels of the high school textbooks for grades three and four tended to be above the reading ability of the majority of the students.⁽¹⁾

2) There was a close relationship between the subjects' scores in the cloze test and the reading comprehension test.

3) The implication of T. M. proves to be successful in understanding a special test (Avand, 1994), but it cannot make a significant change in the students' ability in reading comprehension.

Pedagogical Implications

The outcome of the study can be used to preparing appropriate lesson plans for teaching the present English textbooks. The results can also be used for teaching different kinds of reading materials to the university students.

1- In order to estimate the readability of the textbooks, the researchers randomly chose three passages from each currently used high school English textbooks. The mean readability of each textbook was calculated and the results were as follows: grade one=11.14, grade two=9.13, grade 3=19.49, and grade four=24.03.

The lesson planners and textbook designers in the Ministry of Education can do necessary modifications in their task on the basis of the findings of this study especially those parts which discussed the readability of the textbooks.

Drawing on the results of the study, the researchers have come to the belief that D. M. is a more effective teaching and learning class procedure for high-school students, not only in the reading portion, but also in the vocabulary and grammatical sections of the books.

The gradation of the readability of the second textbook with that of the third one is not similar to the gradation of the first book and the second book or the third book and the fourth one. So, this ratio should somehow be revised and become more reasonable.

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