

Original Research Article

Development of Reading Skill in English Language through Rote Learning

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Abstract

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In Pakistani context, the importance of English language cannot be denied in any stage of life, like to get entry into university education or giving interview for a job etc. Students who have stumpy background in their English competencies always struggle at various stages. Reading skill, which is pre-requisite in the understanding English language, is highly needed in our country. Rote learning is a learning technique, in which a piece of information is learned by the repetition of the items in that information. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the role of Rote Learning in students' achievement in the reading skill of English language. A sample of fifty students was taken from the population. The students were pre-tested and then divided in to two equal groups of control and experimental groups. The teaching of control group remained unchanged while the experimental group was taught through Rote Learning techniques. Different methods of Rote learning like Chunking, Rhyming, Mediation, Recital and Bridging were used for the study of experimental group. The results of the study in post-test as well in retention test revealed that the reading skill of the experimental group was improved at significant level in the comparison of control group.

Key words: Rote learning, Reading skill, students achievement

INTRODUCTION

Rote learning is a learning method in which students acquire specific information by reciting or memorizing basic facts, frequently through a big deal of repetition. This method is opposed to the critical thinking method or problem solving method, where the students are forced to use the concepts they have already learnt. There are some merits of rote learning. First of all the students became able to recall the items quickly which they have already learnt. The demerit is that without the critical thinking and its application, students may have problem in the use of those facts in real life situation, they have learnt by rote learning (Belayneh, 2013).

Noah Westar's Dictionary (2002) describes that rote learning is that type of learning which comes in the mind

of the students by a frequent repetition of the items. National Council of Teacher of Mathematics (2011) made an experimental study on rote learning. This experimental study shows that rote memorizing is a clear fact in the teaching of general science and mathematics like learning of formulae etc. The council also recommended rote learning for the learning of basic things in any subject for the students.

Ashley (2013) defined rote memorization as a type of specific learning method. It is different from cramming. In this method students are taught how to learn some basic facts like formulas, date, location and roles. Students read that information again and again until it is fixed in their memory. According to some of the educationists this

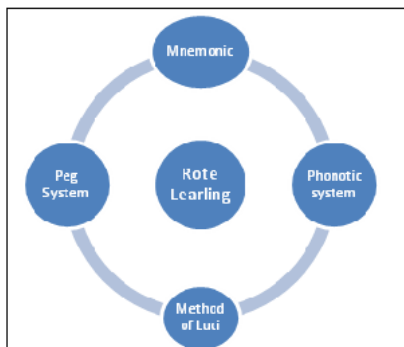


Figure 1. Techniques for Rote Learning

method is just mimicry and not the real learning. With all these good and bad rote memorization is very effective in some levels of study and strongly recommended for basics things in mathematics and in language.

Experts agree that rote learning is important and necessary to some limits. For example, students have to memorize things such as spelling of new words, alphabet and numbers. On the other side, when students come to the use of proper grammar, it is very important to know the concepts and rules. Simply memorizing complicated rules will not be enough. Students have to learn basic math by rote, such as their multiplication tables, but they must need to know more innovative concepts so they will be able to solve the complex mathematical problems. In this way we can say that rote learning builds the foundation and students learn more difficult ideas. We can say that it is the most important merit rote learning (Kurban, 2015).

The demerit of using rote learning method in advanced subjects are; that students may forget the facts in short time after the test, and thus the study will of no use. We can take the example of a student who is studying a piece of literature. He knows that he has to memorize the setting, the character's names, and other basic facts for his test. He will possibly have not deep understanding of the real meaning of the work. Thus in this way his learning will not help him properly. Why it is so because rote learning is good place to begin but it is not the way man all the time interact with the world around him. We learn by sighting how an already known concept can be used to a more challenging or advanced problem. In such situations, only a simple list of facts cannot be helpful. This is why courses are often planned with a beginning step of rote learning and it is followed by lengthier period of practical study, applied and critical thinking. All these types of learning are essential, but they work best when they are use in their proper places. They must complement each other, concept and rote learning rather than as a single technique of teaching (Baars and Gage, 2007)

Sometimes, there is a short time and the student has to learn a big deal of material of his course, perchance

when learning dialogues for a dramatic role. In this situation the student have to assimilate the information which is unfamiliar, like foreign language words. In these situations, rote learning is very useful because it stimulates fast memorization in the students. The preparation for an exam is in fact a kind of rote learning. Our students use a number of learning material to help them in remembering the information while studying for the paper. They make notes or short outlines, practice each other with flashcards. Sometime students make acronyms or like a short poem and use it as mnemonic devices. These things will help them in recalling the data they have learnt (Aggarwal, 2009). (Figure 1)

Some principles and procedures which are recycled to assist in rote memorization are discussed below:

The first one is mnemonic, which is a type of memory assistance. Mnemonic are often verbal and are like very short poems. Sometime they are like distinctive word used to help a person to recollect something, mainly a type of lists. They may be pictorial, or acoustic. The second one is link system of mnemonics. It is a technique of remembering lists of information, based on generating a relationship between the different modules of that information. The third one is peg system technique. It is a technique used for memorizing information in a list. This practice works on the pre-memorized list of words that are easy to connect with the numbers. Numbers can be represented like (1 to 10, 1 to 100, etc.). The fourth one technique is phonetic number system. This system is also like mnemonic technique, which is helpful in memorizing numbers. This system works by changing numbers first into appropriate consonant sounds, then shifting into words by the accumulation of vowels. These words can be remembered more solely than the actual numbers, particularly. The next procedure is the Method of loci. It is a procedure for remembering information. (Bernstein, 2010). (Figure 2)

We can use rote memorization as perfect tool for learning, like learning of alphabets in English. We also use the same thing in learning irregular verbs in second language. We cannot learn the morphology of second language in a short time. Rote learning is mostly used in

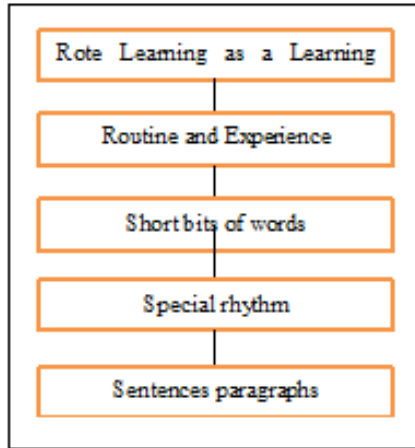


Figure 2. Rote Learning as a Learning Tool

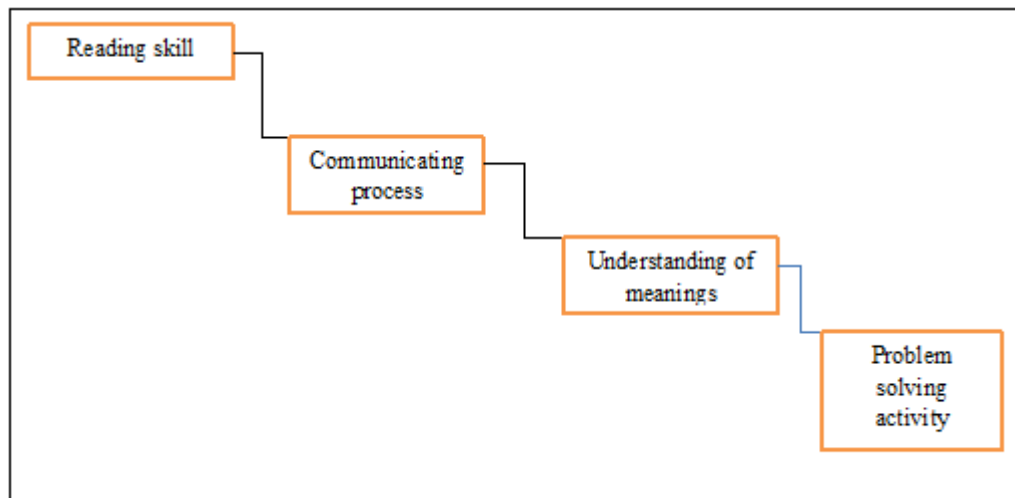


Figure 3. Reading skill in english language

these cases. We have to memorize it. The native speakers of a language develop these basic skills unconsciously by routine and their experience. These experiences can be video or audio. These experiences are in short bits. These bits are combined in a special rhythm and so they make a long series of sentences paragraphs. Like we recite our national anthem every day but we do not know the meaning of these verses used in national anthem. This is attributed to rote learning only. Like this we learn many things by rote learning in our daily life. Many words are repeated in public. We hardly give notice to these things but they remain rooted in our day to day life (Lucas, 2001).

Reading Skill in English Language

Reading is a process through which a written material is

made informative. Students get knowledge from their books when they read it. (Figure 3)

Literature Review

Human beings get learning as a part of family, schooling, social or community development, or training. It can be assisted by motivation. Learning is a part of educational psychology, educational philosophy, learning theory, and pedagogy. Learning may come as a result of classical conditioning like habituation. Learning can be found in many animal species like parrot, monkey etc. Learning may come consciously or without the awareness of conscious. We have some evidence for the behavioral learning of human beings. Like habituation has been supposed as early as first eight months in the development of child. It shows that

the central nervous system of the human body is sufficiently improved and prepared for getting learning. Games can also help in learning according to several theorists as the first stage of learning for child. Children observe with the world and learn the rules through performance in games. It is approved that games are very essential for the children's growth and development. This process is present before the time, when the children make meanings and understanding of the environment (Brown et al., 2008).

Hosseini (2000) conducted a study on the role of rote learning. His study was entitled as "An Analysis of Iranian EFL Learners' Beliefs about the Role of Rote Learning in Vocabulary Learning Strategies." The objective of this research was to study the views of Iranian EFL learners, and their beliefs and opinion about the impact of rote learning in learning new words or vocabulary. Iranian EFL learners were influenced culturally by the view that their preference for rote learning approaches were against to other learning strategies. Taking all the previous literature, Hosseini (2000) stated in his study that it was commonly believed that Iranian learners of English language depended on Rote Learning. He also stated that Iranians were passive and submissive learners in English language. The first objective of his study was to support the existing information in English literature with respect to rote learning. The second objective was to determine Iranian EFL learners' opinions about their inclination for rote learning approaches. The last objective of this research was to cultivate a guideline for the students, teachers and examiners who were connected with Iranian EFL learners. Three different instruments were used for the collection of data. The first instrument of the study was English vocabulary test, the second instrument was interview and the last instrument was questionnaires. The respondents were hundred Iranian students in the Department of English from University of Northeast. Descriptive analysis and triangulation was used for the data analysis of the study. The main hypothesis was that Iranian EFL students have the faith that rote learning strategies are needed to other memory approaches for the learning and memorizing of new vocabulary. Most of these learners had positive beliefs about rote learning. The final result of the study discovered that most of the Iranian students of English language had a positive belief about the use of Rote learning method for learning new words and vocabulary. They also preferred rote learning on the other methods of vocabulary learning. According to the responses of the students rote learning was not a passive learning but it was the combination of repetition, understanding and memorization. Further Hosseini (2000) described that rote learning was not only a parrot work but it was the integration of repetition, memorization and practice.

Further, Morton (2011) conducted a comparative study on rote learning. His study was named as "con-

structivism or rote learning: promoting greater academic achievement". The purpose was to identify how rote learning promotes better academic achievement for mathematics students at Grade IX. The study comprises the comparison of academic achievement of discovery learners to the academic achievement of rote learners of grade IX students and the teachers' beliefs on the role of rote learning and discovery learning. After the comprehensive study of the related literature, data taken from the test scores, surveys and the student observations were collected throughout this study. The findings of this research revealed that there was no noteworthy difference between the accomplishment of discovery learners and rote learners. The results also showed information that teachers were not sure about which method was best for the learning of the students. What should they follow Rote Learning or the discovery learning? The objectives of this research consist of: (i) to match the effects of discovery learning to rote learning; (ii) to discern the approaches of the teachers as well as the students about the use of Discovery Learning and Rote Learning. This research was an action research and both qualitative and quantitative data were used. Two different classes were taken for the sample of the study. The duration given for the treatment of the study was two weeks. Chi square and ethnographic method was used for data analysis. Ethnographic method helped to determine whether there was a difference in the test marks between learners using rote learning and the learners using discovery learning. Surveys were conducted to take data from the teachers to know about their attitudes about the use of discovery learning versus rote memorizing.

Statement of the Problem

It seems that most of the students use rote learning in their study but they are not utilizing the Rote Learning exactly how it needs to be taught. The study of the reading skill of language in English is very important. Rote learning can play a good role in the improvement of reading skill.

Objectives of the Study

The study objective was to investigate the role of rote learning in reading skill of English language teaching and learning in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Hypotheses of the Study

The above stated objective was tried to be achieved by testing the following null hypotheses with respect to Rote Learning.

- a) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in reading skill of English.
- b) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in reading skill of English with respect to Rote Learning on post-test.
- c). There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in reading skill of English with respect to Rote Learning on retention-test.

Significance of the Study

Rote learning remained an important thing for debate in education system for the whole world. Rote learning also remained as an issue for a long time. No one can deny the importance of reading skill in English language in our country. This study tried to explain how we can take the rote learning as a positive aspect of teaching English in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It will help the student how they can utilize rote learning in learning reading skill of English language. The study tried to help the teachers in using rote learning technique and improve the reading skill of the students in English language.

Learning to read is the process to make the student able to read in a good possible way. Student must be able to acquire meaning from the text you read. Leading to read is inconsistent in some way. For an educated person reading is nothing. According to him reading is an effortless activity. But for a beginner and non-native it is very difficult activity. Reading consists of much cognitive social and linguistic ability. Reading is the receptive skill of English language.

There are many theories which show how the students learn to read. Campbell (2002) called reading a message-getting and problem solving activity. This activity can be improved by practice. How much you practice on reading so much you will get command on this skill?

The Ministry of Education for Ontario (2004) defined the reading process as a communicating process where the first aim is the understanding of meanings. It shows that reading is a transitive process. It needs different approaches for improvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population

This study was on the whole Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Therefore 319881 students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa studying English at Grade Nine constituted the population of the study.

Sample

Govt. Shaheed Waseem Iqbal High School Tarkha was selected as targeted school for the study. Fifty students were selected from class IX of the same school. Two groups (Experimental Group and Control Group) were formed from these fifty students through pair random sampling on the basis of pre-test result.

Research Instrument

The researcher used a teacher made test for the research. The test was comprised of the first five units of the English textbook 1 Grade IX. In the first step the students were pre-tested. On the level of pre-test, the students were divided into low achievers and high achievers.

Validity and Reliability of the Test

The validity and reliability of the research instrument is very necessary. There are many factors which influenced the experimental study. These factors are time, history, age of students, and selection of lesson, maturation and statistics. The researcher has to control these factors otherwise the result will be not a valid one. To make the research instrument a valid and reliable one, the test was approved from the two different scholars of English literature and linguist. The content of the research instrument was also approved by the supervisory committee of Northern University.

Research Design

The research design used for this study was Pre-test Post-test Equivalent Group Design. A group of fifty students was randomly selected from Govt. Shaheed Waseem Iqbal High School Tarkha for the treatment of the study. This group was first pre-tested. After the pre-test this group of fifty students was divided into two groups. One group was taken as control group and the other as experimental group. It was also tried that the students of both groups were equal in talent.

Following is the symbolic representation of the design:

RE = O ₁	T	O ₂
RC = O ₃	-	O ₄

In this design, RE stands for Randomly Selected Experimental group. RC is used for Randomly Selected Control group. O₁ and O₃ stand Pre-test Observations of experimental and control group. O₂ and O₄ are used for

the Post-test Observations of both groups.

a. Independent variables

The independent variable was only one and that was rote learning or rote memorization.

b. Dependent variables

Reading skill of English language was the dependable variables of the study.

c. Controlled Variables

Different controlled variables were also come in front during the study. For instance duration of treatment, conditions of instruction, methodology variation, use of teaching aids, sample size, subject to be taught, average age and marks of the students remained the controlled variables of the study.

d. Uncontrolled Variables

We cannot control all the variables of the study. During this research, different variables as motivation and interest of the students, home environment, socio-economic status, reading habits, teacher competence and education of parents remained the uncontrolled variables of the study.

Treatment of the Study

Two teachers of the same qualification and of same experience in the teaching of English were selected for the treatment of the research. These teachers were given one day training about the study. The treatment was started on Monday, 6th October, 2014 and was ended on Saturday, 29th November 2014. In this study the researcher used different methods to improve the rote learning of the students. The first method used for the treatment was "Chunking". This is one of the oldest methods of rote learning. In this method the items of learning were divided into groups and chunks. Then these chunks were given an order. This order is very important. This method is a practical method and was found significant in learning or memorizing different items like mobile numbers and especially in difficult and long spellings of the words etc.

Data Collection

Two teachers of the same designation, qualification and experience were selected to teach the prescribed two groups for a period of eight weeks. The experimental group was taught for eight weeks or 48 classes of 40 minutes each as treatment through rote learning. The control group remained on the traditional method as there was no change in their teaching method. The first five units of the 9th class English textbook were taken as the course to be taught in this experimental study. The researcher administered three tests (pre-test, post-test and retention-test) for the data collection. When the

treatment was completed, a post-test was taken from both the groups.

Data Analysis

After the treatment the data of all the three tests were gathered. Paired sample t-test was used for the analysis of the data taken from all the three tests. SPSS software was used for the data analysis. First the Pre-test of both groups was analyzed through t-test. After the treatment the post-test was also analyzed by t-test. Same was the procedure for retention-test.

Analysis and interpretation of data

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in reading skill of English on Pre-test.

Table 1 shows the result of pre-test in the reading skill of the students. Reading skill is very important for the second language learners. When we take it in our country situation it becomes more important. Dr. West pointed out that all the learners of English language from the subcontinent had only to read English and then write it. Reading was more important than other skills in the learning of English language. The mean score of pre-test was 5.1 in control group while 4.9 in experimental group. Both the score are nearly similar. It shows that both groups can be treated for the study. The S.D was 3.3 for experimental group and 3.4 for control group. The t-score was 0.212 which is very low score. The level of significance was 0.861. It means at this stage the null hypothesis of the study, there is no significant difference of rote learning in reading skill between the mean score of experimental group and control group in the subject of English, was accepted.

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in reading skill of English on Post-test.

Table 2 shows the result of reading skill on post-test. The post-test on reading skill with respect to rote learning showed that there is significance in the study. The mean score of experimental group was 19.5 and control group got 9.4. There was a significant difference of 10.1 in the mean score of both groups. The experimental group remained high at this level. The t-score was 53.71. It is also evidence that the treatment was effective. The level of significance was 0.00. This result rejects the null hypothesis of the study and accepts the alternate hypothesis so we will say that there is a significant difference of rote learning in reading skill between the mean score of experimental group and control group in the subject of English.

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in

Table 1. Significance of difference between control group and experimental group in reading skill on pre-test

Group	N	M	S.D	T	P
Control Group	25	5.1	3.4		
Experimental Group.	25	4.9	3.3	0.212	0.861*

Table value of t at 0.05= 1.711 *insignificant

Table 2. Significance of difference between control and experimental group in reading skill on Post-test

Group	N	M	S.D	T	P
Control Group	25	9.4	2.3		
Experimental Group.	25	19.5	2.9	53.71	0.00*

Table value of t at 0.05= 1.711 *significant

Table 3. Significance of difference between control group and experimental group in reading skill on Retention-test

Group	N	M	S.D	T	P
Control Group	25	8.6	2.1		
Experimental Group.	25	19.2	3.1	30.76	0.00*

Table value of t at 0.05= 1.711 *significant

reading skill of English on Retention-test.

The retention test result was also significant like the post-test of the study. It showed that the mean score of control group was 8.6, while the experimental group showed 19.2 as mean score. The difference in both the means was 10.6. The mean of experimental group was higher than the mean of control group. The t-score remained on 30.76. The significance was 0.00. The result of retention test showed that there was retention in the treatment. The significance of the study rejects the null hypothesis of the study and accepts the alternate one. The alternate hypothesis would be that there is significance of difference between the mean score of experimental and control group in reading skill with respect of rote learning.

DISCUSSION

English language learning is a complex process for those students who get it as second or foreign language. With the passage of time many new methods were evolved to teach English language. Being an oriental nation our country also used many methods which could be very effective for the learning of English language. All the past researches showed that every method of teaching English has its own importance. These methods vary from place to place from situation to situation and even from teacher to teacher. Among these methods we also see the use of rote learning method. This study tried to know the role of Rote Learning in the teaching of listening skill in the subject of English language at secondary level.

At first stage of the study, all the students were pre-tested. The result of both experimental group and control

group was insignificant at the significance level of 0.05 with respect to listening skill of the students. Thus at this stage the null hypothesis was accepted and the students of both groups were similar on their previous knowledge. Like the listening skill, the result of speaking skill also showed that the students of both control and experimental groups were similar at pre-test. The mean scores of both groups were insignificant at the significance level of 0.05 with respect to speaking skill. Here the result showed the similarity of the student in their prior knowledge.

CONCLUSION

When the experiment was completed, it was observed that the student given treatment with the rote learning were more efficient in reading than those who were not treated with rote learning. It showed that rote learning plays an important role in the reading skill of the students in the study of English at secondary level.

RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that reading skill of the students was improved by the rote learning. It is recommended that the teacher should use only the targeted passages in the class. Students should be given model reading by the teacher. After the model reading students should read the lesson in groups and individually. How much the students practice on reading, so much their reading will be improved.

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