

Effects of reading strategies instruction on students' reading comprehension performance and reading motivation: grade nine in focus

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of reading strategies instruction on students' reading comprehension performance and reading motivation focusing on grade nine. An experimental study was conducted to see the differences in students' reading learning with and without reading strategy instruction intervention. Purposively selected two sections of students as experimental ($N=40$) and control ($N=40$) groups were chosen. The experimental group explicitly learned reading lessons through four reading strategies namely: predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing whereas the control group followed the conventional method. A pretest posttest comparison group quasi-experimental design was employed. The participants of the study were grade nine students in Menkorer General Secondary School in Debre Markos town. For data collection purposes, reading passage tests, reading motivation questionnaire and interview were used at the different stages of the study. Quantitative data were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and interview was analyzed qualitatively. After the intervention, the findings of the study revealed that the experimental group significantly differed in performance with the control group in overall reading strategy instruction ($p<0.05$ i.e. $p= .046$). On the other hand, experimental group showed significant motivation development compared to pre and post questionnaire results. From the obtained interviewees' responses, it was confirmed that students were motivated to learn reading lessons actively. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that reading strategies instruction is helpful for teaching English reading to students in General Secondary School to improve their reading comprehension performance and reading motivation.

Key words: reading strategies, reading comprehension, reading instruction

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1. Introduction

In Ethiopian, English language is given as a basic course starting from kindergarten to higher institutions. Especially starting from grade seven the medium of instruction is almost all in English. It is unquestionable that reading ability is a must for all students in Ethiopia in order to be effective in their academic achievement. According to Abiy (2005), the education in Ethiopian secondary schools demand deeper learning; that is students are required to critically read materials, to evaluate what they learn using their previous knowledge and their personal requirements, to synthesize and to analyze information.

Reading is the key to develop knowledge through written text suggested by the writer. Reading alone is not enough to know the intended meaning. The learner or reader should understand the text and the writer's intention. In addition, in order to comprehend the text, learners should know reading strategies. Some researchers stated this idea in the following way:

Learning to read with understanding is the most important achievement in a young student's life. Unfortunately, many students are unable to comprehend texts, even though they can decode them fluently. Consequently, teachers, researchers, and other educators have begun focusing on early comprehension instruction (Williams and Atkins, 2009: 26).

Students should read again and again part of the text or they might ask their own experiences to dig out some ideas in the text. In some reading circumstances, comprehension is fast gained and strategy instruction intervenes unconsciously; other circumstances need conscious effort. They might re-read a portion of the text, or they might ask themselves questions to highlight certain information in the text. In some reading situations, comprehension is quickly repaired and strategies; other situations require deliberate effort.

Effective comprehension strategy instruction for adolescents includes direct/ explicit teaching, show, don't tell, connect reading to students' lives and their out-of-school literacy focused instruction and

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this encourages cognitive collaboration strategy at a time (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004,; Moje, et al, 2004,;Nokes & Dole, 2004). Generally, the explicit teaching reading strategy will provide students rich and meaningful opportunities to take control of their reading. Reading proficiently is not a matter of being innately smart but in part, a matter of applying appropriate strategies.

As far as motivation is concerned, it is a key variable in language learning (Oxford, 1989). An understanding of language learning motivation provides insight into how students regulate their motivation to keep on in language learning and why they continue beyond the basic requirements. Many learners do not continue beyond these requirements. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation concerns behaviour performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity. Extrinsic motivation involves performing a behaviour as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g. good grades) or to avoid punishment. Human motives can be placed on a continuum between self-determined (intrinsic) and controlled (extrinsic) forms of motivation.

Precisely, complexity of motivation has prevented a consensus in the understanding of it:

“...a preliminary that no existing motivation theory to date has managed – or even attempted to offer a comprehensive and integrative account of all the main types of possible motives, and it may well be the case that devising an integrative ‘super-theory’ of motivation will always remain an unrealistic desire. After all, motivation theories intend to explain nothing less than why humans think and behave as they do, and it is very doubtful that the complexity of this issue can be accounted for by a single theory (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011:4)”.

In Ethiopian context, students neither speak at home nor practise in daily communications; the only opportunities EFL students have to learn English occur in English classes. According to (Eskey 2005,) asserts that any EFL students may not need to speak English in their daily lives but they need to read it to access the richness of information in English. Therefore, the average students’ reading ability in English usually lags far behind the expected ability. In line with the

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need of improving reading ability for Ethiopian students, this study can have its own contribution to fill the gap of reading comprehension performance and reading motivation by answering the following research questions.

1. How does reading strategy instruction affect students' reading comprehension performance?
2. Does reading strategy instruction have an effect on students' reading motivation?
3. What are the reading strategies that grade nine students employ in the EFL reading process?

2. Materials and Methods

The study employed quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test group comparison design.

2.1. Participants of the study

Participants of this study were Grade 9 students in Menkor General secondary school. among fourteen sections, there were 3 sections who were taught by one English language classroom teacher of which two intact classrooms were assigned to intervention and non-intervention group for which random assignment was not a mandatory (Creswell, 2009). With the consent of directors, department head and classroom teachers, one teacher won by lot computing with other English language teachers to teach the study participants. The two sections of grade 9 students were assigned to intervention and non-intervention group. Although there were 49 and 46 students in experimental and control group respectively, only 80 students were able to participate in the study from two sections starting from the beginning to the end; on the contrary, some students from both groups were unable to take both tests (9 from experimental and 6 from control). Having administered the pre-test, the researcher recruited and introduced ninth grade English language classroom teacher and trained her on reading strategies instruction of teaching reading. Finally, the experimental group received the treatment from November 15, 2018 – February 15, 2019 (reading strategies instruction) while the control group did not get the treatment. The researcher asked purposively selected six high performer students (three boys and three girls) to make the interview manageable.

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2.2. Research instrument

Both the Experimental and control groups took the pre-test (pre-intervention test) and post-test (post-intervention test). In addition, only experimental group took motivation questionnaire before the intervention and after intervention to see the change of motivation. Experimental group students are engaged in a variety of classroom activities designed to enhance their reading comprehension performance and reading motivation. The researcher adapted and prepared three reading comprehension tasks to the experimental group from grade nine English textbook passages. One strategy training was given once in a week to experimental group for three months but not for the control group. Finally, The researcher asked purposively selected six high performer students (three boys and three girls) to make the interview manageable for the purpose of supplementary evidence to confirm the overall study.

In Ethiopia, there are no available standardized reading passage tests that could measure students reading performance for general secondary schools. Therefore, the researcher adapted and prepared from the online source which is given for grade nine (English Grade 9 - Reading Test. Source: <http://www.englishteststore.net>) and/or *edHelper.com Grade nine reading comprehensions*. The researcher made appropriate adaptation for grade 9 students in level of difficulty as compared to reading passages in their textbooks. He tried to adapt and equalize the length and content of the text taken from online to the grade nine English textbook passages.

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2.3. Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from three types of instruments used in the study: reading comprehension tests, motivation questionnaire and interview. Each data set was analyzed according to the methods described using descriptive statistics and independent samples t- test on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, Version 20.0. The results of the analysis are given in the following sections.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1: Significance of difference between mean scores of the experimental group and control group on reading comprehension passages pretest

Group Statistics

students\ section		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre reading tests	experimental	40	18.3750	4.17985	.66089
	control	40	18.2250	3.80612	.60180

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The scores in Table 1 depict the comparison of the mean scores between the experimental group and control groups in the pre-testing of reading comprehension passages test. It is shown that the means and standard deviations of the experimental group 18.38(4.18) and control group 18.23(3.81) were found in the pretest. This indicates that there was no mean difference between the two groups.

Table 2: Significance of difference between mean scores of the control group and experimental group on reading comprehension passages posttest

Group Statistics

students\ section		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post reading test	experimental	40	22.5500	3.21814	.50883

Group Statistics

students\ section		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post reading test	experimental	40	22.5500	3.21814	.50883
	control	40	20.7500	4.60629	.72832

Table 2 above illustrates the comparison of the mean scores between the experimental group and control groups in the post testing of reading comprehension passages. It is shown that the means and standard deviations of the experimental group Mean: 22.55 and Std.:3.22 and control group Mean: 20.75 and Std.: 4.61 were found in the posttest. This shows that the mean of the experimental group was greater than that of the control group. Thus, the difference has been brought due to the treatment the experimental group received.

On the other way round, comparison between groups at time 1 (pretest) time 2 (posttest) were made to find differences in score gains between the experimental and control groups. Table 3 below shows the comparison between pretest and posttest scores across the two groups participating in the study: forty in the experimental group and forty in the control group.

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Table. 3. Statistical description of pretest and posttest scores between groups

test	Experimental group			Control group			df	significance
	Mean	SD	t	Mean	SD	t		
pretest	18.3750	4.18	28.49	18.23	3.81	30.23	39	0.16
posttest	22.55	3.22	44.32	20.75	4.61	28.49	39	1.8

As it can be seen in table 3 above, independent samples t-test were conducted to compare the pretest scores of the experimental group and control group, and then to compare the posttest scores of the two groups. It is clearly observed that the pretest mean difference between experimental and control groups was 0.16, which is very small. However, the posttest mean difference between the groups was 1.8 which is statistically big difference. The average posttest scores for the experimental group were higher than the average pretest scores (22.55 and 18.38 respectively). For the control group, the average posttest scores were similarly higher than the average pretest scores (20.75 and 18.23 respectively).

Table 4: Independent sample test: T-test for equality of means

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
pre reading test	Equal variances assumed	.870	.354	.168	78	.867	.15000	.89384	-1.62949	1.92949

p<0.05

In Table 4, an independent t-test was used to compare the means scores between the control group and experimental group reading comprehension passages test. The t-test means reveal that the comparison of the means of the control group and experimental group did not show significant statistical difference between the two groups. This clearly implies that there was no significant difference between the two groups on reading comprehension passages tests since the significance p value 0.867 was above the standard level $p < 0.05$.

Table 5: Independent sample test: t-test for equality of means

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
post reading test	Equal variances assumed	4.029	.046	2.026	78	.046	1.80000	.88846	.03121	3.56879

$p < 0.05$

Table 5 above, an independent t-test was applied to compare the means scores between the control group and experimental group on reading comprehension reading passages posttest. It indicates that the comparison of the means of the control group and experimental group showed significant difference between the two groups. That is, Table 5 presents that the reading comprehension passages post-test results brought a significant difference since the significance p value 0.046 was below the standard level ($p < 0.05$). This implies that the experimental group had better than that of the control group in reading comprehension passages test.

Analysis of motivation questionnaire and interview data

According to Artino (2005), motivation questionnaire was divided into six sub scales which are Intrinsic Goal Orientation, Extrinsic Goal Orientation, Task Value, Control of Learning Beliefs, Self-Efficacy for Learning & Performance, and Test Anxiety. Each sub scale consisted of 4, 4, 6, 4, 8 and 5 items respectively. Students rated themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The response result was calculated by adding the responses for each scale divided by the number of sub scale items and the obtained results were 3.4, 3.7, 3.7, 2.99, 3.5, and 3.8 revealed that students developed motivation after the intervention.

On the other hand, interview also helped as an additional source of data to recognize the students' intention towards reading strategies for their academic reading performance and motivation to read. Six best performer participants three male and three female from the test were selected purposively for the interview. The researcher conducted the interviews. The obtained data from the interview were revealed that reading strategy instruction had helped the participants to have overall understanding of reading and motivation. They added that after learning reading strategies they liked reading more because they were becoming motivated to read and they know how to apply each strategy in order to understand the reading text.

4. Conclusions

Based on the research question: "How does reading strategy instruction affect students' reading comprehension performance?" the mean scores and standard deviations for the students in both the experimental group and control group were calculated. The results revealed that there were mean difference between the experimental group (Mean 22.55); (STD: 3.22) and the control group (Mean 20.75); (STD: 4.61) in the post-test. This happened because of the intervention of reading strategy instruction to the experimental group. In addition, an independent samples t-test indicated that the comparison of the means of the control group and experimental group had significant difference. That is, .046 was below the standard level $p < 0.05$. This implied that the experimental group had better performance than that of the control group in reading comprehension passages test. As far as motivation is concerned, it is concluded that students developed their motivation as compared to before and after intervention to the experimental group. Generally, the results of this study revealed that reading strategies have a significant positive

effect on grade nine students' reading comprehension and reading motivation. According to the interview, reading strategies instruction to the students' reading comprehension performance, the finding revealed that strategy instruction showed significant change on the experimental group.

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