



A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON BILINGUALS AND MONOLINGUAL LEARNER' READING COMPREHENSION

KHADIRPASHA

Research scholar linguistic department
Potti Sri Ramaulu Telugu University
Hyderabad
Khadripasha.p@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the differences between simultaneous bilingual and Iranian EFL monolingual learners on reading comprehension. To perform this study, 110 third grade three high school bilingual and monolingual participants studying in four different schools of Mahshahr were selected non-randomly. Then, the four groups were given a teacher-made pre-test of reading comprehension before the treatment to determine how well the participants know the contents. During an eight session courses, four groups covered eight passages selected from Select Readings: Intermediate (Lee & Gunderson, 2011). Finally, at the end of the course which lasted two months, the participants sat for their post-test of reading comprehension which was the modified version of pre-test. One-way ANOVA was used to compare the means of the pre-test and the post-test in four groups and Paired Samples t-test was used to compare the pre and post-test of each group. The findings revealed that the reading comprehension of four groups improved and there was a significant difference between the groups concerning reading comprehension post-test. According to the findings of this research, the researcher concluded that monolinguals performed better than the simultaneous bilinguals and also female students were more successful than the male learners. Implications of the study may be useful to teachers and learners who study reading comprehension in bilingual contexts.

Keywords

Reading comprehension, Simultaneous bilingual, Monolingual

1. Introduction

English has gained importance all over the globe due to political, economic and technological reasons. It is generally believed that English as a foreign language (EFL) plays a crucial role in Iranian educational system in which reading comprehension has its own dominance among other teaching skills. Reading comprehension is a very complex process, the importance of which has been mentioned in many of the studies. Kirby (2007) states that a process by which we understand the text we read is called reading comprehension. This process is the purpose of reading and also reinforces meaningful learning from text. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), "reading comprehension happen when we perceive a written text with a purpose to understand the content" (p. 443). This perceiving can be done silently.

Reading comprehension is a complex process in itself, but it also depends upon other important lower – level processes. It is a critical foundation for later academic learning, many employment skills, and life satisfaction. It is an important skill to target, but we sold not forget about the skills on which it depends. To improve the reading the reading skills of poor performers, we need to understand that there is no magic wand, and no secret weapon that will quickly reading comprehension for poor readers. Careful assessment is required to determine individuals` strength and weaknesses, and programs need to be tailored accordingly; most poor readers will need continued support in many areas. The root of many reading comprehension problems lies in the early elementary years (Kirby, 2007).

Generally speaking, reading comprehension is always a grand task for the students who want to learn a foreign language. 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 (Chastain, 1988). With the use of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension students will be able to monitor their understanding of text and also to evaluate the degree of their understanding. Cohen (1998) states that strategies are different in nature; they can be metacognitive, cognitive, performance and affective. When we plan the organization of our learning, it is called metacognitive strategy. When we apply mnemonic devices for learning vocabulary, it is called cognitive and affective strategy is when we booster self – confidence for a language task by means of self-talk it is performance. It is important to teach students reading techniques to facilitate their reading comprehension. Students might be unaware of reading strategies that can be of help to them. The role of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension needs to be clarified until students become independent in reading for meaning.

One important issue in studying bilingualism is that bilinguals have better meta-linguistic awareness. According to Fromkin (2003), meta-linguistic awareness refers to a speaker's conscious awareness about language and the use of language. This is in contrast with linguistic knowledge, which is knowledge of language and is unconscious. Moreover, bilingual children have an earlier understanding of the arbitrary relationship between an object and its name. Also, they have sufficient metalinguistic awareness to speak the contextually appropriate language. Whether they enjoy some cognitive or educational benefit from being bilingual seems to depend a great deal on extra linguistic factors such as social and economic situation and the relative prestige of the two languages (Fromkin, et al. 2003).

2. Background

2.1. Bilingualism

It has been estimated that approximately 60% of the world's population is either bilingual or multilingual; that is, more than half the people in the world routinely use two or more languages in their daily communication (Maghsoudi, 2008). Multilingualism and multiculturalism are social facts of this new century, which can be seen in most classrooms and playgrounds. For bilingual students in English as a second language learning context, being able to speak, read and write in the English language is critically important as English is the main language required for school success and interaction with the wider society. However, the role played by bilingual students' first language in such a learning environment is also important (Parvanehnezhad & Clarkson, 2008).

Bilingualism, defined as possessing two languages, has always been a controversial issue in society. During the early 1990s, bilingualism was considered an unwelcome topic among American professional and politicians. Educators rendered bilingualism responsible for immigrant children's failure in school subject matter. Employers believed that immigrants, due to their low competence in English, did not fit the requirements needed to become part of the United States workforce. Psychologists regarded bilingualism as a handicap to cognitive development; it was assumed that bilingualism was a barrier affecting verbal intelligence (Vygotsky, 1978).

Two instructional methods commonly used to educate students in reading development are deductive, involving inferences from general conclusion. One study examined deductive and inductive instructional method for L2 learners in comprehension and production of target structure in second language (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Three classes of fourth from (6th grade) students were examined and measured on a baseline test of scholastic abilities. The English as a Foreign Language students' level of English was sufficient as they were nearing the end of their second year of foreign language instruction in French. For this study, each class met 5 days a week for three 45 – minute lessons in French in which the instruction was arbitrarily assigned to deductive instruction, inductive instruction, or the control group, which received typical French instruction that consisted of both deductive and inductive methods (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). All groups received an equal amount of instruction in French.

According to Bagheri and Tavakoli (2001), the use of some strategies and techniques has been considered to be of the success for overall comprehension. These strategies are good as far as they provide the readers with required information to answer the reading questions. Some of the reading strategies that are most appropriate and desirable are skimming and scanning, anticipation and prediction, general and specific statement, irrelevant sentences, references and restatement. Strong reading comprehension strategies, especially for college and graduate students who often have to complete extremely long readings each week could be very important. In experienced students are sometimes overwhelmed by their intimidating reading assignments. Reading proficiency is undoubtedly crucial to academic success, and students definitely need guidance and practice in order to become efficient readers. Reading skills for college students offer some advice and practice which may help these students achieve their goals.

2.2. Research Questions

The present thesis will set out to pursue the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there any difference between Telugu monolingual and simultaneous bilingual learners who learn reading comprehension?

RQ2. Is there any difference between Telugu male/female monolingual and simultaneous bilingual learners who learn reading comprehension?

3. Method

3.1. Participant

The initial research participants of this study totally were 110 simultaneous bilingual (Telugu –Hindi) and monolingual students of grade three high school learners. From all, 60 participants were simultaneous bilingual that speak and apply both Telugu and Hindi while 50 participants were monolingual that communicate with all just through Telugu language. These 110 students were selected from four male and female high schools of Hyderabad city .Since the intended level of students was intermediate, they were given Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT, 2001). After conducting the Quick Placement Test, 30 simultaneous bilingual (including 15 male and 15 female) and 30 Monolingual EFL Learners (also including 15 male and 15 female) were selected in four groups.

3.2. Instrumentation

Different testing instruments were utilized in the process of the development of the present investigation. Initially, to ensure the homogeneity of the participants and also to determine the students' level of language proficiency which was intended to be intermediate included in the final stage of the study, OQPT was given to the whole population. The purpose of this test was to place students reliably into appropriate levels.

The second instrument was a pre – test which is a 40 items test including true/false, fill in the blank, cloze test, reading comprehension questions and vocabulary parts that will be selected from textbook “Select Readings Intermediate” which is given to assess learners' background. The pre- test is so important to inform the instructor about topics that are/are not needed to cover in the course based on student's previous knowledge. The validity of pre – test was content validity; the test was given to two experts and was confirmed by them. While reliability for pre – test was not necessary, because the QOPT that was taken before pre – test was a standard test and rejected the necessity of reliability.

The last instrument is post-test that after the completion of eight session instruction of reading comprehension will be carried out to compare the probable differences between four groups of bilingual and EFL monolingual learners and also between male and female in reading comprehension field. The items will be chosen from textbook “Select Readings Intermediate” (Lee & Gunderson, 2011) to determine the effectiveness of four experimental groups. Validity for post – test (i.e., content validity) of the pre and post - tests were confirmed by two experts. Since the items of the post – test was those which applied for the pre – test, but the pre – test was modified for prevention of reminding the items and the validity once again met for the content validity. The pre and post – tests were piloted on a sample of the learners who were at the same level with the participants. The reliability was calculated through Cronbach Alpha for the pre-test as ($\alpha = .86$) and for the post- test as ($\alpha = .73$).

3.3. Materials

Select Readings: Intermediate level (Lee & Gunderson, 2011): In this book, high-interest, and authentic reading passages served as springboards for reading skills development, vocabulary building, and thought providing discussion and writing .

3.4. Data Analysis

To achieve the goal, the collected data were analyzed using different statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations were estimated to describe and summarize the data. The obtained scores of four groups were processed through the application of the statistical software SPSS. The researcher used One-way ANOVA method in order to analyze whether four groups of learners are different and to identify if there is any difference between the groups.

4. Results

The data were gathered after the treatment were analyzed to find out if in learning reading comprehension is there any specific differences between simultaneous bilingual and monolingual Iranian EFL learners. It should be noted that the data were analyzed through SPSS, version 17. Descriptive statistics is shown in Table 1

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of Four Groups (Pre-test)

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pre-test Female Mono	15	19.6	6.0	1.5
Pre-test Female Bio	15	20.8	5.9	1.5
Pre-test Male Mono	15	19.5	6.2	1.6
Pre-test Male Bio	15	18.5	4.6	1.2
Total	60	19.6	5.6	.7

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of pre-test of four groups of male and females' monolingual and simultaneous bilingual learners. This table shows that the mean for pre-test of female monolingual is 19.6333 and the mean for pre-test of female simultaneous bilingual learners is 20.8333. While the mean for the pre-test of male monolingual and male simultaneous bilingual students are 19.5000 and 18.5000 respectively.

Table 2 shows that Observed F for pre – test is .415 which is less than Critical F which is 4.160. Based on this calculation of One-way ANOVA, Observed F is less than the Critical F with $df=3/56$, there is no significant difference between all the four groups. This means that all 60 students of four groups of female monolinguals, female simultaneous bilinguals, male monolinguals, and male simultaneous bilinguals were homogeneous from the beginning. The data were obtained from the performance of the students on the post-test after eight sessions on reading comprehension. They were analyzed descriptively in terms of the mean and standard deviation of the four groups in the post-test which are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA (Pre-test of Male and Female Mono and Simultaneous Bilinguals)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	41.1	3	13.70	.415	.743
Within Groups	1851.5	56	33.06		
Total	1892.6	59			

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of Four Groups (Post-test)

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Post-test Female Mono	15	25.2	2.8	.7
Post-test Female Bio	15	24.3	2.9	.7
Post-test Male Mono	15	22.9	2.6	.6
Post-test Male Bio	15	19.8	3.1	.8
Total	60	23.0	3.4	.4

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of post - test of four groups of monolingual and simultaneous bilingual male and females' learners. In this table, the mean for female monolingual learners in post – test is 25.2333 while the mean for female simultaneous bilingual students is 24.3000. Also respectively the mean of post – test for monolingual male and simultaneous bilingual high school students is 22.9333 and 19.8333.

Table 4. One-way .ANOVA (Post-test of Male and Female Mono and Bilinguals)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	250.3	3	83.43	9.929	.000
Within Groups	470.6	56	8.40		
Total	720.9	59			

Table 4 indicates that the Observed F (9.929) is greater than the Critical F (4.160) with df=3, thus the difference between the groups is significant in the post-test.

5. Conclusion

This study tried to investigate the differences between simultaneous bilingual and Iranian monolingual EFL learners on reading comprehension. As it said earlier, reading comprehension and how to read and how to understand is crucial to second language acquisition. The results of the study also indicated the superiority of monolingual learners over simultaneous bilingual students and also the superiority of female over male learners in

terms of finding the differences of learning reading comprehension. One of the assumptions of this study was that teaching reading strategies could enhance the intermediate language learners' reading comprehension ability. The instruction lasted more than two months. In the course of this time, the researcher employed the reading strategies and instructed the participants how to use them in their reading comprehension. After the post – test, the results indicated that the use of some particular reading strategies like metacognition skill, answering questions, recognizing story structure, summarizing, note – taking, prediction and re – reading affect the male and female language learners' reading comprehension skill, with this difference that female receive more influence than male and also monolingual were affected through the 8 session treatments more than simultaneous bilingual learners. Namely, the reading comprehension ability of the students who had made use of the above - mentioned reading strategies among male and female and also among monolingual and bilingual learners surpassed that of the less successful readers.

Similar studies can be done on other proficiency levels, namely pre- intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced. As mentioned earlier one different situational and learner factors are said to influence the learners' use of language learning strategies among which sex (gender) and bilingualism were investigated in the present research. There are other important variables like subjects' proficiency level, major, motivation, psychological type, sensory preference, attitude and so on not yet investigated among Iranian EFL learners which can serve as interesting areas for future research.

6. Reference

1. Bagheri, M. S. & Tavakoli, F. (2001). *TOFEL: Reader's digest in a flash (3rd Ed.)*. Tehran: Azaran publication.
2. Brown, H.D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
3. Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing Second Language Skills: Theory and Practice*
4. Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London, New York: Longman.
5. Ehrman, M. & Oxford, R. (1989). *Effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adult language learning strategies*. *Modern Language Journal*, 73(1), 1 – 13.
6. Erlam, R. (2003). *Maximising instructional effectiveness in the language classroom*. *The New Zealand Language Teacher*, 31, 38 - 40.
7. Fromkin, V. (2003). *An introduction to language (7th ed.)*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.