The Degree of The Effectiveness of Paraphrasing vs Summarization as Reading Tasks

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Abstract. The emphasis on the development of reading skill can be justified in all EFL situations where the learners have rarely any opportunity to converse with the native speakers of English and the only authentic input they can be exposed to is the written materials in the target language. The purpose of the present study is to examine the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing vs summarization as reading tasks, using 60-Iranian sophomore students, whose major of study is English translation. To determine the students' level of proficiency, a pretest was done. Then the students were selected randomly and divided into two groups. The students of group 1 were taught reading comprehension only on the basis of summarization and the students of group 2 were taught reading comprehension only on the basis of paraphrasing. After the treatment, a standard TOEFL test was administered to both groups. The result of the study indicated that, 1) there is a relationship between paraphrasing and summarization and reading comprehension, 2) the students of group 1 performed better on the test than group 2 because it was revealed that most of the high marks belonged to the group1. Finally, the findings of this study are expected to be of significant importance to syllabus designers, teachers and learners.

Keywords: Degree of Effectiveness, Paraphrasing, Summarization, Reading Tasks

1. Introduction

As is true for the three language skills, reading is a process involving the activation of relevant knowledge and related language skills to accomplish an exchange of information from one person to another. Reading requires that the reader focus attention on the reading materials and integrate previously acquired knowledge and skills to comprehend what someone else has written. (Chastain, 1976)

The importance of reading has made many students interested in doing researches and experiments concerning reading skill.

This is a study which is going to be done following the study done by Rumelhart (1977) concerning the notion of "gist of the story" and how it relates to the model of comprehension. He made a comparison between summarizations and recalls.

2. Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that the majority of Iranian students are poor readers in English. Most of the problems of second language reading and reading comprehension are viewed as being essentially decoding problems, deriving meaning from print.

2.1. Research Question

The purpose of the present study is to examine the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing vs summarization as reading tasks. Two groups of students were selected randomly. To one group reading

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comprehension was taught only by using summarization, and to the other group reading comprehension was taught only by using paraphrasing.

So the question this study is expected to answer is this:

"Does the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing vs summarization affect EFL learners' reading comprehension test performance?"

The hypothesis of this study, on the basis of its research question, is this :

"There is no relationship between the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing vs summarization and EFL learners' reading comprehension test performances." That is, the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing vs summarization does not affect learners' reading comprehension test performances. The statistical analysis of the study will, therefore, determine whether this hypothesis is to be accepted or rejected.

The significance of this study is more for reading comprehension and English translation as well.

2.2. Review of the related literature

Chastain (1988:56) contends that "perhaps the single greatest ability of humankind is the ability to use language. We are human because we have language, and we have language because we are human ".

In a definition of language, (Falk, 1978:3) points out that: "investigation of any human language demonstrates that a language is an extremely complex, highly abstract, and infinitely productive system linking meanings with sounds." Widdowson (1978) and Birjandi et al. (2006) refer to reading "not as a reaction to a text but as an interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text. In a definition of reading, Carrel (1988:12) points out that "reading is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs. There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought.

In the last ten years, the accepted theory of ESL reading has changed dramatically, from a serial (or bottom-up) model, to "reading as an interactive process." Widdowson (1979), Farhady et al. (2007) and Careless (2007) have discussed reading in this light as the process of combining textual information with the information a reader brings to a text.

According to Langan (1992:531),"Reading and writing, however, are so closely interconnected that it is virtually impossible to be competent at one without being competent at the other".

- Reading and writing are interrelated language skills.

- Both reading and writing are processes.

- Both reading and writing are vital for communication.

- To be able to write well, students need to read widely.

"The role of background knowledge in language comprehension has been formalized as schema theory (Bartlett 1932; Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Rumelhart, 1980), which has as one of its fundamental tenets that text, any text, either spoken or written does not by itself carry meaning. Rather, according to schema theory, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. This previously acquired knowledge is called the reader's background knowledge, and the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata. (Carrel , 1988 : 16)

According to schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. Comprehending words, sentences, and entire texts involves more than just relying on one's linguistic knowledge.

Chastain (1988 : 216) contends that two goals of reading are : "Establishing sound-symbol relationships and comprehension . Early in a beginning course, much time should be spent on the relationship between sounds and their written symbols and vice versa through reading aloud and dictation practice. There are four types of reading: Skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading. "Skimming is a way of reading for the general or main idea of a text, and scanning calls for reading for specific information or details"

Romanoff (1991: 74). "Intensive reading is generally at a slower speed and requires a higher degree of understanding than extensive reading. Intensive reading is typically concerned with texts of more than 500 words. Extensive reading simply refers to the outside reading students do on their own with no help or guidance from the teacher" (Paulston & Bruder, 1976:199). According to Chastain (1988:231) "five factors should be considered in selection of reading materials including: Interests and goals, readability, authentic materials. enrichment for the gifted and length"

According to Picket & Laster (1993 : 216) " three basic types of summary are descriptive , informative , and evaluative , depending on the writer's primary purpose and intended audience " .

A summary may describe; it may state what a work is about in a very general way. The descriptive summary simply indicates the main idea of a complete work and may include the main topics that are discussed. It is usually very brief, sometimes only one or two sentences.

The primary purpose of an informative summary is to inform; that is, it is designed to present the principal facts and conclusions given in the original work. According to Johnson, (1990 : 97) " the very useful skill of summarizing is often helpful in determining the topic, the topic sentence or the main idea in a reading selection .

How long should a summary be? A summary may vary in length from one sentence to several pages, depending on your purpose in summarizing and the length of the original text. If your purpose in summarizing is to concisely state the main information in the text, it can be done in one sentence.

As Arnaudet & Barrett (1984:41) put it, "Paraphrasing expressing someone else's ideas in your own words is essential to most types of academic writing assignments. Although it is a complex task involving thinking, reading and writing, as well as, a good knowledge of English structure, it is something which can be learned if a student is willing to devote to it the required time, effort and patience. There are several specific techniques for learning this multifaceted skill."

Paraphrasing techniques include:

Alternating sentence linkers, alternating active and passive verb forms, alternating word forms, using synonymous word or expression, and alternating clause / phrase structures.

3. Method

The participants were 60 Iranian sophomore students who were studying English Language in Islamic Azad university, Lahijan branch, and who were translation majors .To determine the students' level of proficiency, a pretest was done. The students were selected randomly using a random figure table from among 150 students who had completed the reading course part II, and were expending reading course part III. There is no control of sex in this study. Students were selected from both males and females between 21-23 years of age. These students were either local or immigrants from far and near cities who lived in Lahijan for up to three years and entered the university for undergraduate studies.

An advanced level reading comprehension book was used for the treatment, Understanding Idea, by Michael swan (1976). I selected 4 texts from this book with the titles of 'chimpanzees', 'Baggy pants', 'the front tail', and 'school and life'. I taught them within six weeks and 2 hours per week for each group. In the class, I did not use translation, instead I used synonym and antonym for explaining the texts. The main aim for this treatment was not reading aloud but reading for comprehension.

After the treatment, I used a TOEFL for reading comprehension test. I selected a reading passage consisting of 275 words, 20 lines. I gave the same test to both groups. The test contained 10 questions, 8 multiple choice type and 2 open-ended questions in order to test composition as well as comprehension.

The amount of time allowed was 30 minutes and 2 points was allocated to each correct response, (totally 20 scores for the test). There was no penalty for the wrong answers.

4. Result and Discussions

Using a "t-test" (Hatch and Farhady, 1982) case II in order to compare two means of the obtained data, a t-observed of 3.66 was accessed. The t-observed of the study was seen to be more than the critical value of t (with the degree of freedom of 58): t - critical = 2.000 < t - observed = 3.66.

Table.1: Mean and standard deviation of two groups

	Group 1	Group 2
Mean	15.8	13.6
Standard Deviation	2.12	2.6

Subjects in group 1 scored between 12 – 20 and subjects in group 2 scored between 10 – 18 . Each group consisted of 30 students .

$$\overline{x_1} = \frac{\sum x}{N} = \frac{476}{30} \Rightarrow 15.8 \; ; \overline{x_1} = 15.8 \; ; v_1 = \frac{\sum (x - \overline{x})^2}{N-1} \Rightarrow v_1 = \frac{130.83}{29} \Rightarrow 4.5$$

$$SD = \sqrt{v} \Rightarrow SD = \sqrt{4.5} \; ; \; SD = 2.12 \; ; \; x_1 = group1 \; ; \; x_2 = group2$$

$$\overline{x_2} = \frac{\sum x}{N} = \frac{408}{30} \Rightarrow 13.6 \; ; \; \overline{x_2} = 13.6 \; ; v_2 = \frac{\sum (x - \overline{x})^2}{N-1} \Rightarrow v_2 = \frac{197.20}{29} \Rightarrow 6.8$$

$$SD = \sqrt{V} \Rightarrow SD = \sqrt{6.8} \; ; \; SD = 2.6 \; ; \; S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}) = \sqrt{\left(\frac{S\overline{x_1}}{\sqrt{n_1}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{S\overline{x_2}}{\sqrt{n_2}}\right)^2}$$

$$S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}) = \sqrt{\left(\frac{2.12}{\sqrt{30}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{2.6}{\sqrt{30}}\right)^2} \; ; \; S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}) = \sqrt{0.15 + 0.23}$$

$$S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}) = \sqrt{0.36} \; ; \; S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}) = 0.6 \; ; \; Tobs = \frac{\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}}{S(\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2})} = Tobs = \frac{15.8 - 13.8}{0.6} = \frac{2.2}{0.6}$$

$$Tobs \Rightarrow 3.66 \; ; \; df = (n_1 - 1) + (n_2 - 1) \; ; \; df = (30 - 1) + (30 - 1) = 58$$

T *critical* = 2.000

T observed > T critical

$3.66 > 2.000 \Rightarrow$ H$_0$ *is rejected*

(with level of significance for two – tailed test)

This indicated that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected; that is, it was concluded that there was a relationship between the degree of effectiveness of paraphrasing v.s summarization as reading tasks and EFL learner's reading comprehension.

The result of this study indicated that there was a relationship between two variables and reading comprehension. According to the data collected, the students of group 1 who were taught reading comprehension only by using summarization performed better than group 2 who were taught only on the basis of paraphrasing on the test because it was revealed that most of the high marks belonged to the group 1 who learned reading comprehension by using summarization. The score range of group 1 was between 12-20 and the score range of group 2 was between 10-18.

5. Conclusions, Implications

According to the result of this study, it was revealed that 1) there is a relationship between paraphrasing and summarization and reading comprehension. 2) the students of group 1 who were taught reading comprehension only by using summarization performed better on the test than group 2 who were taught reading comprehension only on the basis of paraphrasing because it was revealed that most of the high marks belonged to group 1.

In our country, English language learning has three majors including English teacher training, English literature and English translation. Each of them has its own syllabus. Regarding English translation which was selected for this study, two - third of the credits are concerned teaching translation. The significance of this study is more for translation because in translation, language is viewed from the contrastive perspective.

So another theoretical implication of this study is that it can be related to one of the main theories of language: Contrastive studies.

In this study, I selected the English translation because it was available in the region where I live; therefore, the practicality of the test increases.

This kind of learning activity has a lot of pedagogical implications that help the students to comprehend the reading materials more effectively. Through the result of this study, language teachers can benefit from the summarization technique for their teaching. Also, the result may guide them in selecting appropriate reading comprehension materials to use in their classes.

Apart from teachers, syllabus designers and test makers can benefit from the theoretical framework presented in the paper. In designing reading comprehension books for students of English translation, compilers can use more effective reading strategies and techniques such as those techniques which were used in this study. Therefore, to compile books and exercises, they can use summarization and paraphrasing. For example, the exercises which start from a sentence and end with a paragraph. The result of this study can be of significant importance for test makers in deciding whether they can make tests such as multiple choice or open ended using these effective strategies.

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