



عضوأكاديمية البحث العلمي والتكنولوجيا بالقاهرة

The Effectiveness of a Proposed Method for Teaching Reading Comprehension to College Students in Jordan

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ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة للتعرف على فعالية الطريقة المقترحة على تحصيل طلبة الجامعات في القراءة واللغة. كما هدفت الى الكشف عما اذا كانت هناك فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين الطلبة في المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة بالنسبة للطريقتين تحت الدراسة. استخدم الباحث اختبارات وحدد مستوى الدلالة الاحصائية بـ (٠,٠٥). وتكونت عينة الدراسة من كلية اربد الجامعية وجامعة اربد الاهلية وقد اختيرت اربع شعب. قسمت الشعب الاربعة الى مجموعتين بحيث اشتملت المجموعة التجريبية على (٧٠) طالبا والمجموعة الضابطة سبعين طالبا ايضا. وقد استغرقت هذه الدراسة فصلا. اكاديميا كاملا خلال عام ٢٠٠٨-

واظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين المجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة لصالح الطريقة الجديدة. مما جعل الباحث يوصي الباحثين بان يطبقوا هذه الطريقة على مستويات اخرى كما يوصي المحاضرين في الجامعات بتطبيق الطريقة الجديدة في تدريس القراءة في الاردن.

1. Introduction

Reading is perhaps a sophisticated skill demanding a number of general skills. Among the most important skills at the beginning stages of reading are visual and auditory discrimination in which the learners read in order to discriminate between letters of the alphabets and / or their sounds . The learner at this stage needs to identify words by knowing how to distinguish between letters and their sounds .That is , learners need information about the pronunciation of letters from their teachers since the information the beginning readers have is less important than the text and teacher's information , because they have not learned to distinguish between letters yet. But , in a later stage of reading , learners go beyond the level of auditory and visual discrimination as they need to read in order to understand the text and the information they have become more important than the information of the text . Evelyn(1962) states that " the information that passes from the brain to the eye is more important in reading than the information that passes the eye to the brain " .This indicates that learners should have enough knowledge about reading in order to make themselves able to understand different reading text .

The process of reading involves the development of a motor and a mental skill that involves so many different elements , for example , mechanical eye movement , grammar , vocabulary , phonetics , spelling and intellectual comprehension . Therefore , reading involves a mental process to help students develop good strategies to handle the text .As we said before , reading can be at two different levels .The first one is called the lowest level in which the

learners have to interpret the written sign , and the second one is called the highest level in which the learner has to read silently (Al -Hamash , 1973 } -

Reading has been considered by many to be one basic tool of language learning as well as of continuing education . In fact , there are various reasons for reading which are influenced by our reading purpose . We read for two values - the first for ourselves and the second for the society . Nuttal (1982) said that ' We read because we wanted to get something from the writing : fact, ideas , enjoyment , even feelings of family community (from a letter .) '

There are many definitions of reading . Flesch (1955) views reading as " getting meaning from certain combination of letters ' .

Fries (1963) also defines reading as " the process of transfer from the auditory signs for language signals , which the child has already learned , to the new visual signs for the same signals " .Whereas Dechant (1970) sees reading as " The process of giving the significance intended by the writer to the graphic symbols by relating them to one's own found fund of experience " .

These definitions of reading look at reading at pronunciation of letters and then attach some meaning to the words which are formed by letters and then attach some meaning to the words which are formed by letters . Furthermore , these definitions suggest that reading is knowing what each letter of the alphabet " Stands for " and the recognition of signs is important for reading . In

addition to word recognition , reading involves comprehension which is the essential part of it.

Reading thus is the reader's reaction toward the text which is determined to a considerable extent by his past experience . At the beginning stages , the major role of reading is pronunciation because learners need to discover how writing is associated with the spoken words they have already learned to use . Thus , one can notice that most of these reactions to printed symbols . Loud reading sometimes hinders the understanding of the text and readers become slow readers . Moreover , many writers generally (Nuttaul , 1982 : Karlin , 1980 : Wilson , 1975 : Burke , 1977 : Alkhoul , 2005) view loud reading as an insignificant aspect of reading at the advanced level . They see that the significant part of reading is to make students understand the text , interpret the words and get the meaning or get a sense out of the text Since the goal of teaching a foreign language in our country and our universities as stated in the description of English courses (1998) is " to produce teachers who fully master the four English skills and to be able to teach them to our students in schools". Therefore , students whose major is English should focus on skills especially reading comprehension.

Based on my teaching experience , I noticed most college students especially those who majored in English are unable to comprehend what they read . That is , they have a low level of English proficiency . This can be checked from their inability to answer the text comprehension questions at the end of each text . One of the main reasons behind their inability to understand the text is perhaps the

procedure which is employed by the instructors . Al – Makhzoomy (1986 , P 31) stated that : most of our students have a low level of reading , especially in reading content areas. This is due to the fact that the techniques of teaching reading applied by most of our instructors concentrate on teaching the meanings of vocabulary items .

This concentration is characteristic of instructors of English who follow the description of courses for teaching reading . Based on my observations , I noticed that it is common for instructors of English at universities to complain of the inability of their students to comprehend their reading textbooks selection or even to answer the lesson factual comprehension questions , let alone the inferential and critical questions . This indicates that our students can not get the message from the text and do not understand what the writer means .

Our concern in this study lies on two methods of teaching reading to university students , namely: 1. the Old Traditional Method and 2. the New Proposed Method . The first method is derived from the courses descriptions issued by the university in which it focuses on pronunciation and explanations of words by giving their definitions or examples using Arabic translations .The second method is called the New Proposed - by Teaching English as a Foreign Language expert * . It concentrates on teaching reading for comprehension . It can be divided into three stages:

(1) Pre-reading stage, (2) Reading stage , and (3) Post – Reading stage . The steps of the first stage are : (a) prepare students for the topic . (b) find out what the

students already know . (c) pre-teach any key words they do not know . The steps of the second stage are : (d) set focus questions for global understanding through silent reading . (e) check focus questions (f) set more questions for more detailed reading . (g) Instructor reading with questions and / or explanations . The step of the third stage is (h) follow – up reading activities . This method may contrast with the traditional one in terms of their major teachers as follows : (1) silent reading vs. oral reading (2) comprehension vs. pronunciation . and (3) identifying word meaning through context vs. word definition or translation .

(* From " Seminar for Teachers of English at University Level " . based on a book called " Understanding Reading " by F . Smith)

2. Statement of the Problem

This study intends to compare between two methods of teaching reading to find out which is more effective for achieving reading skills. These methods are : (1) The Old Traditional , and (2) The New Proposed Method .

This study is concerned with applying a new method that makes students get meaning from the text.

3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study comes from finding out the best method for teaching reading comprehension . This study gains it significance from its topic - i. e. reading which is the product of university overall learning . A good reader can learn on his own since reading is a life – long learning

activity . Moreover , university students needs reading in every course they take at the university .

Harrison (1975) states that the general aim of teaching English in Jordan is to produce proficient students who have the ability to understand speak , read , and write English correctly . This is difficult to achieve without reading .

4. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study are as follows :

(1) To compare both in terms of their effect on improving students reading comprehension and language efficiency .

(2) To find out whether the proposed method is appropriate for teaching reading to university students .

5. Hypotheses of the Study

This study has been specifically designed to test the following hypotheses :

(1) There is no significant difference between the two groups of both methods in terms of student achievement in Reading Comprehension .

(2) There is no significant difference between them two groups in their language achievement (Lexicon and Syntax) .

These two hypotheses will be tested at $\alpha = 0.05$. This level of significant is used to give reasonable assurance that the null hypotheses will not be rejected unless it should

really be (Minium , 1978).

6. Sample of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the New Method for teaching reading , by comparing it with the Traditional Method .

The subjects of the study were consisted of 140 university female and male students four sections drawn from Irbid National University and Irbid University College in Irbid . The section was considered as the unit of selection of the subjects as follows : two sections were assigned as experimental group (70 students) and the other two sections were assigned to control group . Both groups were equal with respect to the average age of students , students general achievement and class size . The age of these students ranged from 19 to 22 years old

Their English instructors had the same years of experience ranging from 7 to 10 years .

7. Instructional Material

The instructional material for this study dealt with reading comprehension and language ability (i. e. grammar and vocabulary) . Ten units were taken from a book called (English Through Reading) . This book has a lot of different topics and types of exercises for measuring such comprehension

8. Instruments

Twenty – item multiple – choice , reading comprehension

test was developed by the researcher to measure student reading comprehension . The test items represented the reading objectives of the reading lessons as they were stated in the courses descriptions .

A group of English specialists helped in developing the comprehension test . The researcher divided the comprehension test into three types of questions : (1) factual questions , (2) Inferential questions , and (3) evaluative questions . A pre- test and a post- test were given to students at the beginning and at the end of the semester .

9. Results of the Study

The findings of this study are presented in the light of its hypotheses to seek whether there are any differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the groups of both methods in terms of students achievement in reading comprehension on the one hand , and check whether there are any significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the two groups in their language achievement (lexicon and syntax) on the other hand . Table (1) presents the means , standard deviation , and sum of the squares on the language and comprehension tests for both experimental and control groups .

Table (1)

Means and Standard Deviations of Students' scores in Both experimental and Control Groups on the Achievement Test
(Comprehension and Language Ability)

Calculations	Experimental Group	Control Group
X	35.89	28.75
S	10.39	12.08
X	2907	2009
X2	97345	27883
N	70	70

X: mean , S : Stand red Deviation , N : Number of Students , X: Scores of Groups , X2 : Chi- Squares

Table (1) shows the results of students on the achievement test , where the effect of the Proposed Method is clearly seen from the discrepancy between means and standard deviation of both groups . It is worth mentioning that the scores obtained by the experimental groups are higher than those obtained by control group .

Data processing the analysis included calculation of means and sum of squares for both experimental and control groups . To compare between the two groups in terms of their attainment of the language and reading comprehension, a – test was preformed to show weather there is any significant difference between the students who were taught through the Proposed Method and those who were taught through the Traditional Method .

The results of this analysis are shown in Table (2) revealed

significant differences in favor of the Proposed Method .

Table 2

Result of the analysis of T-test for the Scores of Students in both Experimental and Control Group

Type of Activity	df	X1	X2	S1	S2	t-Cal	t-Critical
Reading Comprehension	138	20.37	15.74	6.55	7.35	3.98	1.98
Language Achievement	138	15.45	12.95	5.06	5.17	2.89	1.98

df: degree of freedom , X1 = Mean 1, X2 = Mean 2 , S1 : Standard Deviation 1 , S2: Standard Deviation 2

This table shows that a statistically significant difference (alpha = 0.05) existed between students due to the type of instructional method favoring the Proposed Method . The results of the t-test clarifies the highly significant effect of the used by the experimental group in language learning and reading comprehension as compared to the Traditional Method used by the control group . However , it shows that the first null hypothesis was rejected at 0.03 level of significance since " t-Cal." was found to be 3.98 which is larger than critical-t= 1.98 . This means that the Proposed Method is effective , which also means that students who practiced reading comprehension according to the Proposed Method gave better results than students who were taught reading comprehension according to the Traditional Method .

Table (2) also shows that the second null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance since t-Cal. was found to be 2.89 which is larger than critical - t = 1.98 . This value is highly significant in favor of students in the Proposed Method group . This means that students who learned language (lexicon and syntax) in the experimental group achieved higher scores than those who learned through the Traditional Method .

The findings of the study were supported by other studies , for example , Modiano (1968) , Heckleman (1969) , Hollingworth (1970) , Gebenedio (1985) , Cronin et al (1985) , Al- khouli (2005) and Al- Smadi (2006) , which revealed that new methods which emphasized the concentration on teaching reading for comprehension , silent reading for understating and identification of word meaning through context , were more effective than Old Traditional Methods which emphasized oral reading , pronunciation of words , and word definition or translation .

10 . Recommendations

In the light of the results of the study , the following recommendations could be suggest\ed :

1. Instructors of English should implement the proposed method in teaching their student reading for comprehension because the results of this study proved to have good effect on improving their reading comprehension and language efficiency . . I also found that the Proposed Method was appropriate for teaching Reading to university students .
2. Instructors should concentrate on reading for comprehension through silent reading and avoid using oral reading for the development of comprehension skills.
3. Educators including instructors authors and researchers should try using the Proposed in teaching comprehension for university students .

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