Tblt Applied to the Teaching of Vocational College English Reading

Mei Caiqin[1], Wang Guxian[2], Hua Hai[3], He Meilin[4,*]

[1]Public Department of Qujing Medical College, Qujing Medical College, Sanjiang Avenue, Qujing Economic and Technological Development Zone, Yunnan Province, China, 655000

[2]Basic Medicine Department of Qujing Medical College, Qujing Medical College, Sanjiang Avenue, Qujing Economic and Technological Development Zone, Yunnan Province, China, 655000

[3]Haifeng Middle School, Zhanyi District, Qujing City, Yunnan Province, China 655000

[4]College of Nursing, Qujing Medical College, Qujing Medical College, Sanjiang Avenue, Qujing Economic and Technological Development Zone, Yunnan Province, China, 655000

*Corresponding Author

Keywords: Tblt, English reading teaching, Vocational college

Abstract: Reading is considered as a royal road to knowledge and information throughout human history and it is also especially significant in English learning in vocational colleges. However, up to present, there are still many problems concerning the teaching of English reading in vocational colleges. This thesis puts forward a task-based teaching model under the guidance of the framework proposed by Jane Willis (1996) and Schema theory. The results of the subjects' reading performance are then analyzed by using the SPSS 11.5 software package. Independent-Samples Test is used to examine the study hypotheses and the students' answers. This research indicated that TBLT can improve the students' interest in learning English in vocational colleges and enhance the students' reading skills as well as the scores.

1. Introduction

Reading is considered as one of the most important accesses for people to acquire knowledge and information in human history. The development of reading ability is paid great attention to in human history, especially, in the field of social and academic circles in the recent half century. With the increasing awareness of the significance of teaching and learning reading, together comes the rising concern of reading teaching methods. It has been proved that "Task-based Language Teaching" (hereafter TBLT) plays an important role in inspiring the students' interest and improving their reading skills and competence. Therefore, it deserves to carry out a research on the effectiveness of TBLT on English reading in Vocational College.

In most current teaching activities, the traditional grammar-translation teaching model dominating in language teaching is still used. Often the teachers explain the meaning of the words, list its' usage and give examples of every word appearing in the text and translate the passage into Chinese sentence by sentence. It is clear that teacher-centered teaching model and too much emphasis on language form lead the students to depend heavily on their teacher and lack the awareness of self -learning and understanding the whole text from the aspect of semantic meaning. Taking the students' present needs and the teaching real situation into consideration, it's the author's belief that both the teaching and learning could be improved by using TBLT approach in reading class. TBLT has become more and more popular throughout the country since the 1980s, and its center is "learning by doing". As one of the later developments of the communicative approach, it suggests that students learn to use English by finishing tasks in real life settings. It is justified, therefore, to use the TBLT approach as a loadstar for the teaching of English in China's vocational colleges. As will be seen, it can stimulate students' learning curiosity and motivation by completing a task, so it suits the task of teaching English to students in vocational colleges.

In the field of reading researches, there exist a constellation of viewpoints about the reading process. In general, the follows are the three main models of reading process: the bottom-up model

by Gough (1972); the top-down model by Goodman (1967); and the interactive mode by Rumelhart (1977). Under the influence of the sociolinguistic theory of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) and the psycholinguistic theory of natural second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982) and other theorists, the landscape of second and foreign language teaching has changed itself greatly since the 1970s. Influenced by these theories, there generates a wide-ranging belief in the needs of learners' exposure to "authentic" or "natural" situation in the process of language acquisition. And these theories attach importance to purpose and meaning considered as the nature of authenticity and naturalness, instead of form. Therefore, the maximum opportunities for learners to involve in closely to real-life interaction have been stressed over the teacher-fronted controlled practice of linguistic types.

2. Research Methodology

In order to examine whether TBLT improves students' motivation and interest to learn English, and whether TBLT is effective to improve the vocational college students' reading skills as well as their scores, the author designs a set of test paper for the study. The author takes steps to make sure that the test-takers in the present study haven not read any of the passage before. There are two multiple questions after the test to check whether they have ever read any of the passages or not before. Scores of those test-takers who have read any passage in the test papers will be taken away from the data analysis. The subjects in the present study are from a Medical College. They are from the classes which will take the exam of Practical English Test for Colleges (PRETCO).

The subjects involved in the study are 101 students from two nursing classes of Grade One in a medical college. There were fifty one students in Class One and it was treated as the experimental class (EC) taught with TBLT, while Class Two had fifty students and was treated as the controlled class (CC) taught in the traditional way. In the process of the study, the two classes were taught by the same English teacher for the same periods every week.

In the end of the research, a questionnaire was given to the students of the experimental class in order to survey whether TBLT affects their interest, attitude, and learning ability about their study of English reading or not. At the same time, an interview was designed for some of the participants from the experimental class after the questionnaire.

In this study, the instruments adopted conclude a pre-test, a post-test, a questionnaire designed for both the experimental and controlled classes. A pretest (including four reading materials and the total score is 40) was given to the two nursing classes in Grade one , which is used to see whether there are significant differences in their English reading at approximately the same level between the two classes. Then during a five-month period a TBLT model was adopted in the instruction of the English reading to the experimental class. At the end of this period, a post-test with the same pieces (four materials) and similar level was arranged for both the experimental and controlled classes. The questionnaires were carried out before and after the students experienced reading strategy to examine whether TBLT is an effective approach to improve the students' interest, self-confidence, and learning ability.

Table 1statistics of The Pre-Test

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORES	Experiment	50	19.7600	4.61962	.62503
	Control Group	51	19.5373	4.80425	.67273

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
SCORES	Equal variances assumed	.437	.510	-1.499	99	.137	-1.3773	.91904	-3.20083	.44632
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.500	98.605	.137	-1.3773	.91827	-3.19940	.44489

In Table 1, the statistical figures reveal that in the pre-test, the mean score of the experimental group is 19.7600 while the corresponding figure of the control group is 19.5375, a little lower than that of the experimental class. The figures of Standard Deviation in the two classes show that there is little or no difference between their scores. In addition, the Significant Value (2-tailed) in the Pre-test is 0.137, a figure much larger than 0.05. It points to the fact that the students in the two groups have the similar English level before having TBLT. What's more, the mean score is only 19.76 for EG and 19.54 for CG, it also shows that most of the students failed in the reading comprehension. Therefore, it means that there is a big challenge for the researcher.

3. Results of the Post-Test

Table 2 Statistics of the Post-Test

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORES	Experiment Group	51	30.5200	5.38797	.76197
	Control Group	50	24.0800	6.36239	.89091

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
SCORES	Equal variances assumed	.244	.622	3.849	99	.000	4.5200	1.17425	2.19003	6.84997	
	Equal variances not assumed			3.856	96.962	.000	4.5200	1.17232	2.19326	6.84674	

In the post-test, the results and findings in Table 2 demonstrates that a significant statistical difference has occurred between the two classes after the experiment. The mean score of the experimental group is 30.52 but that of the control group is 24.08, 5.44 higher. And seen from the Standard Deviation, it also shows there is a significant difference, for the Post-test Significant Value (2-tailed) is 0.000, enormously below 0.05. From this, compared with the control group taught in the traditional way, we say the application of TBLT has effects on the students reading competence in the experimental group.

4. Results of the Questionnaires

After the experiment, in order to get some information about the students' reading strategy, interests and experience in English reading, attitudes toward English reading and their ways of reading and the effects of TBLT on their English reading, these questionnaires are given to the students from the experimental class.

Table 3 Students' Attitude Toward Each Question

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Question1	0	6	26	15	4	51
Question2	0	1	2	33	15	51
Question3	0	1	11	25	14	51
Question4	0	1	10	21	19	51
Question5	0	1	11	25	14	51
Question 6	0	1	6	20	25	51
Question7	0	0	9	26	16	51
Question8	0	5	3	22	21	51
Question9	0	1	3	25	22	51
Question10	0	2	9	28	12	51
Question11	0	3	6	28	14	51
Question12	0	1	5	32	12	51
Question13	0	3	10	19	19	51
Question14	0	1	8	21	21	51
Question15	0	1	4	28	18	51
Total	0	28	123	368	246	765

As shown in Table 3, it indicates that as for all the 15 questions, no student chose "strongly disagree", 28 chose "disagree", and 123 chose "neither agree nor disagree". The total number of these three is 151, accounting for only 19.7% of the whole. However, there are 368 choices of the item "agree" and 246 choices of the item "strongly agree". The total number is 614, accounting for 80.2%. This result shows that most students have held a positive attitude towards the TBLT approach to English reading.

Table 4 Frequency Distribution of the Reading Strategy and the students' Expectance on Improving Reading Competence

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per. (%)
Question1	0	0%	6	12 %	26	51%	15	29%	4	7.8 %
Question2	0	0%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	33	65%	15	29%

From table 4, it shows that most of the students have a poor strategy in their English reading and learning. And they seldom employ the reading skill flexibly in latter reading. In question 2, it also shows that the students have a high expectance for improving their reading ability by reading a variety of materials.

Table 5 Frequency Distribution of Tblt Improving the students' Confidence and Arousing Interests

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)
Question3	0	0%	1	0.2%	11	22%	25	49%	14	27%
Question4	0	0%	1	0.2%	10	20%	21	41%	19	37%
Question5	0	0%	1	0.2%	11	22%	25	49%	14	27%

As shown in Table 5, the answers to question 3, question 4 and question 5 also indicate most students hold the view that the TBLT instruction does help to improve their self-confidence and arouse their interests in English reading by a variety of cooperations with their classmates.

Table 6 Frequency Distribution of the students' Enjoyment of the New Teaching Approach

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)
Question 6	0	0%	1	0.2%	6	11%	20	39%	25	49%
Question 7	0	0%	0	0%	9	17%	26	51%	16	31%
Question 8	0	0%	5	1%	3	0.6%	22	43%	21	41%
Question 9	0	0%	1	0.2%	3	0.6%	25	49%	22	43%
Question10	0	%	2	0.6%	9	17%	28	55%	12	24%

As Table 6 indicate that a majority of students think that the task the teacher has designed helps them concentrate their attention on reading and benefit their reading. In other words, they enjoy the new teaching method (TBLT).

Table 7 Frequency Distribution of the students' Progress in Scores

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)	Fre.	Per.(%)
Question11	0	0%	3	0.6%	6	11%	28	55%	14	27%
Question12	0	0%	1	0.2%	5	1%	32	63%	12	24%
Question13	0	0%	3	0.6%	10	20%	19	37%	19	37%
Question14	0	0%	1	0.2%	8	15%	21	41%	21	41%
Question15	0	0%	1	0.2%	4	0.8%	28	55%	18	35%

From Table 7 we can see that, the percentages of the students' choice of "4" or "5" for each question are very high, which indicates that the students have made some progress in their reading comprehension and their reading scores also have increased after the application of TBLT.

5. Conclusion

Firstly, the students try their best and actively participate in a variety of interesting tasks. Most of them think that they gain interests and make progress during the cooperation with their peers

regardless of their English levels. When they see their process, they also build up self-confidence and it motivates them to have more interests in reading more materials.

TBLT in reading class makes the students have more chances to participate in the activities and to gain experience from each other. In the interaction, they learn to use the language with their classmates. As Rivers (1987) considers that the students have the experience to produce information from what they hear in interaction because comprehension is a creative process. Therefore, the students' reading ability is improved and increased in the process of interactive communication.

The results from the Independent-Samples Test shows that the EG gets higher scores than CG in the post-test, and the data of Question 14 and 15 indicate that most of the students contribute their improvement of reading comprehension to the effect of TBLT instruction.

References

[1] Alderson, J. C. (2000). Assessing Reading. London: Cambridge University Press.

[2] Willis, J. 1996. A Framework For Task-based Learning. Oxford: Longman, 23.

[3] Willam,M. & Burden, R. (1997). Psychology for Language Teachers: A social constructivist approach. Cambrige: Cambrige University Press.

[4] Gong Yafu, Luo Shaoxi, 2003, task-based language teaching, Beijing: People's Education Press

[5] Luli 2002, "Task-based English Teaching in junior middle school", foreign language teaching in primary and secondary schools, 2002, (26): 6-9

[6] Yang Duanhe, application of SPSS in language research [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004

[7] Zhong LAN, Zhong Jie, Jiang Xingjun, a-year real test of College English application ability, China business press, 2010