

The Effect of Meaningful Learning Strategy on Iraqi Preparatory Pupils' Achievement

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Abstract

The current study aims at investigating the effect of meaningful learning strategy on Iraqi Preparatory pupils' achievement. In order to achieve the study aim, the following hypotheses has been formulated. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group who is taught by meaningful learning strategy and control group who is taught by conventional method in post pupils' achievement test. The sample of the study is (50) pupils who are taught during the academic year 2021-2022. They are selected randomly from Baiji Preparatory School for Girls. The fifth-grade scientific biological branch consists of two groups are selected as a sample of the study. The study is divided into experimental group and a control group. The group (A) which is selected to be the experimental group and group (B) which is selected to be the control group are chosen from Baiji Preparatory School for Girls. The two groups have been equalized according to the following variables educational level of parents, age(in months) , the pupils scores in the pretest, and English scores in the previous Schooling year. A unified posttest which contains five questions is constructed to collect data. Face and content validity have been ascertained. Reliability coefficient have also been ascertained by using the Alpha Cronbach method. Thus, the whole sample has been exposed to posttest. The data collected from results of the posttest have been analyzed statically by using T-test for two independent samples. The results show that there is statistically significant differences among the mean scores of the experimental group who is taught by meaningful learning strategy, and control group who is taught by conventional method. Finally, some conclusions, pedagogical recommendations, and suggestions for further studies have been put forward.

Keywords: Meaningful Learning, Iraqi. Preparatory Pupils', Achievement test

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Language is one of the most important things in communication and it is used as a communication tool among the nations around the world. As an international language, English is very significant and has many interconnections with any aspect of life that human beings have (White, 1988).

In Iraq, English is considered as a foreign language and is formally taught from elementary school to university. The most common complaint is the ability of teachers to apply appropriate teaching or

learning methods, procedures, strategies or techniques. Therefore, many pupils do not care about learning English. Reading has proven to be an essential tool for pupils . It does not only help to improve reading ability, but also improves listening, speaking and writing abilities.

Literacy teaching can be described as truly effective when it positively impacts pupils learning. Successful teachers are able to skillfully integrate a range of instructional approaches and resources to meet the diverse learning needs of their pupils. that the effective teachers of literacy know the literacy process and the pedagogy that determines how their pupils learn and flexibly use a range of instructional practices and engage pupils in challenging learning experience. The effective teachers of literacy have a deep understanding of the complexities and cumulative process of reading . They also understand the developmental nature of literacy learning (Hervey,2013).

In order to master reading skill, teachers as educators must use good strategies or methods in the teaching processes. One of the strategies and methods that the researchers use to gain a clearer picture of what pupils usually do when reading a foreign language is the direct strategies which is divided into memory and cognitive strategies (Oxford,1990).

1-2 Aims of the Study

The current study aims at:-

1. Finding out the impact of Direct Strategies on literacy of Iraqi EFL preparatory school pupils.
2. Finding out the development of pupils literacy in reading comprehension

1-3 Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypothesis are put forward in order to be verified:-

1. There is no statically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group who is taught by direct strategies and the control group, who is taught by conventional strategies in post literacy test.

1.4 Limits of the Study

The present study is limited to fourth preparatory school pupils at scientific branch, in Salah al din Governorate, at Al-Hikma School. During the academic year (2021-2022). Selecting a sample of EFL at fourth preparatory school and dividing it into two groups, one of them as experimental group which taught by direct strategies and the other as a control group which taught by conventional method .

1.5 Value of the Study

The value of the present study can be stated as in the following:

1. It helps EFL curricula designers and EFL methodologists to develop instructional teaching method and material.
2. It helps teachers by facilitating their roles as well as pupils by helping them to practice the structures and the rules of English quite easily and smoothly.

1.6 procedure of the Study

The following steps will be used in this study in order to verify its hypotheses and to achieve its aims:

1. Selecting a sample of EFL at fourth preparatory school and dividing it into two groups, one of them as experimental group and the other as a control group. Both of them are equalized in age, parents' level of education and previous academic year (2020-2021).
2. Teaching the experimental group by using (Direct strategies) while the control group is taught by using conventional strategies.
3. Both experimental group and control group are subjected to a pre-test and posttests to find out the impact of using (Direct strategies) on the pupils literacy development.
4. Constructing a pretest and post literacy development -tests.
5. Estimating the validity, reliability, discrimination power and difficulty level of the tests.

1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms

The researcher adopts the following definitions operationally:

1.7.1 Impact

Impact means the positive or negative changes produced by a development intervention directly or indirectly, intended or unintended, in the context of its environment, as it interacts with the multiple factors affectively development change (Hearn and Buffardi, 2016).

1.7.2. Direct strategies

Strategies that pupils use directly in dealing with a new language and require mental processing of their language (Oxford, 1990).

1.7.3. Literacy Development

Literacy Development is the learning process of a pupil, which starts from the beginning stage to an ongoing process throughout the pupil's academic level (Morrow, 2012).

2. An Introductory Note

This chapter is essentially divided into two sections. The first section is about the theoretical background direct strategies and literacy development. The second section is about previous studies that are related to the current study.

2.1 Concept of Direct Strategies

Research on language learning strategies start at the 1970s. For the most part, the progress in cognitive psychology a great effect on the research studies on language learning strategies (Williams and Burden, 1997). Most of the studies on language learning strategies, identifying what good pupils do to learn a second or foreign language has been the main issue. In 1971 Rubin conduct a study in which the main focus on the strategies of successful language pupils. In her study she argues that, once identified, such strategies could be offered to less successful pupils. Rubin (1975) classifies learning strategies according to processes which contribute either directly or indirectly to language learning.

Wenden (1986) believes that reading and discussing the strategies of good language pupils are a constructive preliminary activity which can help pupils to get aware of the concept of pupil's strategies.

Oxford (1989) states that language learning strategies as explicit actions are made by the pupils to make learning simpler, quicker, more enjoyable, more productive and more transferable to a new situation.

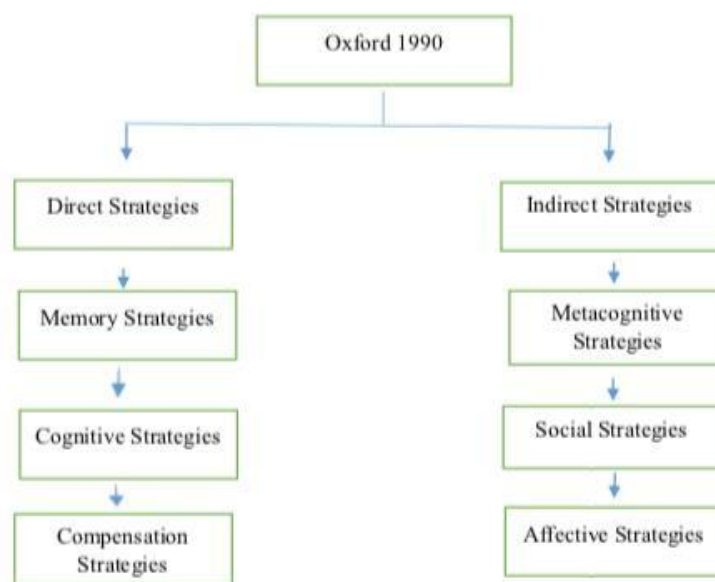
Direct language strategies, according to Oxford, (1990) require mental processing of the language. Their primary goal is to assist pupils in developing their own study system. Furthermore, they use the most useful study skills of their purpose, such as understanding new words and phrases, organizing and producing vocabulary, and communicating accurately. Pupils can understand and produce second language by using direct language strategies. They help pupils improve their reading skills and develop the natural process of language learning through meaningful activities. Direct strategies should confidently respond to language required for a variety of tasks and strategies.

2.1.1 Oxford's Model (1990)

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars (Rubin 1987 , O'Malley and chamot 1990 and Oxford 1990) . According to Rubin, There are three types of Strategies used by pupils that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), teaching strategies can be classified into three generic categories: metcognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social / affective strategies.

According to Oxfords (1990) Language learning strategies which directly involve the target language are called direct strategies. These strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies.

All of these direct strategies involve mental processing of language. On the other hand , indirect strategies are metacognitive , affective , and social strategies and they provide indirect support for language learning through focusing , planning ,evaluating , seeking opportunities , controlling anxiety , increasing cooperation and empathy , and other means (Oxford ,1990) .



Finger1: Oxford (1990) Classification of language learning Strategies

Generally, this model is flexible in terms of procedure, in other words, each step can be modified or rearranged in different orders for different needs and intentions.

2.1.2 Literacy Development

Literacy development is a challenge for all pupils , but it may be even harder for target language pupils . Target language pupils are working at learning how to read, listen, and speak most likely in a different situation than they have already know. Closing the development gap for target language pupils is a challenge when their peers continue to make growth as well (Drucker,2003).

Nzeneri (2012) refers to literacy as an important component that has been emphasized as a necessary tool for driving development in a sustainable manner. Literacy in this context is considered as functional, which implies the ability of a pupil to read and use the reading skill for his daily living. In other words, pupil who is literate should be able to read and use this skill to provide for his daily needs and solve problems around him that affect his development as a pupil and that of the class to which he belongs.

Aruma (2014) adds that literacy provides the pupil with clear knowledge of what is happening around him/her and how he/she can contribute to the growth and sustainable development of the school, essentially, the ability of a pupil to read and contribute positively to sustainable development will always make such a pupil to remain relevant in their classroom.

2.1.3 Reading

Reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed pages and interpret the information appropriately (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

Reading is an activity where the pupils need some steps. First, the pupils must master it to comprehend letters, phrases, words, clauses and sentences and the pupils understand the meaning of them. Second, the pupils demand their background knowledge and their experience to clarify the text (Brown , 2003).

While Grabe (2009) defines reading as the process in which pupils learn something from what they read and involve it in academic context as a part of education, so learning happen when there is a change in mind from an unknown thing to the known one, as reading is included in learning, the readers try to grasp the texts being read by interpreting, synthesizing, evaluating and selecting the important information. Reading is the strategic process in that number of the skills and processes used in reading call for effort on the part of the reader to anticipate text information, select key information, organize and mentally summarized information, monitor comprehension, repair comprehension breakdowns and match comprehension output to the pupils goals.

3. Methodology and procedures

Experimental design is one of the most popular quantitative research criteria for assessing cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Experiment is carried out with a high degree of control and manipulation over the test environment and variables, allowing any change in the outcome to be attributed to the procedure or independent variable variance (Easterling, 2015).

It is the procedure outline that helps the researcher to test hypotheses by drawing significant conclusions about the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Best and Khan, 2006). The Non-Randomized pretest/ posttest design is followed for the sake of achieving the aims of the study and verify its hypotheses. The researcher therefore, used two groups, one group represents a control group and the other group as an experimental one, as shown in table (3.1):

Table (3.1)
The Experimental Design of the Study

Groups	Pre-test	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Posttest
Experimental group	Literacy Development	Direct Strategies	Development English Literacy	Literacy Development
Control group	Literacy Development	conventional Teaching Strategies	Development English Literacy	Literacy Development

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

A population as a group of individuals who have the same characteristic. A target population is a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identify and study. A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher aims to study for generalizing about the target population (Creswell, 2012).

The target population of the present study includes (60), fourth-year pupils of Al- Hikma School for Girls in the city of Salah al din Government. The pupils are grouped into two sections: (A and B). Thus, (30) pupils have been selected from section (A) as an experimental group, and (30) pupils from section (B) represent the control group. Therefore, the total number of the involved sample is (60) who represent 41% percent of the original population.

3.2 Test Construction

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) indicate that tests are used to measure pupils development within a classroom lesson, unit, and material covered in curriculum in a particular time frame are focus on the objectives of a particular course. It can help pupils to identify the features that they need to work on in the future.

3.3 Face Validity

Face validity refers to the judgment of people who are regarded to be knowledgeable about the variable being measured (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2011).

Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that face validity is the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of an observer. which a measure represents all sides of a given concept.

3.4 content validity

Best & Kahn (2006) refer to content validity as the degree to which the items of the test actually measure or they are specifically concerned to the attribute for

which the test is designed and used. The content should contain the issues, the actual formulation, the item design in general and the expected skills that suppose a pupil to master.

3.5 Reliability of the Posttests

Reliability is explained by Ravitch (2007) in testing, a measure of consistency. Alpha- Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the posttest. The coefficient is found to be (0.85), which consider acceptable.

3.6 Pilot study

Pilot study used to evaluate the accuracy of the researcher planning methods and procedures by evaluating the possibility of succeeding the strategies which are used. A separate EFL group of (15) 4th preparatory school pupils selected from Experimental groups and control groups randomly are adopted of the present study which is requested to answer the items concerning the post test (Lown,2019).

3.7 Item Analysis

Item analysis is a process of analyzing the testees' responses in order to find out the difficulty level and discriminating power of each item included in the test as follows:

3.7.1 Difficulty Level

The difficulty level is specified as the ratio of the pupils who answer test items correctly (Rosas, 2000).

Item difficulty refers to the extent to which an item appears to be complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. It reflects the percentage of pupils who respond correctly to the test. The most suitable test item will have item difficulty varying between (0.15) and (0.85) (Brown, 2010).

According to the table (3.11) the DL of the present test items varies from (0.28) to (0.70).

3.7.2. Discrimination Power

Discrimination power means calculating the degree to which a particular item's results correspond with the results of the entire test (Alderson, 1995). This means that an object is deemed to have weak power of discrimination if it is correctly scored by high-skilled pupils as well as low-skilled pupils. Item discrimination refers to the degree to which an object makes a difference between good and poor testees. An object has good power of discrimination if it collects the right answers and the wrong answers. It is worth noting that the high power of discrimination will be close to (1.0) and no power of discrimination will be nil at all (Brown, 2010). The test item DP is found to have a range of (0.29) - (0.71). The test items for DP and DL

4. Analysis of Data and Discussion of Results

4.1 Results Related to the First Hypothesis

Comparison between the Mean Scores of the Experimental Group and that of Control Group in the Posttests. To find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post literacy test, all mean scores are obtained and compared. Statistics shows that the mean scores of the experimental groups are (74.20) and that of the control group is (50.30). By using the t-test formula for two independent samples, the calculated t-value is found to be (8.037), while the tabulated t-value is found to be (2.00) at the degree of freedom (58) and level of significance (0.05), This indicates that there is a significant statistical difference between mean scores of the two groups and in favor of the experimental group.

Thus, the first hypothesis which states that there is no statistical significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the posttest is refuted, as shown in table (4.1).

Table (4.1)
Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values of the Two Groups
in the Post Literacy Test

Groups	No. of pupils	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	30	74.20	9.46	Calculated	Tabulated	58	0.05
CG.	30	50.30	13.25	8.037	2.00		

4.2 Discussion of the Obtained Results

The obtained results indicate that the pupils of the experimental group are significantly better than the pupils of the control group in their developing . This, means that Direct Strategies are prove to be more

efficient strategies for developing literacy. All findings of the present study demonstrate the positive impact of Direct Strategies on EFL Iraqi pupils literacy development .

1- The variety of instructional material which is prepared by using technology tools is based on practicing and exchanging ideas in problem- solving.

2- Direct Strategies and programs have led to the development of pupils in reading comprehension by motivating pupils' minds to be creative. This is done through the classroom environment and using smart devices in order to develop pupils' reading.

3-Applying direct strategies as a mental tool support pupils in remembering some words and phrases

4-Pupils also can share their ideas and get benefit from each other.

when they trying new words and ideas

far away from the traditional way of developing reading .

5-All findings of the present study demonstrate the positive impact of the dynamic posttests on pupils literacy development

6-According to the obtained results of the test, in relation to the preparatory pupils in the scientific branch, it has been noticed that literacy development through direct strategies influence the experimental group which is found to be higher than the experimental group exposed to modern technology tools that have an important effect on developing pupils' reading.

5.1 Conclusions

In the light of the results of the present study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The subjects of the experimental group of the current study have dealt positively with Direct Strategies , showing high interest,interactive and motivation.

2. Direct Strategies are beneficial, appropriate, and effective in developing reading skill.

3. It helps the EFL preparatory school pupils to improve and develop their understanding in comprehending a reading text.

4.The use of Direct Strategies in the class are useful to improve the social interaction among pupils. The pupils share information, participate in the reading comprehension and answer the questions freely.

5. Direct Strategies expend pupils understanding that support their confidence, expressive ability to write at least part of the answer related to productive questions.

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