A Schema-Learning Based Program to Develop Al-Azhar Secondary Stage Students' EFL Creative Reading Skills.

A proposal submitted

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of a schema-learning based program on developing EFL Al-Azhar secondary Stage Students' creative reading skills. The study participants were sixty (60) 2nd year secondary Al -Azhar students from Awlad Zaid Religious Institute, Al -Ibrahimia department, Sharkia governorate, Egypt. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design. So, there were two groups: an experimental group (n= 30) and a control one (n= 30). To collect data, the researcher designed multiple instruments: creative reading skills checklists, pre- posttests of creative reading skills. The experimental group was taught through the schema-learning based program while the control group was taught by the regular instruction. The results of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in creative reading skills in favor of the experimental group. The effect size of using the schema-learning based program was found to be high. The study recommended using the program as a program in teaching EFL skills and as a training approach in professional development programs of EFL teachers.

Key words: creative reading skills. Creative writing skills. Reading metacognitive awareness. Schema-learning based Program. Secondary Stage. Al-Azhar. Egypt.

عنوان البحث بالعربي:

برنامج قائم على المخططات العقلية لتنمية مهارات القراءة الإبداعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية الأزهرية

الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية لتنمية مهارات القراءة الابداعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية الازهرية باستخدام برنامج قائم علي المخططات العقلية ، و لتحقيق هذا الغرض استخدم الباحث نظام المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة ، حيث اختار الباحث عشوائيا ٦٠طالبا من طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي الازهري ، إدارة الابراهيمية التعليمية ، محافظة الشرقية ،حيث اشتملت المجموعة التجريبية على ٣٠ طالبا ز حيث استخدم الباحث اختبار للقراءة الإبداعية تحدث اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، و تم تطبيق الاختبار قبليا و بعديا ، هذا و قد استغرقت الدراسة الحالية خلا لا الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢١- ٢٠٢٢ ، و بعد إجراء التحليل الإحصائي توصلت الدراسة إلى النتائج الآتية أ) وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات طلاب عينة الدراسة في اختبار القراءة الإبداعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية قبليا و بعديا لصالح التطبيق البعدي ، ولذلك فان له تأثيرا إيجابيا في تنمية مهارات القراءة الابداعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية .وتوصي الدراسة باستخدام البرنامج في تنمية مهارات اللغة الأخرى.

Introduction

Language learning requires performing the four basic skills successfully. All these skills are productive skills as every skill has its own processes of acquiring and delivering information. These skills are interrelated and interchanged as they cannot be learnt or taught separately, thus, the new trend in teaching EFL skills is to be taught in an integrative way. Speaking skills need listening skills as writing skills require reading skills. So, writing skills cannot be developed unless reading skills are developed especially for secondary and university students. Thus, the more reading skills develop, the more the writing skills develop. Recent language learning and teaching focus on the advanced skills of language such as creative reading, which will lead to creative writing. Therefore, recent study will investigate some integrative strategies to enhance creative reading and writing.

Haroon (2014) reported that creativity is an essential element that is obviously involved in the teaching and learning process; particularly that learning is viewed as a creative process that involves students making information relevant by linking prior knowledge and new knowledge in a meaningful format. Creativity is supposed to provide an effective way of engaging learners with their learning. Creative teaching is supposed to increase levels of motivation and self-esteem on the part of learners and to provide them with the flexible skills they need for the future. Developing creativity is believed to have the potential to enrich lives and contribute to a better society. However, not all students have the opportunity to experience creative teaching.

According to Winskel (2020), EFL reading is an essential skill for learners of all ages. It serves as the key to develop EFLreading

fluency and grammatical knowledge. It also helps readers build their good reading habits, boost knowledge of vocabulary, and encourage a liking for enjoyment. As for El-shaer (2018), Reading is a creative activity in itself though it is often perceived as passive and receptive, and frequently an important element in other creative processes. It encourages connections and provides stimulus. It links other types of cultural expression and other art forms. It helps young people explore the world and enrich them educationally and emotionally.

According to Yurdakal & Kirmizi (2017), Reading, which is a life-long skill, is actualized through five steps: obtaining knowledge, comprehension, continuity, critical and creative reading. This is also reflected in the evolution of the education system. Whereas the behavioral approach aims at developing open reading skills, the cognitive approach focuses on developing critical reading skills. On the other hand, the constructivist approach addresses interaction with the knowledge and creating new knowledge, and therefore is concentrated on the creative reading process.

Creative reading is a reading activity that involves creative thinking skills. Creative thinking skill is identified with the emerging of new ideas or the combination of several ideas in the form of new ideas. Creative thinking also involves divergent thinking, a cognitive aspect that is characterized by fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality (Nakano & Wechsler,2018).

According to Syahrin et al. (2019), creative reading is strongly associated with imagination, innovation, originality, and excellence. Creative reading is the key to productive thinking because creative thinking is defined as a mental activity used to build new ideas. Creative reading skills consist of two essential elements that are the skills to make decisions and the ability to develop a new idea based

on the result of the decision-making process. As the aforementioned definitions, it can be summarized that creative reading is reading to produce creative writing based on the response to what has been read.

As for Yurdakal (2019), Creative reading is composed of divergent and convergent reading. Convergent creative reading is concentrated on meeting the individual's and writer's thoughts on common ground. On the other hand, divergent reading, which is the main aim of creative reading, aims at producing extraordinary, unique and creative ideas by using the writer's ideas. Asking quite surprising and unexpected questions is an important assistant to this process. Divergent questions help the individual think flexibly with a broader perspective without focusing on one truth only because contemporary information societies pay importance to interact with the text through metacognitive skills and reconstructing the text rather than learning or memorizing content.

Nakano & Wechsler (2018) reported that it is important to create a comfortable learning-teaching environment in order to keep curiosity alive at all times. Text selection and reading it aloud constitute some of the important points of this process. The teacher should read the selected literary text as a film artist. In this way, the learners are enabled to benefit from the musicality of the text and enjoy the content. Besides the joy of listening, the learners should be drawn closer to the text by means of intermittent divergent questions. The teacher should assume the role of an usher in this process by directing questions that enable imagination and extraordinary thoughts during creative reading.

Creative reading enables learners to understand the subject matter and words correctly, comprehend literary meanings, integrate

past experiences with ideas, discover covert meanings and connections through symbols develop new ideas and apply these to new fields. In this context, creative reading acts as an effective method that improves learners' attitudes towards reading, decreases reading anxieties, improves comprehension during the reading process, teaches multidimensional thinking, develops imagination, and creates a culture of reading (Swann & Carter, 2011).

Focusing on creativity, which is a mysterious, and an extremely individual phenomenon, creative reading attempts to understand the concepts beyond the content and comprehend the unseen connections between them through imagination reveal the secret and covert beauties of life as a self-creation process, and reach the best. In this way, the learner is enabled to renew and develop by adapting to the continuous changes in life (John, 2004).

According to Saadeh (2011), creative reading skills include many skills such as fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Firstly, Fluency is the ability to recall the largest number of appropriate responses to the problem or an incentive in a specific period. It can also be described as the mental skill that is used to generate thoughts flowing freely in the light of a number of related ideas. However, from student's point of view, fluency is the skill that makes student's ideas flow freely in order to get plenty of ideas in the possible quickest time.

Gattami (2001) believed that fluency includes multiple thoughts that could be recalled or the speed to recall uses, synonyms and benefits of specific things. It also means the flow of thoughts and their easy production, e.g. asking a student to mention synonyms of a word as much as he can, or to mention the different uses of a textbook. On the other hand, Abdulaziz (2006) cited that fluency

means organized thinking, the ability to recall a large number of suitable thoughts in a specific time, or the ability to produce several verbal thoughts for a problem.

Schema-learning based program

Schema is a term used in psychology and cognitive science, which describes a systematic pattern of thought and behavior. Schemata affect attention and the absorption of new information. People use schemata to organize prior knowledge and provide a framework for future understanding.

Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) proposed that "schema represent stereotypes of concepts". Anderson and Pearson further explained that a schema is an abstract knowledge structure. It is abstract in the sense that it summarizes what is known about a variety of cases that differ in many particulars. It is structured in the sense that it represents the relationship among its component parts (Carrell, 1988).

According to Carrel (1988) Schema can be classified into three types: linguistic schema, content schema and formal schema. Linguistic schema refers to readers' prior linguistic knowledge, including the knowledge about phonetics, grammar and vocabulary as traditionally recognized. They should decode both the lexical units and syntactic structures they encounter in texts. Therefore, accumulated linguistic information is a necessity for readers to obtain meaning of a passage.

Firstly, Content schema is the background knowledge an assay or the topic it relates to (Carrell, 1988). It involves many things, such as topic familiarity, cultural knowledge, conventions and previous experience of the domain. As culture-centered, this type of schema is, among the three, the very one which decides readers'

understanding of a passage, since whatever kind of writing is read, it must be interpreted under a cultural context because it is a product of that culture. For students with low language proficiency, content schema is a very important tacky problem they should deal with. Defined as "background knowledge about the formal, rhetorical, organizational structures of different kinds of texts".

Secondly, formal schema is "abstract, encoded, internalized, coherent patterns of meta-linguistic, discoursed, and textual organization that guide expectations in our attempts to understand a meaningful piece of language" (Carrell, 1988). It is the knowledge of different text genres and their respective structural organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar etc. Argumentation, exposition, description and narration are the general types which are explained in writing books for students, but the fact is that the reading materials that they come across are of various subcategories under these four, such as newspaper reports, poems, short stories, editorials, and so forth. Their specific characteristics do work as a necessary part of the whole. To know them, readers find it easier to grasp the whole reading materials since it can help to deepen their understanding; otherwise, it becomes a hinder. Schema enables readers to relate new information to their prior experience. By bridging the new with the old, unfamiliarity is decreased, interest is aroused, and prediction in reading is possible. Schema helps to solve the problems in reading and thus ensure to make the right decision

Thirdly, Linguistic schema refers to the language knowledge, which is the fundamental of understanding a text and is an essential part in understanding passage background knowledge. Vocabulary accumulation is one of difficult points for EFL learners. They always think memorizing words wastes a lot of time and are not efficient.

The reason for this problem is that they do not master a good method to memorize words. In the process of teaching words, teachers can combine the new words and previous memorized ones, which can activate students' schema that was grasped. In the process of word teaching, the word context should be paid attention. Grammar accumulation is also important. Grammar knowledge is an important part in reading. Teachers can explain the grammar that is encountered in teaching. This can also activate students' schema in mind.

Fisher, Frey and Williams (2002) mentioned many content schema activation strategies such as reflection and recording, brain storming, computer assisted activation and topic related pictures. Two strategies for content schema activation are pre-questioning and interactive discussions. **Pre-Questioning** is a simple strategy, and the most used one in English classrooms. In this strategy, the teacher activates the students' content schema through asking questions before, during, and after reading. These questions are guiding questions to help the students recall the information they already have about a certain topic. King (1994) clarified that this strategy is used to build on what the students already know, as it raises their awareness about the topic and makes them ready for more learning. **Interactive Discussion** is called an interactive approach strategy. The students' reflection of their prior knowledge can be refreshed through interactive discussions. Dole et al. (1991) utilized this strategy and they mentioned that the students could reflect on and record their background knowledge about a certain topic, and then engage in a group discussion about it. This interactive discussion can facilitate the students' learning of the new information of a topic.

The researcher will integrate between some strategies based on schema-learning through the program such as brainstorm, questioning, modeling and K-W-L strategy to produce a suggested strategy which will be called as 3E strategy (experience, experiment and expectation) through some Quranic stories to develop creative reading, writing and reading metacognitive awareness.

Teachers should motivate students and create their interests to read and write. They can do this by giving their students interesting reading passages that they are familiar with their topics. By doing so, students feel at ease while reading. Therefore, they can easily interpret the text and guess the meaning of new words. Quranic stories have this characteristic, which attracts interest. The students already know the content of the story in Arabic. The new and difficult words will not be a big problem to them, as they can easily guess their meanings from context according to their prior knowledge about the topic of the story. Consequently, they easily understand the whole text and answer the comprehension questions correctly.

The pilot study:

A pilot study was conducted in order to affirm the problem. A pilot test for creative reading was conducted to a group of 30 2nd year Al-Azhar secondary stage students at Awlad Zaid religious institute in Al-Ibrahimia town in Sharkia governorate in the first term of (2020-2021) school year. The test was divided in two parts. Firstly, students were asked to read a piece of writing and answer some questions to specify how far they perform their fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration skills. Secondly, they were asked to write different pieces of writing to specify how far they perform their fluency, flexibility, originality, accuracy and elaboration skills see

appendix (a). The results showed that the students have clear deficiencies in reading in general and creative reading skills.

1.2 The statement of the problem:

Through the previous discussion, the researcher's experience and the pilot study, it can be stated that Al-Azhar 2nd year secondary stage students have deficiencies in EFL creative reading skills. Therefore, the researcher proposes a new program based on schema-learning hoping to develop them.

1.3 The study aims:

This study aims at developing Al-Azhar EFL creative reading via implementing schema-learning based program through some Quranic stories.

1.4 The questions of the study:

The study attempts to find answers for the following main question:

1. What is the effect of a schema-learning based program on developing Al-Azhar secondary stage students' EFL creative reading skills.

This main question can be divided into some sub questions as follows:

1) What are the EFL creative reading skills required for Al-Azhar (2nd year) secondary stage students?

2) What are the actual EFL creative reading and writing skills of Al-Azhar (2nd year) secondary stage students'?

3) How can a schema-learning based program be designed to help develop EFL creative reading skills?

4) What is the effect of the program on Al-Azhar secondary stage students' EFL creative reading skills.

1.5 Hypotheses of the study:

- The quasi-experimental design will be used to test the hypotheses of the study. The main hypotheses of the study which will be verified in the recent study as follows:

   1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group in the pre-post administrations of EFL reading skills test, in favor of the post administration.

   2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in the post administration of EFL reading skills test, in favor of the experimental group.

   3- The schema-learning based program has a positive effect on the experimental group EFL creative reading skills results**.**

1.6 Instruments of the study:

 Some instruments will be designed to investigate the problem as follows

For EFL creative reading skills:

- A checklist as a pre-requisite.
- A test as a real instrument.
- A rubric as a post requisite.

1.7 Delimitations of the study:

- The current study is delimited to the following:

1- Al Azhar 2nd year secondary stage students at Awlad Zaid religious institute in Sharkia governorate.

2- Certain EFL creative reading skills that should be developed within the program. These skills are listed as follows:

- **Fluency   - flexibility**

- **originality**   **- elaboration**

3- The study is limited to measure the effect of the proposed program on EFL creative reading via a suggested strategy:

- 3 E (experience, experiment and expectation) strategy.

- Some Quranic short stories.

4- The instructional time devoted to the program will last for 30 hours in 10 weeks. There will be three sessions a week, each session lasts one hour.

1.8the study Procedures: To answer the research questions, the following procedures will be conducted:

1. Reviewing relevant literature and previous studies related to:

 A- The independent variable. Schema- learning based programme to frame the study experiment.

 B- A dependent variable: EFL creative reading skills to crystallize the target skills.

2. Designing an EFL creative reading skills checklist of the main and sub skills, judging it by TEFL jury members and modifying it according to their opinions.

3. Translating the approved EFL creative reading and writing skills into a pre/posttest and implementing it before and after the experiment for experimental group.

4. Choosing the study participants from Al-Azhar institutes.

5. Designing the proposed programme in the light of its aims, activities, methods, procedures and learner's and teacher's role.

6. Pre-administrating the study instruments to both groups.

7. Teaching the experimental group by the proposed programme.

8. Post -administrating the study instruments to both groups.

9. Comparing the pre to the post results statistically of experiment group.

10. Concluding, suggesting for further studies.

1. 11 Definitions of the study terms:

1. Creative reading skills:

Williams (1947) defined creative reading as the process of stimulating the mental activities of the student and reveals itself in all types of in-class activities. It is also the process of creating/producing a new interpretation for himself/herself by using the past experiences and analytical thinking processes of the reader. This process occasionally comprises interrogation and judgment.

Holden (2004) defined creative reading skills as the abilities to read for implied and inferred meanings, appreciative reactions and critical evaluation. The reader becomes an active participant and adds to what the author has written.

Creative reading is operationally defined in the present study as the skills which Al-Azhar second year secondary stage students utilize to go beyond the text to absorb the underlying meaning, be involved inside the text, set different questions and create new ideas related to the topic.

2. Schema learning:

According to Anderson & Pearson (1984), schema means "an active organization of past reactions or experience which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response".

Schema is defined as the "prior knowledge that is already stored in memory, functions in the process of interpreting new information and allows it to enter and become a part of the knowledge store" (Anderson & Person as cited in Maghsoudi, 2012).

Schema learning is operationally defined in the present study as the students' previously gained information about the short stories

mentioned in the Holy Quran, including the interpretation of these short stories through using a suggested strategy.

Methodology

1-Participants of the study

The participants of the study were second year secondary stage Al-Azhar institutes' students. The researcher chose secondary stage students because it is a transitional period between basic education and college education. It is the best period to enable these students to develop their creative skills to be prepared to meet the modern educational and vocational needs. The participants were chosen from two classes. Every class has thirty students. Two classes Awlad Zaid religious institutes represented the control and the experimental groups. To make sure that both groups were of the same level at the beginning of the experimentation, an EFL creative reading and writing tests were pre-administered to both groups.

Findings of the study:

1. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group in the pre-post administrations of EFL reading skills test, in favor of the post administration.
2. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group in the post administration of EFL reading skills test, in favor of the experimental group.

Discussion of Findings:

The pre-test means of scores indicated that both the experimental and control groups were homogeneous. There were no significant differences between the means of scores of the experimental and control groups in EFL creative reading skills. The

major purpose of this study was to investigate whether the use of the schema-learning based program has any effect on the promotion of the participants' creative reading skills. The results of the present study indicated that the suggested program positively and significantly influenced their creative reading, writing skills and reading metacognitive awareness. The researcher observed that schema-learning based program has new, unusual ideas and innovative thoughts, ability to put things together in a new image. It means to think in a different way that is like thinking outside the box. Schema-learning calls for benefitting from prior knowledge to reach new understanding, besides, reading and writing a text creatively read a text. Thus, creativity is a mental activity that leads to original production, and includes new solutions to ideas, problems and curricula.

Finally, schema-learning program can be described as a process of sensing difficulties, gaps in information, missing elements, something oblique, making new guesses and formulating hypotheses about these deficiencies; evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses; revising and retesting them and finally communicating the results. The post-test results revealed that there was a statistically significant differences between the means of scores of the experimental and control groups in the EFL creative reading and writing skills. Therefore, it can be argued that the cognitive thinking strategy proved to be statistically and educationally significant in developing the participants' creative reading fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration skills.

The participants fluency skill developed as they were able to derive the objectives of a reading text, generate new words from the spelling of given words, generate new words related semantically to

given words, suggest new titles to the text, relate between the elements of the reading text and others and suggest other alternatives of some words in the reading text. Their flexibility skill also developed as they were able to put the incidents of a story in the correct order as these incidents happened, produce questions about information not mentioned directly in the text, give evidences about the information of the reading text, deduce characteristics of objects and expressing opinions, predict what will happen next, view the text from another aspect, use the reading text information in situations and realize the missing elements in the reading text.

The participants originality skills developed as they were able to summarize the idea of the reading text, reformulate the reading text in another way, predict the results of a specific situation, suggest ideas not mentioned in the reading text, give unusual reasons for an incident, give new strange names to the characters of the story and predict unusual endings to the story.

Their elaboration skills developed as they were able to write a paragraph using a required list of words, add adjectives or figures of speech to an existing passage, add story details to a basic story map, add setting details to enhance a literary work and compose an illustrated character study.

Conclusion:

☐ The findings of the present study confirmed the effect of schema-learning based program on enhancing second stage students' EFL creative reading and writing skills.

☐ The schema-learning based program can be used to provide supplementary instruction to help the learners overcome the problems of creative reading writing skills.

☐ There is a need for a communicative and collaborative environment, which is based on interaction between the teacher and students and among peers for giving students a sense of confidence.

☐ Considering students' individual differences and learning styles while using schema-learning, is essential.

Recommendations of the present study:

Based on the results of the present study and the delivered conclusion, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

1- Teachers should emphasize the development of the students' creative reading and writing skills in early educational stages in order to develop throughout the following stages to prevent any possible creative reading difficulties the students may face.

2- It is necessary to devote more time in English language teaching to teaching creative reading and writing skills.

3- Lecturers of English should teach the students how to use the schema-learning based program in reading texts in order to help them overcome any difficulties they face.

4- The major implication of the present study for EFL instructors is to integrate schema-learning in their classes on a regular basis as classroom courses. In so doing, teachers are in a better position to not only enhance learners' creative reading skills but also monitor their weaknesses in reasoning, enriching the curriculum with cognitive thinking that enhances students' creative reading skills.

5- Supplying schools with different materials for employing cognitive thinking strategy like short stories is really needed.

6- Preparing and distributing instructional materials that increase teachers' awareness concerning the significance of schema-learning

and necessity of its training for promoting students' creative reading skills should be targeted.

7- Conducting workshops that aim at familiarizing teachers to how to apply schema-learning in their classes should be considered.

8- Adapting modern classroom activities that enhance students' participation and interaction should be considered.

9- Students should be provided with authentic and real learning situations that might help in developing their creative reading skills.

Suggestions for further studies:

The following areas of research can be suggested for further studies:

1- Using schema learning strategies with students' reading comprehension.

2- Using schema-learning strategies with students' writing, speaking or listening skills.

3- Using schema learning strategies with EFL language skills among prep school students.

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Creative reading test

1. Read this passage then answer the following questions:

Once, a couple has just married. While they were returning home, they had to cross a lake in a boat to reach their home, a great storm arose. The man was a warrior, but the woman was so petrified because it seemed almost hopeless. The boat was very small and the storm was violent, at any moment they were going to be drowned. However, the man was wordless, calm and uneventful, as if nothing was happening. The woman was trembling and she said to her husband '' are you not afraid! This may be the last moment of life. It does not seem that we will see the shore again.

The man laughed and took the sword out of his its sheath, then he brought the naked sword very close to his wife's neck and asked her if she were afraid. she said if the sword was in his hand why she should be afraid as she was sure that he loved her and wouldn't do anything harm for her. Then, the man smiled and said '' this is my answer to you I am certain that my God loves me and the storm is in his hand, so whatever is going to happen is going to be good. If we survive, it will be good. If we do not survive, it will also be good as everything is in his hand and he will not do anything wrong to his slaves whom he loved better than the mother loves her children. Finally, they survived and safely returned to their house.

When they reached their home, they found that it was demolished by the cyclone. Then the wife smiled and said '' losing our home is better losing our life. Whatever our God decrees for us is good even if we see the contrary. Allah knows and we do not know''.

A. Answer the following questions:
1. Give suitable titles to the passage.

2. Mention at least three morals understood form the story.
3. Mention three synonyms for these words. **Demolished - cyclone**

4. Put yourself in the wife's shoes. What will you say if the husband put the naked sword on your neck? Why?
5. If you were the husband, would you do what he had done? W
6. Suggest another end for the story.
7. Replace the bold words with other words to give the same meaning:

- The man was wordless, calm and **uneventful**.

- Whatever our God **decrees** for us is good.

- The woman was so **petrified.**

. "It does not seem that we will see the shore again." Express the same meaning with you own words.

8.   ''He brought the naked sword very close to his wife's neck''.