The improvement of teaching and learning Pashto and Dari through Teacher Guidebook at primary school level in Afghanistan

ZAHID Zabihullah (Naruto University of Education, Graduate Student)

Keywords: Afghanistan Education System, Pashto and Dari languages, Teacher Guidebook

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Education System in Afghanistan
Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in South-Central Asia. The total population of Afghanistan in the year 2018 was estimated at around 37 million (World Bank, 2019). The country is divided into 34 provinces, and Kabul is the capital city.
The Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) take responsibility for the entire education system. The MoE is responsible for providing school-based education to the entire nation, while the MoHE provides and administrates higher education in the country.
According to the country’s constitution, education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the Bachelor level in the state educational institutes free of charge by the state (Afghanistan, 2004). There are four school levels: pre-school for nursery and kindergarten, a primary school for grades 1 to 6, a lower secondary school for grades 7 to 9, an upper secondary school for grades 10 to 12, and post-secondary for grades 13 to 14 (MoE, 2003).
Upper secondary education concludes with a national examination, on successful completion of which pupils are awarded a 12 Grade Graduation Certificate, formerly Baccalaureate Certificate. To gain admission to higher education, students are required to sit a national examination after having obtained the 12 Grade Graduation Certificate. If they pass the examination, students can gain admission to a specialization within a degree program, depending on their grades and own interests. The entrance examination is organized once each year. If students fail the examination, they may sit the examination a year later (MoE, 2008).

1.2 Pashto and Dari
There are more than 30 languages spoken in Afghanistan, while Pashto and Dari are the two official and national languages, which are most widely spoken (Jordan, 2015). According to the country’s education law, the language of teaching shall be selected from one of the two-state official
languages, based on the current language spoken by the majority of the population residing in the area, per its related rule (MoE, 2008).

Pashto as a national language makes the lyrics of the Afghan national anthem and is spoken as a native language in the East and South, while Dari is spoken as a native language in the North and West of Afghanistan and it is also a common language of communication in the capital city, Kabul. Both Pashto and Dari are written primarily with the Arabic alphabet. However, some modifications were made to account for sounds not found in Arabic (Qazi, 2018). According to the law, Afghans are free to choose their language of education. Primary and secondary educations are available in both Dari and Pashto, as well as in Afghanistan's other languages, such as Uzbek. However, in most Afghan universities, lessons are taught in Dari (Najibullah, 2003).

1.3 Pashto and Dari Textbooks and Teacher Guidebook
After the fall of the Taliban, in 2001, the country began reconstruction efforts, placing a strong emphasis on education. In the following year, the framework was put into effect, followed by the development of textbooks according to the framework. By June 2007, the primary school textbooks were almost completed in the two official languages, Dari and Pashto, with the technical and financial support of JICA (Tatto and Mincu, 2009). Meanwhile, the Teacher Guidebook (TGB) was introduced, for the first time in the education system.

The introduction of new school textbooks is one of the biggest changes that occurred in the Afghanistan education system in the last 15 years. The new textbooks are better than the old ones (Hedayatzai, 2013). They are based on modern knowledge, which makes them different than what was used before 2003. Pashto and Dari are part of these new textbooks, which have been taught in all three levels; primary level (1-6), lower secondary level (7-9), and upper secondary level (10-12). These two are being taught as a first and second language based on the native speakers' region in Afghanistan. Pashto and Dari textbooks are designed to improve students' language skills focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The TGB is designed as a lesson plan based on the active learning approach, which provides instruction for teachers on how to teach the lessons. It briefly explains the objectives of the lesson and indicates how to approach them by describing teaching methods, materials and students’ assessment for each lesson. The TGB for Pashto and Dari subjects is providing similar information on each lesson for the teachers.

1.4 Statement of the Problem
Learning Pashto and Dari languages in schools and educational institutions is compulsory (MoE, 2008). Based on the Afghanistan Educational Curriculum goals, national and foreign languages’ skills are placed in the first position to be achieved (MoE, 2003).
Though these two languages have been taught from grades 1 to 12, the report "Grade 6 proficiency in Afghanistan 2013" published by Australian Consult for Education Research (ACER) indicated "the native languages’ reading and writing skills are at a very low level, at public primary schools in Afghanistan." The research also claimed that 31% of 6th-grade students could not solve a simple math problem, 14% could not write a simple word, and 11% were unable to write a simple sentence. In this research, grade 6 students proved to perform equal to or lower than students in grade 4 in neighboring countries (Lumley et al., 2015).

1.5 Research Objectives and Questions
This research aims to improve primary school students’ Pashto and Dari language skills and teachers' teaching abilities at the primary level by using Teacher Guidebook (TGB) in Afghanistan. Thus, field research was conducted to assess the effectiveness of TGB while teaching students in grade 5. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions are posed:
1. What is the current situation of teaching and learning Pashto and Dari languages at primary schools in Afghanistan?
2. What kind of factors affects students' low levels in reading and writing (Pashto and Dari)?
3. Can the Teacher Guidebook help teachers to conduct better teaching Pashto and Dari at primary school?

2. Methodology and Data collection
2.1 Sampling, Research Area, Data Collection Tools and Method
In this research, 260 Fifth grade students and 100 primary schools’ language teachers of both Pashto language and Dari language took part and the selection was done through a random sampling method and was done in the capital city of Afghanistan, Kabul. Questionnaires, interviews, class observation, pre/post-tests, and experimental lessons were used for data collection. The questionnaire was administrated to 100 of grade 5 students (50 male and 50 female) and 100 primary schools’ Pashto and Dari language Teachers (56 male and 44 female). The experimental lessons were carried out in two schools (Pashto language and Dari language) with 160 of grade 5 students. Two classes were chosen per each school, one as an experimental class and another as a control class, and the selection was made randomly. Three lessons were developed and taught to the experimental classes using the Teacher Guidebook, and all the lessons were taught by myself, the researcher. The control classes, however, were taught straight from the textbook by the schools' language teachers using the usual way of teaching.

2.2 Pre/Post-Tests and Experimental Lessons
Based on the primary data findings, model lessons were designed with pre/post-tests. The pretest consisted of six questions for Dari language school and five questions for Pashto language school.
After that, three model lessons were conducted in both schools following a post-test, consisting of similar questions as a pretest with some verbal differences.

The control classes were taught by both the Pashto and Dari language schools’ language teachers following their usual method and using only the student textbook as the source of teaching materials in the class. The same contents as control classes were taught in both the Pashto and Dari experimental classes. These classes' interventions were based on Teacher Guidebook (TGB).

Teaching materials for all three lessons in both classes were prepared based on TGB instruction and consisted of flashcards, charts, and blank papers for group activities. All lessons were divided into four parts and structured according to the framework given in Table 1.

Table 1: Lesson sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part one</th>
<th>Part two</th>
<th>Part three</th>
<th>Part four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Individual skills</td>
<td>Presentation and</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair work</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.1 Questionnaire and Observation Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire and class observation were conducted, to find out the current situation of teaching and learning of Pashto and Dari languages.

3.1.1 Teachers’ responses regarding classroom teaching:

![Figure 1: Teachers' responses to the classroom teaching](image)

As displayed in Figure 1, only 14 out of 100 teachers said that they always use Teacher Guidebook (TGB), while 35 of them stated they never use TGB. But during the class observation, no one of the teachers used TGB. In the case of a lesson plan, 91 of them responded that they always prepare their daily lesson plan; however, during the class observation, only 3 out of 6 teachers had their
lesson plan. Regarding homework, 92 out of 100 teachers said they always give homework to the students at the end of each lesson. This was found to be true during the class observation. In terms of feedback on homework, 57 teachers replied that feedback is always given on students' homework. But during the class observation, it was found that teachers only see whether the students have done the homework or not rather than looking for the errors or mistakes committed by the students.

3.1.2 Teacher response on their access and training to TGB

As shown in Figure 2, 65 of 100 teachers said they have access to TGB, and 35 of them stated they do not have access to TGB. While during the class observation, no one used the TGB. On the other hand, 48 teachers stated they had seen training on how to use TGB, but a very big proportion of the participants, 52 out of 100, said they had not been trained on how to use TGB.

3.1.3 Teachers’ and students’ responses about the current teaching materials

According to the current classroom teaching materials, as illustrated in Figure 3, all the teachers said they are using textbooks and board, and 70 of them said they are also using charts, while 35 of them replied that they are using flashcards as well. On the other hand, Students’ responses indicate that teachers are only using textbooks and blackboards as their teaching resources in the classroom.
This was also noticed that teachers did not use any teaching materials except textbooks and board during the class observation.

### 3.1.4 Most difficult skill for teachers to teach and students to learn

When teachers and students were asked about the most difficult language skill for them to teach and learn. The majority of teachers and students said that reading and writing are the most difficult skills for them to teach and learn. Following that, some of them said that understanding the context is also a challenge, but regarding speaking skills, it seems to be a challenge for a small number of teachers and students in the classroom.

### 3.1.5 Challenges facing by teachers during teaching language subjects

As shown in the Figure above, 60 out of 100 teachers said that a large number of students is a huge challenge for them while teaching the class. 54 also mentioned that teaching other subjects besides the main subject is another problem, following that 44 of them replied that lack of textbooks is also problematic for them, and 19 said that teaching materials, which they hardly able to prepare. In addition, 5 of them mentioned the time shortage as another problem that prevents them from conducting any class activities that need time.
3.2 Pretest results

The pretest was conducted in both Pashto and Dari language classes before the intervention lessons with respect to the Experimental Class (EC) and Control Class (CC) groups. Figures 6 and 7 show the overall performance on the pretest items from the two groups.

Figure 6: Pashto-Pretest overall performance

According to the Pashto-pretest results displayed in Figure 6, the overall performance was poor for the total respondents, and the accuracy rate for most items was less than 50%. The only higher accuracy rates of 70% (CC) and 73% (EC) were observed in item ‘A’ Identification of Antonym and Homograph words. Otherwise, the other four items (B, C, D, and E) were poorly performed by the participants. They performed very poorly in word recognition and spelling, for instance, for Item 'B,' which concerns the meaning and using the words in complete sentences, the accuracy rate for the CC was 44%, while EC had 39%. Also, item 'C,' which is the formation of a sentence from disordered words, 41% were correct from CC whilst EC had 49%. Following that, item 'D,' which is a writing section (spelling) was also difficult for the respondents in the pretest. Though CC had an accuracy rate of 43% in item 'D,' others were 46%. Finally, in item 'E,' the accuracy rate for both CC and EC was 49%.

Figure 7: Dari-pretest overall performance

According to the Dari-pretest results displayed in Figure 7, the overall performance was good from the total respondents. The only lower accuracy rates of 16% (CC) and 18% (EC) were observed in
item ‘B’ (identification of verbs in a text), which was the main objective of the lesson. Similar to that, participants also performed poorly in item ‘A’ (identification of verbs’ form in a sentence) where the accuracy rate for the CC was 43% while EC had 48%. Else, the other four items (C, D, E, and F) were performed well by the participants, and the accuracy rate was around 60% (48%-69%).

3.3 Post-test results
A post-test was conducted in both Pashto and Dari language classes after the three regular lessons with respect to the Control Class (without intervention) and Experimental Class (with intervention). Figure 8 and 9 show the overall performance on the post-test items from the two groups.

Figure 8: Pashto post-test overall performance
As illustrated in Figure 8, the Pashto post-test overall performance from both the CC and EC participants improved greatly on the post-test after receiving the three respective lessons. As observed in the pretest results, item 'A' was again done well in the post-test with a much higher accuracy rate of 84% (EC) and 73% (CC). For question items, B, C, D, and E, CC had an accuracy rate of 48%, 58%, 49%, and 58% respectively, whereas the EC maintained an accuracy rate of 68%, 78%, 60%, and 69%. Although improvement was seen, items B and D for CC participants and item D for EC participants were still challenging as there was a slight increase in the total accuracy rate compared to other items. In general, the experimental respondents demonstrated a much higher accuracy rate than the control group for all five items.

Figure 9: Dari Post-test overall performance
According to the Dari post-test results displayed in Figure 9, after receiving the three respective lessons, the overall performance from both the CC and EC participants improved significantly on the post-test. As observed in the pretest results, item A, C, D, E, and F were done very well in the post-test with much higher accuracy rate of 45%, 65%, 51%, 68%, and 72% (CC) and 55%, 76%, 63%, 75% and 73% (EC). Item B was still very challenging for CC with an accuracy rate of 18%, while EC had a significant improvement in item B with an accuracy rate of 57%. Overall, comparing the two classes’ results, it’s clearly visible that the experimental respondents demonstrated a much higher accuracy rate than the control group for all six items.

### 3.4 Pre/Post-test Average Score

Figures 10 and 11 show the pre/post-test averages with respect to the CC and EC sample respondents’ performance for both the Pashto and Dari classes.

**Figure 10: Pashto pre/post-test average score**

As displayed in Figure 10, both classes increased their means considerably from an approximate of 8 to 9.9 for the CC and 12.3 for EC. This indicates that the students have gained knowledge regarding new vocabulary and grammar during the three lessons. However, the EC showed more significant improvement with an average of 12.3 in contrast with CC with an average of 9.9. This proves that the three intervention lessons taught in the EC have an optimum chance for the students to get better results in language skills.

**Figure 11: Dari pre/post-test average score**
According to Dari pre/post-test average scores displayed in Figure 11, both classes increased their means considerably from 8.7 to 9.6 for the CC and from 9.2 to 12 for EC. This indicates that students from both groups improved their language skills on the post-test. However, students who received the intervention lessons showed much more improvement with an average score of 12, while the students who received the regular lessons had an average score of only 9.9 in the post-test.

3.5 Statistical Analysis

The pre/post-tests were statistically analyzed using the MS Excel software to find the significance at 0.05 confidence interval for the two-tail test and to see how students performed with the use of TGB in both the Pashto langue and Dari language. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the P-Value is less than 0.05 in both Pashto language class and Dari language class, which revealed a statistically significant effect of TGB.

Table 2: P-Value for the CC and EC groups in the Pashto Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pashto language school</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>Pretest Average</th>
<th>Post-test Average</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>P-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.005&lt; 0.05</td>
<td>significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: P-Value for the CC and EC groups in Dari Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dari language school</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>Pretest Average</th>
<th>Post-test Average</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>P-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.007&lt; 0.05</td>
<td>significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 The Current Pashto and Dari Languages Teaching Situation

The main purpose of this study was to highlight the current situation of teaching and learning native languages and to examine the effectiveness of the Teacher Guidebook in improving teachers’ teaching abilities and students’ language skills at the primary level in Afghanistan. The study was successfully carried out in 6 different primary schools in the Capital city, Kabul. It was based on questionnaires, interviews, class observation pre/post-test, and experimental lessons.
The findings show that the majority of the language teachers follow the teacher-centered approach in the classroom. Textbooks and blackboards are used as the main teaching material for the teachers. Besides that, during the class observation, it was found that teachers do not conduct any other class activities rather than reading the book themselves first and then asked the students to read, while language learning requires practical teaching practices. At the end of each lesson, teachers give plenty of homework to the students. In terms of giving feedback on homework, they hardly ever provide feedback. Teachers only see whether students have done it or not rather than looking for the errors or mistakes committed by the students. However, as shown in Figure 1, 57% of the teachers stated that they give feedback on the homework.

Moreover, primary school teachers in Afghanistan hardly use TGB as their teaching resource. There are 3 main reasons behind the issue. First, as shown in Figure 2, 35 out of 100 primary school teachers do not have access to these books. Second, the most important one is a lack of knowledge about how to use them. As mentioned earlier in chapter four, 52 out of 100 teachers who responded to the questionnaire said they had not seen any training relevant to TGB. Third, lack of regular assessment which can play an important role in pushing teachers to follow the teaching methods and provide the simple sub-teaching materials based on TGB. It was also found that a number of the language teachers are not native speakers or not majored in the language. Likewise, some of the students are attending the schools based on the language other than their native language.

4.2 The Effectiveness of Intervention Lessons

The study examined the effects of Teacher Guidebook based instruction in improving students’ language skills. The TGB sequence of instruction guided the development of each interventional lesson for fifth-grade students and compared their performance to a control group, which received instruction on the same lesson content, but it was based on a teaching-centered approach, which is a usual teaching approach in Afghanistan. The pretest overall performance was generally poor according to the results obtained in both Pashto and Dari classes respectively, while in the post-test, both the CC and EC groups demonstrated some form of understanding language skills after receiving the three regular and interventional lessons respectively, with considering the fact that improving language skills are quite difficult in only three lessons.

The quantitative results showed satisfactory improvement from both groups, increasing the accuracy rate from the pretest. In the case of Pashto language class, the CC group increased from pretest average of 8.6 to post-test average of 9.9, whereas the EC group increased from pretest average of 8.9 to post-test average score of 12.3. Likewise, in the case of the Dari language class, the CC group increased from pretest average of 8.7 to post-test average of 9.6 while the EC group increased from pretest average of 9.2 to post-test average score of 12. Hence, both experimental
groups who received interventional instruction proved to have a much higher accuracy rate over the control group in all the question items.

Similarly, descriptive analysis claimed a strong significant of the experimental groups for both the Pashto language and Dari language with the value of $\rho = 0.005 < 0.05$ in favor of the Pashto class and the value of $\rho = 0.007 < 0.05$ in favor of Dari class. Therefore, statistically, both Pashto and Dari experimental groups showed much better performance than the control groups. This may perhaps show that the interventions (TGB based teaching methods) used to the EC groups were more useful for improving students’ native language skills at the primary level in Afghanistan.

In addition, the pre/post-test qualitative analysis showed that both CC and EC groups had improvement in all the items targeting students’ Pashto and Dari language skills; however, CC groups had lower improvement. On the other hand, EC groups continued their record of improvement rate reducing the high rate of incorrect answers recorded in the pretests. Therefore, students in the EC groups revealed a greater level of language skills than their peers in the CC groups.

To conclude, all the TGB based intervention lessons were proved more useful to developed students’ language skills. Those who received the interventional instruction improved more by showing a greater understanding over the control group in different aspects of language skills.

4.3 Recommendation

Based on the positive results proven by this research, using the Teacher Guidebook (TGB) to teach native languages (Pashto and Dari), the following recommendations are crucial to help improve the students’ language and teachers’ teaching skills at primary level in Afghanistan.

Firstly, TGB provides brief and proper instruction for teachers on how to teach the lessons and clearly indicates how to achieve the objective of the lesson. Therefore, teachers are strongly recommended to use TGB as their main instruction tool. Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Ministry of Education (MoE) should provide teachers’ access to these books.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the TGB is a new tool in Afghanistin Educational History; for that reason, MoE should provide numerous training and workshops on how to use these books. Following that, the General Directorate of Academic Supervision should run regular assessment and class observations to make sure that teachers are frequently using TGB as their instruction tool. Moreover, as the curriculum has undergone several changes in the past ten years, MoE should update the current TGBs for better results.

Finally, it is recommended that there is a need for more extensive period research with a huge sample size to thoroughly evaluate the efficiency of the Teacher Guidebook in the teaching of all the school subjects at the primary level.
4.4 Conclusion
The success of teaching and learning is likely to be strongly influenced by the resources made available to support the process and the direct ways in which these resources are managed. It is obvious that schools without teachers, textbooks, or learning materials will not be able to do an effective job (UNESCO, 2004).

The current student-textbook is designed based on modern knowledge with an active teaching approach that strongly requires sub-teaching materials and student-centered activities. Therefore, TGB as an instruction tool can better support teachers to apply these activities properly and improve their teaching abilities/strategies and increase students learning achievement.

To conclude, the research was a success in proving that by implementing the TGB based teaching approach into teaching Pashto and Dari languages, the students can achieve good results by understanding the conceptual meaning behind the letters and sentences rather than memorizing them. Moreover, TGB based simple teaching materials can strongly keep students active and increase their interest in learning the lessons.

REFERENCES
Abstract

Pashto and Dari are two national and official languages in Afghanistan and is used as a medium of instruction. According to the Afghanistan Education Curriculum goals, national and Foreign languages' skills are placed in the first position to be achieved. Though these two languages have been taught from grades 1 to 12, recent research finding shows that; the native languages’ reading and writing skills are at a very low level at public primary schools. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to highlight the current situation and issues of teaching and learning native languages and look for the effectiveness of the Teacher Guidebook in improving primary school students’ native language skills and teachers’ teaching abilities in Afghanistan. The study includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and is based on questionnaires, interviews, observations, pre/post-tests, and experimental lessons. The questionnaire was administrated to 100 fifth-grade students (50 male and 50 female) and 100 primary schools’ Pashto and Dari language Teachers (56 male and 44 female) and was done in two types of schools: Pashto-Language school and Dari-Language school. The experimental lessons were carried out in two schools with a population of 160 fifth-grade students. The questionnaire analysis shows that many of the language teachers do not use the Teacher Guidebook for their daily teaching activities, and some do not have access to them. Also, 48 percent of teachers have not been benefited from any training on how to use the Teacher Guidebook. After the questionnaire survey, three model lessons were conducted in grade five to analyze how efficient is the Teacher Guidebook-based teaching to improve the students' language knowledge and skills. The analysis for the test after the intervention showed that the experimental group had a more significant improvement than the control group, especially in item no.2, which was the main objective of the lesson for the Dari class. To conclude, Teacher Guidebook-based teaching can help both teachers and students to better teach and learn language skills at primary schools. Besides that, Teachers need regular training and monitoring to make sure whether they are applying Teacher Guidebook-based teaching or not.