

The Effect of A Suggested Metacomprehension Based Strategy in Enhancing EFL Critical Reading Skills and Reading Preferences of Secondary Stage Students.

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Abstract

The current study was conducting to investigate the effect of suggested metacomprehension based strategy on enhancing some EFL critical reading skills and reading preferences of secondary stage students from Gamal Abdel Naser Secondary School for Girls in the academic year 2021/2022. They were equally divided into experimental and control groups. The researcher adopted the quasi-experimental design where the experimental group received instruction using the suggested metacomprehension strategy to enhance their critical reading skills and reading preferences. On the other hand, students in the control group received their regular instruction. The instruments of the study included a critical reading test and a reading preferences questionnaire. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group (taught through the suggested metacomprehension based strategy) and the control group on the post administration of both the critical reading test and the reading preferences questionnaire favoring the experimental group .

Keywords: Critical reading skills-Reading preference-the suggested metacomprehension based strategy.

Introduction

Reading expounds the ability for processing texts, grasping meanings, and assimilating with what readers already know. Also, knowing the meanings of words and sentences of a specific discourse context, identifying passages, antecedents and references, abilities to inferences from passages about its contents and recognizing main thoughts and ideas of a passage.

Reading comprehension is one of the essential study skills. Academic and even technical courses demand substantial readings, so there is a need for students to be able to comprehend what they read in order to succeed in their academic life and beyond (Entwistle & Ramsden, 2015).

Critical reading as a pointer of critical thinking has become operative in living a viable life. In academic contexts, many students are not yet knowledgeable to read critically. Furthermore, critical reading skills may impact learner's completely academic progress (Wilson, 2016).

Critical reading involves learners' energetic practices to think deeply by situating numerous skills. Mainly, critical reading activities are practiced to *“state the main ideas of a selection, determine a conclusion, connect the information, conjecture its*

purpose, analyze the arguments, find different points of view, and evaluate ideas” (Flemming, 2012).

Subsequently, a critical reader needs the capacity to outline arguments accurately from the text, categorize claims, discover stated or indirect assumptions, analyze and evaluate the accurateness of the reasoning that sustains a specific thesis statement, and explain and evaluate the aim or consequence of utilizing particular facts or sources of information. Equally, important, critical readers collect evidences to test mistaken assumptions and evaluate them through a specific criteria for assessing its quality (Barnet & Bedau, 2011).

Critical reading is seen as an actualization of critical thinking processes, it helps to establish a mental process directed to make decisions, solve problems, analyze, persuade and evaluate ideas methodically. Furthermore, it is realized through careful decisions and evaluations to state errors, truth, strengths or weaknesses of a script (Johnson, 2007, p. 183).

Critical reading makes readers more dynamic in getting meanings of the writers’ aim via evaluating his viewpoints, aims and assumptions. Finally, critical readers can judge whether to follow, reject, believe, or trust, the view or ideas inserted by the authors (Freire, 2018).

Critical reading skills are modified from the critical thinking taxonomies. These skills comprise six stages such as; “*interpretation skills, analysis skills, inference skills, evaluation skills, explanation skills, and self-regulation skills*”. (Facione, 2013, pp.s 5-7).

For teaching critical reading skills, teachers must have information in texts, utilize appropriate strategies, and preparations of functional learning and teaching process, and contextually they should state critical reading skills themselves. (Unal & Sever, 2013, pp. 9). With this aim, Greiff, Niepel & Wustenberg (2015) decided that readers have no ability to classify the writer’s purpose and they need to recognize and determine them precisely.

Findings of previous studies have yielded that critical reading skills are challenging to be mastered. Puteh, Zin & Ismail (2016) revealed that the learners’ capacity to evaluate and reflect a script was inferior to their capacity to retrieve, access, integrate and interpret. This shortage of skills designates that the learners struggled to understand scripts at a higher level. In the same thought, findings by Karadag (2014) exposed that pre-service elementary school teachers believed that they were not critical readers with any confidence to comment that they could master critical reading skills.

Mohd Zin, Wong and Rafik-Galea (2014) examined the level of CRS among tertiary students specifically in the areas of analysis, evaluation and understanding.

Metacognitive strategies are divided into three components: planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Ku & Ho, 2010) planning includes advance organizers, functional planning, directed attention, selective attention, and self-management. The functional planning and self-management were done before teaching the grammatical points.

The instructor asked participants to do the followings at their home:

- 1- To think about the new structures and features in texts and sentences,
- 2- To find the known structures via thinking,
- 3- To think about the relationship between new and old structures, and
- 4- To think about the ways the sentence may be organized. The monitoring engaged the learners' minds before and during teaching. According to Zhang (2020), self-monitoring is the process of "*correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or for appropriateness related to the setting to the people who are present*". Therefore, the instructor encouraged the learners:

- 1- To use their findings in sentences.
- 2-To monitor their comprehension by themselves (self-monitoring) via thinking aloud; that is to express and reflect what was happening in their minds through engaging with the problem,
- 3- To ask themselves “*Do I understand the grammatical points of the sentences?*” 4- To get connections,
- 5- To make predictions,
- 6- To make inferences, and
- 7- To discover what part of the sentence prevents them from understanding? Evaluation was carried out during and after teaching the grammatical points (Muhid, Amalia, Hilaliyah, Budiana & Wajdi, 2020) in the following manner:

- 1-The instructor teaches the grammatical points in the classroom.
- 2- Students evaluate their findings (self-evaluating).
- 3- Learners ask themselves how well did they understand?
- 4- What strategies worked well for us? e.g., thinking before teaching, monitoring and thinking aloud or evaluating the findings after teaching the grammatical points, and etc.
- 5- What strategies did not work well for us?
- 6- Do we need some help for the next time?

One of the main struggles that students face in trying to develop an understanding of metacognition and ways to develop strategies that positively impact themselves is an overall lack of awareness to their own learning process. Students, even at a rudimentary level, have some basic understanding of their own knowledge and thinking.

The goal of metacognitive strategies is to teach students how to state objectives and be effective and independent was emphasized by Baker (2002). Metacognitive strategies are related to how we think and learn including three skill techniques: planning, monitoring and evaluation. At the beginning of reading assignment, students must be informed on how to use their planning, monitoring and evaluation skills. It is of great importance to improve the questioning skills of students in the process of teaching metacognitive strategies. Studies on metacognition and reading comprehension reveal the strong relation between the uses of strategies, awareness and reading comprehension (Baker & Beall, 2009).

Metacognition basically denotes to thinking about thinking. According to Iwai (2011), metacognition involves one's knowledge about his thinking processes and products, active monitoring, and regulation of cognitive processing activities. It is categorized into four components:

1- The metacognitive knowledge refers to the person's awareness or perceptions about factors such as; person, task, strategy and influence cognitive activities.

2- The metacognitive experiences refer to the individual's mental or emotional responses pertaining to any cognitive activity;

3- The goals/tasks which refer to the purpose or objective of any cognitive undertaking; and

4- The actions/strategies which refer to activities carried out by learners to fulfill their purpose or metacognitive objectives. It has three main aspects: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive monitoring, and self-regulation and control (Pintrich, Wolters & Baxter, 2000) and is viewed in two dimensions:

1- The knowledge of cognition which is made up of three factors such as declarative knowledge (abilities and characteristics that affect cognitive processing), procedural knowledge (using or implementing strategies), and conditional knowledge (assessment and reflection on the effectiveness of the strategies used) and

2- The regulation of cognition which comprises planning, monitoring, testing, revising, and evaluating strategies used (Iwai, 2011).

In fulfilling a task using metacognition, a learner plans and activates, then monitors, controls, reacts, and reflects (Pintrich, Wolters, & Baxter, 2000).

Iwai (2011) summarizes the process of metacognition in three steps: 1) Planning; 2) Monitoring; and 3) Evaluation. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness plays an important role in reading comprehension and educational process (Ditzel, 2010; Mytcowicz, Goss, & Steinberg, 2014; Ahmadi, Ismail, & Abdulla, 2013).

Sen (2009) also conducted a similar study in Turkey and revealed that metacognitive reading strategies are potential in developing effective and successful readers.

Metacomprehension which is typically defined as the ability to judge one's own learning or comprehension of text material (Dunlosky & Lipko, 2007; Maki & Berry, 1984).

Metacomprehension accuracy has been measured using several different measures. Each one provides insights into different aspects of metacomprehension, and in general, these measures may be assigned to either absolute accuracy or relative accuracy (Maki, Shields, Wheeler, & Zacchilli, 2005; Schraw, 2009).

Metacomprehension, therefore, can be defined as the reader's ability to monitor the degree to which he/she understands

information being communicated to him/her, to recognise failures to comprehend, and to employ repair strategies when failures are identified.

(Kintsch, 1998; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978), stated that a reader's comprehension of text involves the construction of an internal representation of the information presented in the text and the subsequent integration of this information with existing knowledge. metacomprehension. through rote-memorisation, drilling or one-way instruction from the teacher, but requires interaction between the teacher and learners (Cohen & Weaver, 2006; Yu-Fen, 2002).

Metacomprehension strategies help teachers to teach young students to use this same reading comprehension strategy as well. Predicting helps keep the reader's mind engaged and activated as he or she works through a text. When students actively predict while reading, they stay connected to the text and can reflect upon, refine, and revise their predictions.

Summarizing builds comprehension by helping to reduce confusion. Teachers train students to process the information they read with the goal of breaking down content into succinct pieces. This strategy can be used with the whole class, small groups, or as an individual assignment. Summarizing text by using writing

activities builds on prior knowledge, helps improve writing, and strengthens vocabulary skill.

Also Questioning strategy is important to teach to students to help them engage with the text. It helps the reader to clarify what he or she is reading and to better understand the text. Asking good questions is a way for students to monitor their own comprehension while reading. asking questions will provide students with a purpose for reading. As they read, students will seek answers to their questions for deeper meaning of the text.

The goal of metacognitive strategies is to teach students how to state objectives and be effective and independent was emphasized by Baker (2002). Metacognitive strategies are related to how we think and learn including three skill techniques: planning, monitoring and evaluation. At the beginning of reading assignment, students must be informed on how to use their planning, monitoring and evaluation skills. It is of great importance to improve the questioning skills of students in the process of teaching metacognitive strategies. Studies on metacognition and reading comprehension reveal the strong relation between the uses of strategies, awareness and reading comprehension (Baker & Beall, 2009).

Reading preferences in recent years, which more highlight has been given to the role of the learners in the language learning

development considering that language learning is principally learners' oriented activities. Furthermore, learners' interests and needs should be taken into account for operative language learning and teaching to take place. One significant field where learners' preferences impact their learning can be viewed in reading. In academic or higher learning contexts, reading is supposed as a prominent academic language skill for all second and foreign language learners, through reading learners get new information and can synthesize, evaluate and interpret to learn more about their subject matters (Noorizah, 2011).

Reading interest or preferences appeared to be dissimilar with different age levels. Mellon (1990) surveyed the leisure reading options of rural teenagers and discovered that their reasons for leisure reading were for acquiring information and entertainment. Newspapers and magazines were found to be the most preferred reading topics of teenagers. Also, it has also been exposed that informational reading was the main purpose for grown-up reading and their most popular books were; social problems, novels, adventure, politics, crime and sports.

Platt (1986) reviewed many selected studies on reading preferences of adolescents, and concluded that adolescents do read

extensively in books, newspapers and periodicals. Graduate and undergraduate learners' reading behaviors are slightly varied.

When students are asked to read a topic of the book or to present a relevant issue, oftentimes, they do not go beyond what is required. They only read what they prefer to read. In Arzubiaga, Rueda, and Monzó (2002), understanding of how people become literate is always being revised in an effort to appreciate the process in all its complexity. One study of library behavior indicated however that most sophisticated students scanned or read parts of the book as they make decisions about what to read. These students seemed to select or refuse a reading material based on personal preference on an emotional response. In college, reading materials become more abstract and comprehend a larger, more technical vocabulary. At this phase, the students must not only obtain new information but must also critically scrutinize the text and accomplish an optimal reading rate based on the struggle of the material and the purpose of reading.

It is observable that many students nowadays do not read extensively (making use of varied reading materials) and intensively (analyzing the content of the material) topics that are assigned to them for class interaction, rather they resort to asking from peers to share with them what the latter has read. Some have become

contented with one reading material, others resort to simply reproduce what they encounter in some reading materials (Bean, 2011).

The students' reading preferences were also examined for determining the reader profiles among the participant students (Ogeyik & Akway, 2009). College student's refinement in reading is already anticipated by the teachers. Thus, it supposed right to consider that they are already furnished with the necessary knowledge scripts, structures and cognitive framework for comprehending texts in the content areas of mathematics, social studies, science, literature arts and music as they were suitably taught by their teachers.

Students have already settled their reading power and are directed in the selection of reading materials. Reading is generally accepted as a means for reaching new information and assumed to be reliable with the comprehension capabilities of individuals' Reading engagement, as such, is understood as a socially-mediated event. In another context, connections between social contexts and differential motivation were examined and access to books implies that teachers should invite children to read by raising interest and curiosity about books and other materials (Gambrell, Hughes, Calvert, Malloy & Igo, 2011).

The daily family practices in which children participate may affect their access to school-based literacy activities; their notions of engagement and the organization of literacy practices; their appreciation of and interest in reading; and their idea of what counts as meaningful literacy (Burnett, 2010).

Context of the Problem

For pinpointing the problem, it can be spoken up that many studies have been executed in the area of critical reading such as; Solyman (1999) who concluded that students' critical reading is poor. On Al-Azhar third year preparatory institute students, Abd El Barry (2012) and Hamed (2016), in his study, asserted that students' critical reading comprehension skills was weak and needed to be improved by adopting web_based techniques in enhancing reading comprehension levels. Confirming the same thought of carrying out this study, critical reading skills and reading preferences need to be enhanced as secondary school students donot master them even they are so effective.

The Problem

As for the significance of EFL critical reading skills, secondary satge students are weak in manipulating these areas and make progress in practicing them. So, utilizing a meta cognitive

strategy may have a positive effect on developing critical reading skills and critical reading preference.

Pilot Study

Results of Critical Reading Skills Pilot Test

- 1- Identifying the main idea (40%).
- 2- Stating specified details (25%).
- 3- Interpreting a word or phrase according to the context (18%).
- 4- Judging facts or opinions (35%).
- 5- Determining the meaning of unfamiliar words (30%).

It is obvious that EFL secondary stage students are weak in critical reading skills as their grades are below 50% in the stated area.

Students' preference towards critical reading needs to be probed as well. So utilizing a meta cognitive strategy may be a remedy for developing these fields.

Questions

More specifically, the study will address the following main question:

How can a meta cognitive strategy enhance EFL critical reading skills and secondary stage students preference?

This main question will be sub-divided into the following questions:

1-What are the critical reading kills needed for secondary stage students?

2- To what extent do secondary stage students gain critical reading kills?

3-What is the current level of secondary stage students preference towards critical reading?

4-How far can the meta cognitive strategy enhance secondary stage students' critical reading skills?

5-How far can the meta cognitive strategy enhance secondary stage students' preference towards critical reading?

Instruments

The following instruments will be used to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1-A critical reading skills checklist.

2- A critical reading skills test.

3- A preference towards critical reading skills checklist.

4- A preference scale towards critical skills.

Purpose

This study will make use of the meta cognitive strategy to enhance EFL critical reading skills and preference towards critical reading skills of secondary stage students.

Significance

Confidently the study will be significant as:

- 1-Implementing the strategy may advantage secondary stage students in developing these field areas.
- 2-Providing effective information that will be valuable for teaching EFL critical reading skills and preference towards critical reading skills.

Delimitations

This study will be delimited to:

- 1-EFL critical reading skills test approved by the jury members.
- 2-A preference scale towards critical reading skills.
- 3-A group of EFL secondary stage students.
- 4-The academic year/.....

Hypotheses:

On the foundation of the theoretical background above-mentioned provided, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

1-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental study in the pre and post administration of the critical reading skills test, favoring the post administration.

2-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental study in the pre and post administration of the preference scale towards critical reading skills, favoring the post administration.

Procedures

For answering questions of the study, the following procedures will be traced;

1- Reviewing the literature related to variables of the study.

2- Building up instruments of the study such as; a checklist of critical reading skills and preference towards critical reading checklist, then presenting them to a group of jurors to justify them.

3- Designing tests of the study and delivering them to a group of jurors for validation and suitability.

- 4- Selecting participants of the study and dividing them into two groups (experimental and control).
- 5- Pre-administering of the tests to the study instruments to both groups.
- 6- Developing the specified materials via a meta cognitive strategy on the surveyed literature and previous studies
- 7- Scheming the teacher's guide.
- 8- Administration of the teaching materials to the experimental group, while the control is taught by the regular method.
- 9- Post-administering to the study instruments to both groups.
- 10- Comparing the results of the two groups and analyzing the data statistically.
- 11- Discussing and interpreting the results and providing a conclusion and recommendations.

Definition of Terms

Metacognition is “*an appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it requires, combined with the ability to make correct inferences about how to apply one’s strategic knowledge to a*

particular situation, and to do so efficiently and reliably” (Peirce, 2003, p. 2)

Operational definition of the metacognitive strategy: Utilizing a meta cognitive strategy with its main components such as; planning, monitoring and evaluation to develop EFL critical reading skills and preference towards critical reading skills of the first year secondary stage students and assessing the former with a critical reading test and the latter with a scale towards critical reading.

Reading Preference is an expressed attitude toward seeking and selecting certain types of reading content under hypothetical conditions (Getzel, 1966).

Operational definition Reading Preference: It is the learner’s personal preference regarding whether he prefers to read or just practices reading the script.

Critical reading comprehension means: *“proposing judgments via reading and questioning about what is being read according to a pre-prepared standard” (Seyler, 2000).*

Critical reading can be defined operationally as practicing proposing judgments of secondary stage students via a meta cognitive strategy.

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