



Effectiveness of Readers Theatre on English Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to investigate the effects of the teaching methods (Readers theatre and traditional method) on English reading comprehension. For this purpose, a random sample of 70 boys and girls of std. 12th of Gujarati Medium was selected. The present study was carried out by using experimental research method. The design of the study was "Two groups, Randomized subjects, Post-test only design." The teacher made English reading comprehension test was constructed as a research tool. The results of the study revealed that the Readers Theatre was found more effective than the traditional method in teaching of English reading Comprehension. The present study was held at Rajkot city in Gujarat during the year 2002-03.

Keywords :

INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that 60 percent of today's world population is multilingual. From both a contemporary and a historical perspective, bilingualism or multilingualism is the norm rather than exception. It is fair, then, to say that throughout history foreign language learning has always been an important practical concern. Today English is the world's most widely studied foreign language. For the teaching or learning of English, many approaches and methods in language teaching came into existence. But Kelly (1969) and Howatt (1984) have demonstrated that many current issues in language teaching are not particularly new.

For an English teacher, the selection of the proper method or technique for any particular topic or unit of English language is very important. Readers Theatre (RT) is also a good way to teach English language. Developmental Psychologist, Dr. Jerome Bruner in a paper presented at a symposium on child literacy, at the university of Victoria, Canada, in October 1982, pointed out.... "as a result of our foolish methods, We produce children with reading difficulties. Difficulties created by the way we teach it." We should seek a solution by re-examining our teaching methods in order to align them more closely with the individual, learning styles of the students. Rosenthal's work (1973) confirmed his prediction that children suffering from dyslexia (Dyslexia, a disorder in children who despite Conventional classroom experience, fail to attain the language skills of reading, writing and spelling commensurate with their intellectual abilities)

(Robinovitch, 1975.) did have a lower self esteem than normal children with no apparent dysfunction. Prior to witelson's prediction, at Bowcraft School in Calgary in 1974, under the principalship of Sam Hays, Donald Bayes Conducted experiments with dyslexic-children adapting learning styles, using Readers Theatre and results were found positive. In the present study, the researcher used Readers Theatre as an experimental method to investigate it's effect on English reading comprehension.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to find out the effects of teaching methods (Readers Theatre and traditional method) on English reading comprehension.

VARIABLES INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

The variables of the study were as given below.

Independent Variable

In this study, 'teaching method' was an independent variable. Two levels of this method were (1) Readers Theatre and (2) Traditional method.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of the study was 'English reading comprehension.'

Control Variable

Following variables were controlled during the implementation of the treatment, (1) Standard (2) Subject (3) area (4) School environment .

Intervening Variable

It was assumed that the following variables might have been affected during the study.

- (1) Interest and enthusiasm towards the subject
- (2) Novelty of the study
- (3) Others' help
- (4) Inter process between the groups.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

To examine the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable, the following null hypothesis was framed for the present experiment and was tested. The hypothesis was,

There will be no significant difference between the means of scores of English reading comprehension (test) of experimental group (taught by Readers Theatre) and control group (taught by traditional method).

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study was carried out by using experimental research method. The design of the study was "Two Groups, Randomised subjects, Post-test only design" which is true experimental design.

SAMPLING

The population of this study was the students of 12th std. of Gujarati medium schools in Rajkot City during the year of 2002-2003.

For the implementation of the experiment, the researcher selected 70 boys and girls randomly. One group (experimental group) was treated with 'Readers Theatre' and the second group (Control group) was treated with the traditional method.

TOOL

The teacher made English reading comprehension test was constructed as a research tool. The reading comprehension test was based on some passages chosen according to the level of the students. The passages were in the forms of stories, dialogues, and pieces from biographies and fiction. On the passages the following four test items were included for testing the English reading comprehension. The test items were (1) True/False items (2) Multiple – Choice items (3) Short answer and very short answer items and (4) Cloze procedure. The English reading comprehension test was made of 40 marks.

READERS THEATRE

Readers Theatre (RT) is a group activity whereby students perform a piece of literature as a class room drama. Routman (1991) defines Rt as "Creating a Script from a narrative text and performing it for an audience." In Readers Theatre text is the most important concept. The intent of Rt is to present a literary work in such a way that the attention of the audience is directed toward the author's creation. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White define Readers Theatre as "a medium in which two or more oral interpreters through their oral reading cause an audience to experience literature." Readers theatre is presentational rather than representational (like drama). The images are formed not on stage but in the minds of the audience and the readers themselves.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RT

RT is easy to implement as there is no full costume, no full memorization or stage props involved. Scripts are read during the performance. In the present study, the researcher followed the following steps for the procedure of Readers theatre.

- (1) Review of the another script published
- (2) Correcting the script
- (3) Selection of the text
- (10) Preparing the master script
- (3) Read and re-read the text
- (11) Distribution of the scripts
- (4) Give the roles to the character
- (12) Choral reading (buddy reading)
- (5) Cuts & Changes
- (13) Choosing the character roles/parts
- (6) Splitting the narration
- (14) Practice in a group
- (7) Preparing the script format (rehearsal in a group)
- (8) Team Scripting
- (15) Performance on the stage

The researcher selected the text material from the curriculum requirements. The text was of high interest for the students. The units of the text were (1) Three questions (by Leo Tolstoy) and (2) The letter (by Dhumketu). The researcher held the group discussion to familiarize students with the topic and difficult words about which they had read. After the students were familiar with the text, they with the help of the researcher, identified the characters to be included in the script for act-

ing. To help students to write their own scripts, the researcher provided a scenario related to the text they had read.

Finalizing their scripts, the students (readers) showed to the researcher. The researcher advised them on what lines to keep and how each line should be read to bring out the characters. Students rehearsed their scripts before the researcher. The researcher provided immediate feed back on students pronunciation. At last, students had done multiple readings of their lines to gain fluency. Finally, the readers performed the text for the whole audience. After performing the text on stage, the English reading comprehension test was given to the readers + audience. This test was also given to the students who was taught the same text material by the traditional method.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The aim of the present study was to find out the effect of teaching methods on English reading comprehension.

TABLE

Effects of teaching methods on English reading comprehension

No.	Teaching methods	N	Mean	SD	t-value
1.	Readers Theatre	35	20.66	9.25	3.36**
2.	Traditional method	35	16.80	8.73	

** Significant at 0.01 level

This table indicates that t-value was found significant at 0.01 level. That means, there was significant difference between the means of two groups. The mean of the scores of the students taught by RT was high than the students taught by the tradition method. So it can be said that the Readers Theatre was more effective than the traditional method in teaching English reading comprehension.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In the present study, Readers theatre was more effective than the traditional method in teaching of English reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study suggest that the students who are weak in reading or reading comprehension should be treated with Readers theatre rather than the traditional way of teaching. Similarly, studies in Donald A. Boyes (1982), Dixon & Politano (1996), Millian S. K. (1996) and Busching (1981) also undertake that Readers Theatre is more effective and preferable in teaching language and also for the development of reading, oral reading abilities and attitudes. Carrick, L. V. (2000) has expressed in her doctoral dissertation that Readers Theatre was found effective on fluency and comprehension. The text material should be performed or read on the stage with the total experience (realistic and imaginative and implicitly, detailed and suggestive) (Maclay, 1971). The dramatization of worthwhile material promotes the reader's Capacities for coping with problems and feelings (Dr. Bruner, 1982; Woods, 1960; Dunn, 1981). Thus, the Readers Theatre's role is very valuable and important. The teacher should use it for the development of reading and speaking skills of the students.

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