Use of Test-Teach-Test Method in English as a Foreign Language Classes

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Abstract

The present study 'Use of test-teach-test method in EFL classes' aims to find out the effect of teach-test-teach method in developing vocabulary, grammatical and reading comprehension skills of Bachelor level first year EFL students in the faculty of education, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. For this experimental research, the sample population consisted 42 B. Ed. students from a Public College, Pokhara who were selected using purposive non-random sampling procedure. The students were divided into two groups; experimental and controlled; each consisted 21 students on the basis of odd even ranking system. The main tools for data collection were test items. A pre-test was administered before they were taught for 4 weeks. Then, the experimental group was taught using test-teach-test method. After experimental teaching, post-test was administered by using the same set as that was used in pre-test. The results of both the tests were compared and determined using simple statistical tool; mean. The findings revealed that the experimental group was found to be performed significantly higher than controlled group.

Key words: English as a foreign language, Teaching, Testing, and Foregin language teaching

Background

Teaching is a process of imparting ideas of a particular person or group to a large number of other people. Generally, teaching is the job of a teacher. A teacher uses different teaching, learning activities to make learners learn what they are taught. The process of teaching a language is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learners to learn, setting the conditions for learning. Nepal is a multilingual country where English is learned as a foreign language. Teaching foreign language in multilingual context is really a challenge. In this context, Widyantoro (2012) mentions that teaching is a complex job as it involve lots of knowledge, skills and activities. It includes knowledge of the foreign language, the learners

and the learning process, the teaching methods and techniques. It involves a lot of skills such as questioning skills and pedagogical skills and a lot of activities, starting from planning, teaching and testing.

Teaching is the process of showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving clear instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge of various areas and aspects, causing to know or to understand. Teaching is intended to bring about language learning. For successful and effective teaching, a language teacher needs to understand the learners and subject matter to be taught along with the various procedures to be applied to test learners' ability and the various constraints of the particular context of learning.

Teaching and learning cannot be separated since teaching is the interaction between the teacher and the learners about a given subject directed to learning under a particular context and both teacher and learners actively involve on it. In this vein, Wilson and Peterson (2006) asserted that teaching is a shared work between students and teachers where teacher still has responsibility for making sure that students learn better. Co-operative learning, team learning, reciprocal teaching, etc. can be the proper ways for a teacher to make the students understand the subject matter.

A language teacher not only teaches and shares but tests the efficiency and effectiveness of his/her teaching and the proficiency developed on the part of learners. That is to say teaching and testing are not separated from each other. Testing is a part of teaching process.

Testing is a process of measuring a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given area using test as a device. Test is designed as a device not to de-motivate the students, but to reinforce learning and to motivate them for better performance and learning. In this context, Corder (1973) writes that language tests are measuring instruments and they are applied to learners not to teaching materials or teachers. He meant to explain that they do not tell us directly about the contribution of teacher or materials to the learning process. They are designed to measure the learner's knowledge, the knowledge of competence in the language at a particular moment in this course. The knowledge of pupil may be compared with the knowledge of others or with that of the same pupil at a different time.

Tests are directly related to the learners which tell the teacher about how much the learner has achieved and how and how much his/her learning is different from others. They give information about various aspects and performances of the learners. At the same time, they contribute indirectly to give information about the materials, about teaching itself. In this sense, tests are both for teachers and students. The results of the test reflect how well a teacher has taught and how well the students have learnt. Students are tested differently using different types of test items. Test-teach-test method is one way of testing their current level knowledge, detecting problems and carrying out appropriate activities to foster their learning. Test-teach-

test (TTT) is a way of staging a lesson. It is a method of teaching learning process where learners first complete a task or activity without any support from teachers. They are involved in a pre-teaching activity in the form of a test. The teacher administers a test on them on a particular issue as if s/he is carrying out an action research to detect the problem. Then, based on the problems seen in the test, the teacher plans and presents the target language. The students are involved in various knowledge building activities of teaching learning process. Finally, the teacher tests the students' achievement or performance and the learners do another task to practice the new language.

Testing is a part of the teaching process. Testing cannot be separated from teaching and vice-versa is true. They are like two sides of a coin, one supports other. This can be proved from the fact that one of teacher's job in the teaching learning process is giving a test to measure how well his/her students have mastered what they have been taught and how effective are the materials and the methods that the teacher uses. But in the context of Nepal, most of the students are afraid of a test. There is no internal testing system to the students of Tribhuvan University, one of the public universities in Nepal.They are tested annually directly from external test. This system has led poor results of the students basically in English language. In this context, the present study has been carried out to see whether the test-teach-test method is appropriate and effective to bring qualitative change in their English language achievement and performance.

Literature Review

Language testing has played a significant role in recent educational setting. Brown (2004, p. 3) explains that testing is a method which measures a language learner's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. Testing is not only a method for test-takers to design a quality test but also measures a test taker's performance in a setting instrument. Ur (2005, p. 33) has given four reasons why the students are tested as:

- The teacher receives information about where the students are at the moment, then s/he takes decision about what to do next, whether to teach ahead or revise/change his/her teaching techniques.
- The students also get information about what and how much they have learned, whether they have to go ahead or revise lessons.
- To upgrade the students or to place them in proper position.
- The teacher knows how much successful he/she is.

Testing is used to get information about teacher and students on various aspects of teaching-learning process. It supports the stakeholders to judge whether the teaching learning process is effective or not, and on the basis of information obtained from testing, some effort can be made to improve the effectiveness of teaching learning process.

The nature of teaching and testing has been shifted according to changed in teaching methods. Richards (2010, p. 3) summarizes the relative dominance of the teaching methods in education during the past two centuries as:

- Grammar translation method (1800-1900)
- Direct method (1890-1930)
- Structural method (1930-1960)
- Reading method (1920-1950)
- Audiolingual method (1950-1970)
- Communicative approach (1970-present)

Grammar translation method (GT) which became the predominant educational framework of foreign language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) in the course of educational contexts until the Second World War. Jin and Cortazzi (2011) comments that in GT method, bilingual vocabulary lists and translation exercises along with the reading of literary texts were believed to be instill mental rigor and discipline along with same grammatical rules. So testing focused on translation skill, grammatical rules and recitation of literary text. After the criticism against GT method, direct method became widely recognized and implemented in second language teaching and learning. Rodgers (2009, as cited in Rodgigues, 2015, p. 19) states that direct method encouraged target language as medium of instruction and grammar was taught inductively. This method incorporated testing oral communicative skills that were built up in a carefully graded progression.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) concedes that mid–twentieth century was highly dominated with audiolingual method which was based on oral approach and use of language to communicate. It incorporated teaching grammar through pattern drills and dialogues. So, aural oral skill was primarily tested. Later, Communicative approach was influenced by diverse theoretical and philosophical elements. Richards (2010, p. 36) points out that, "Communicative language teaching is a broad approach to teaching that resets from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the language."

Communicative language teaching approach enhances learners' communicative competence in real, natural and authentic situations, considering various aspects like socio-cultural context, setting, topic, participants, conventions of speech, etc. Classroom practices lie on discourse and context and students are viewed as active participants in charge of their own learning creating opportunities and taking risks. Being based on this approach various other approaches like content based instruction, participatory approach, task based learning have been emerged as methods of teaching second or foreign language. Talking about a brief historical background of teaching and testing, Hancock (2006) writes:

> Historically speaking, language teaching including English as a foreign language has been an emphasis on communicative language teaching method since the early 1970's when the term communicative competence was first introduced to the language teaching profession by Dell Hymes. Since that time teachers have attempted to incorporate real world language usage in their classes and in their instructional materials, especially in adolescent and materials, especially in adolescent and adult language instruction. However, language testing has not kept up with communicative instructional practices.

From Hancock's words, we came to know that testing was not taken as the part of language teaching even with the emergence of communicative approach. This fact has created a great challenge for many language teachers to find the typical way of testing student's ability or progress in terms of their functional ability in English as a foreign language.

But now, with the development of task based instruction, content based instruction, the concept of testing has been shifted and it has become an integral part of language teaching. Showing the linkage between teaching and testing, Rudman (2004) mentions that with the development of discovery approach in teaching, testing remained as an integral part of teaching. He further mentions four points to show the linkage between teaching and testing:

- Testing is a useful tool at the beginning of the school year. He meant to say that a language teacher gains an overview of what students bring to new instruction. Test results can help the teacher plan, review and identify the potential issues to be faced.
- Testing can aid in decisions about grouping students in the class. If the teacher has specified instructional objective, testing can yield information that will aid the teacher in assigning specific students to instructional groups.
- Testing can be used to diagnose what individual pupil knows. A triangulation of several kinds of data drawn from various types of tests like aptitude test, observation of behavior, teacher made quizzes, etc. are helpful to find out the current level knowledge of the pupils.
- Testing can help the teacher determine the pace of classroom instruction.

Teachers tend to use tests prepared by themselves more often than any other types of tests to monitor what has been previously learned. Tests can be the proper means for determining how quickly new material can be presented.

Teaching cannot be separated from testing as testing is a tool to get teaching improved. At the same time, to identify the exact performance of the students, a test needs to be designed from taught items. In the same vein, Widyantoro (2012) argues that the close link between teaching and testing can be seen from the fact that a test cannot be said to be valid if it does not measures what it is supposed to measure. 'What' must be related to the materials taught by the teachers? Similarly, Walvoond and Anderson (2010) stated that a language teacher needs to keep in mind that language testing can have a great effect on their students. This will affect

how students study, what they focus on, and how much time they have to spend. Testing not only tests the students' and teachers' performances but it also influences the students' motivation to learn as well. A language teacher should create environment which encourages students to learning. Patel and Jain (2008) argue that some parties are concerned about the result of language testing, such as the school principal, college chief, the teachers and students and their parties. These parties need to know how much students have already got benefit from their study and they need to make a decision.

Relevance of TTT Method at Present Era

Unlike other methods, it claims that a teacher must test students' prior knowledge of the target language for two reasons: one is to find out their current level of knowledge and the other one is to explore the particular problem that they have so that the teacher can plan to teach the target language systematically. Test-teach-test method helps the teacher make his/her input comprehensible. Krashen (1983, as cited in Schutz, 2014) concedes:

> The best methods are therefore those that supply comprehensible input in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in second language, but allow students to produce when they are ready recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production.

To make language input effective/efficient and comprehensible a language teacher needs to know the current level of the learners so that he can plan for the language input which is i+1;a level ahead of the current level of the learners. Test-teach-test method can be a means to decide i+1. Talking about the relevancy of this method, Hadfield (2014) has mentioned two advantages;- beginning with a test allows the teacher to listen to the students and know what language they know already and what is necessary to teach them. This avoids teaching the language they know already. Similarly, it makes students aware of the gaps in their knowledge and may make them more receptive to the new language input.

Bondjema (2014) explains that TTT is a useful approach as it enables teachers to identify the specific needs of learners concerning a language area and address this need suitably. In the same context, Woodward (2010, p. 123) writes:

> In terms of opportunities for learning, the first 'test' stage offers students a chance to try to remember and use what they have remembered. The 'teach' stage may offer exposure to new language and some chances to notice features of language and the second 'test' could give the chance for use and refine level.

From the above discussion, we came to know that TTT is student centered teaching technique in which learners learn language by doing by themselves. Getting insight from the above

mentioned literature, I have developed the following six points conceptual framework to use TTT in teaching English as a foreign language.

- Teacher administers a test
- Students first use their knowledge
- Teacher centers his target language lesson on the results of the first test.
- Students are made aware of their knowledge of the target language, filling the missing part of the TL then they are encouraged to practise it fully to understand it.
- Learners are given text and are asked to find out the solution. The teacher plans a lesson and facilitates them and involves them in more practice.
- Students are tested further which allows teacher to monitor and observe the target language used by the students . This stage can then be followed with delayed error-correction focusing on how students used the new language and highlighting the differences/improvements from the first test stage.

Methodology

The design of this study was experimental research design under quantitative inquiry. The data was collected only from primary sources as it aimed at finding out the effect of TTT method in EFL classes. The total population of the study was all the students studying bachelors' in Education (B.Ed.) first year, under Tribhuvan University. But it was difficult to carry out the research on total population due to some constrains. So, the researcher selected one of the public colleges and 42 B. Ed. first year students using purposive non-random sampling procedure. 42 students were divided into two groups: experimental and controlled groups. Each group consisted 21. The group division was made on the basis of odd and even number that were assigned through ranking system. All the students were following the same textbook, Eng. 411.

The tool for data collection was test items; pre-test and post-test (See Appendix A). Before experimenting the TTT method, a pre-test was administered in both groups and then the intervention was used in experimental group. After the four weeks of teaching, the post-test was administered in both groups. After the post-test, the findings of pre-test and post-test of both the groups were compared using a simple statistical tool, i.e., mean to see the effect of TTT method in EFL classes.

Results and Discussion

This study investigated the effects of TTT method in EFL classes. The collected data were analyzed, interpreted and discussed taking account of the following questions:

i.   Is there any difference between pre and post-test results of the experimental group in acquiring grammar, vocabulary and developing reading skill?
ii.   Is there any difference between the pre and post-test result of the controlled group all in acquiring grammar (reported speech),vocabulary (synonyms)and reading comprehension skill?
iii. Is there any difference between the experimental group and controlled group in developing grammar (reported speech), vocabulary (synonyms) and reading comprehension skills?

In order to examine the difference between the experimental group's pre-test and post-test result the descriptive statistics were calculated. Figure 1 shows the means of experimental group's pre-test and post-test.
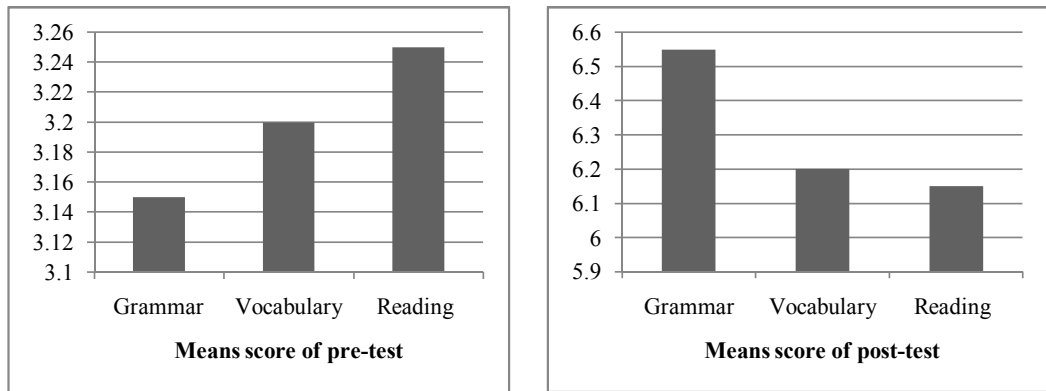

Figure 1: Means Score of Pre-test and Post-test of Experimental Group

Figure 1 shows that the mean of the post-test of the experimental group was significantly higher than its pre-test in each criterion of experiment. While the pre-test means of experimental group were 3.15 in grammar, 3.20 in vocabulary and 3.25 in reading comprehension, the post-test means were 6.55 in grammar, 6.20 in vocabulary and 6.15 in reading comprehension. The data reveals that there was significant difference in the score of pre-test and post-test. This shows that test-teach-test method remained effective in enhancing vocabulary (synonyms), grammar (reported speech) and reading skills (answering comprehensive questions) of the students.

In order to examine the difference between the controlled group's pre and post-test result, the descriptive statistics were calculated. Figure 2 shows the means of controlled group's pre and post-tests.
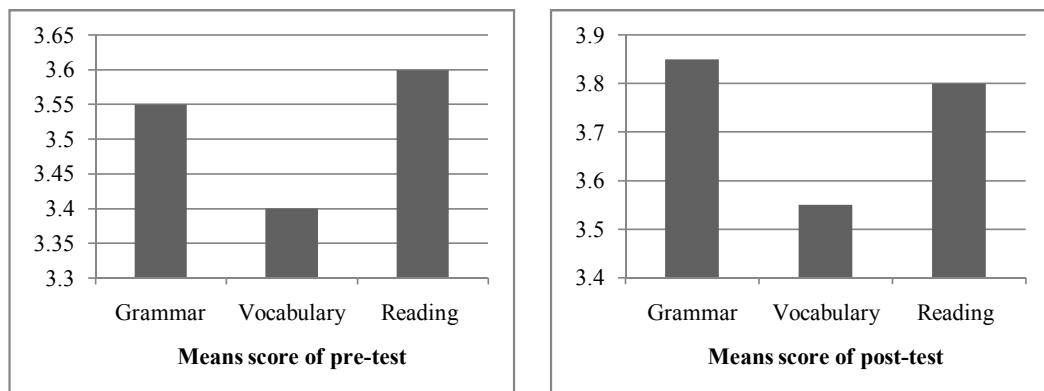
Figure 2: Means Score of Pre-test and Post-test of Controlled Group

The information presented in figure 2 shows that the post-test result of the controlled group is slightly higher than the result of pre-test of the group. While the pre-test means were 3.55 in grammar, 3.40 in vocabulary and 3.60 in reading comprehension, the post-test means were 3.85 in grammar, 3.55 in vocabulary and 3.80 in reading comprehension. The data reveal that the controlled group did not receive any particular training except their regular English classes in usual methods of teaching, but they progressed slightly in their performance.

As presented above, the experimental group made significant change in performance than the controlled group. Table 1 displays the overall comparison of both the groups in pre and post-tests.

Table 1: Overall Comparison of Both the Groups

	Pre-test			Post-test			Difference		
	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading
Experimental group	3.15	3.20	3.25	6.55	6.20	6.50	3.40	3.0	3.25
Controlled group	3.55	3.40	3.60	3.85	3.55	3.80	0.30	0.15	0.20

Table 1 shows that both the experimental and controlled groups have performed better during four weeks time. However, the performance of the experimental group was significantly better than of the controlled group. In grammar, controlled group increased its performance only 0.30 while the experimental did by 3.40. Similarly, in vocabulary, controlled group increased its performance by 0.15 while the experimental did by 3.0. Likewise, in reading comprehension, the controlled group increased by 0.20 whiles the experimental group by 3.25. The data on the whole reveals that the experimental group which was treated with test-teach-test method was

found developing vocabulary, grammar and reading skills significantly better than the students who were taught in regular manner.

Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of the data reveals that test-teach-test method remained effective in EFL classes in building vocabulary, grammatical and reading skills. The experimental group which was treated with test-teach-test method performed much better than the controlled group. The experimental group in post-test obtained 6.55, 6.20 and 6.50 in vocabulary, grammar and reading respectively making the differences of 3.40, 3.0 and 3.25 in each area compared to the result of pre-test. Similarly, controlled group obtained 3.85, 3.55 and 3.80 in grammar, vocabulary and reading respectively making the difference of 0.30, 0.15 and 0.20 in each area compared to the result of the pre-test. Similarly, a controlled group obtained 3.85, 3.55 and 3.80 in grammar, vocabulary and reading respectively making slight differences from the results of pre-test which are 0.30, 0.15, 0.20 in each area. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that language testing should be integrated with other activities in the classroom. Testing should not be considered as an isolated activity done at the end of teaching learning process, instead, it should be part of planning, teaching and testing. The findings of the study will be applicable to the students who have come fear of testing and the teachers who lack proper method for enhancing learner's learning ability and better performance. Further, it will be useful to the textbook writers, curriculum designers, language planners and policy makers in order to make testing as a part of teaching and plan accordingly.

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Appendix A
Test Items (Pre and Post tests)

1. Supply the two synonymous words to each of the following word.
   Dawn, detest, ensnare, assails, squat, clasp, plank, grapple, stare, condemn

2. Change the following forms in to indirect speech.   [10×1=10]
   a. "who is down?" asked John
   b. "I'll be arriving at six," Laura said
   c. "what are you building?" he asked.
   d. George said, "I'll finish my work on time."
   e. She said," the earth is round."
   f. She asked, "Do you want me to bring my guitar?"
   g. John said, "Open the door."
   h. Janet said to me, "Where have you been living?"
   i. My teacher said to me, "Don't worry about the exam."
   j. "You will be ready at three, I hope, won't you?"she said to me.

3.a. Read the following passage. Tick (√) the best answer.   [5×1=5]

   I was not born and raised to be a Kyoto geisha. I was not even born in Kyoto. I am a fisherman's daughter from a little town called Yoroido on the Sea of Japan. In all my life, I've never told more than a handful of people anything at all about yoroido, or about the house in which I grew up, or about my mother and father, or my older sister-and certainly not about how I became a geisha, or what it was like to be one. Most people would much rather carry on with their fantasies that my mother and grandmother were geisha, and that I began my training and dance when I was weaned from the breast, and pouring a cup of sake for a man who happened to mention that he had been in Yoroido only the previous week. Well, I felt as a bird must feel when it has flown across the ocean and comes upon a creature that knows its nest.

   1. Who is the narrator?
      a. a poet   b. a sport person
      c. a fisherman   d. a geisha
   2. How many people knew her story of how she became geisha?
      a. hundreds and hundreds   b. none
      c. people of the whole town   d. not more than a handful
   3. She felt as a bird because
      a. she heard about her parents   b. she knew the man very well
      c. she heard the name of her native town   d. she got a message from her sister

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4. Where is the narrator living now?
    a. Yoroido   b. Kyoto
    c. Minoru   d, Masao
5. Who was the man to whom she was pouring a cup of sake?
    a. her father   b. her employer
    c. her friend   d. her guest

b. Read the text carefully and answer the questions below.   [5×1=5]

Ivan Pablov(1849-1936), the Russian psychologist who won the Nobel prize in medicine in 1904 showed reflexes, animal reactions to stimuli could be predictably fixed, unconditioned by associations. For example , a dog salivates when it sees food and if bringing food is uniformly preceded by the ringing of bell, soon the dog will begin to associate the bell with the coming food and will be conditioned to salivate at the sound of the bell. This discovery of conditioning by association has turned out to perhaps the most significant finding of psychology is the direct base of the Gestalt and the behavioural branches of the field.

1. What did Pablov show in this experiment?
2. What does the word 'reflex' indicate in the text?
3. In the above mentioned experiment, at what time was the bell rung?
4. What made Pavlov's experiment with dog possible?
5. What message did Pablov give to the world?