The Effect of Collaborative Reading on Iraqi EFL Intermediate School Pupils' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract:

The present study aims at investigating the effect of Collaborative Reading on Iraqi EFL Intermediate School Pupils' Reading Comprehension. To fulfill the purposes of this study, (60) second -class pupils are randomly chosen to be the sample of the present study. They are divided into experimental (30) and control group(30). During the experiment, the experimental group is taught reading collaboratively, while, the control group is taught conventionally. After conducting the post test, the findings indicate that there is significant difference in reading comprehension between the performance of the experimental and control groups the post – test. In other words, collaborative reading is found to have a positive effect on student' reading comprehension. On the basis of the results obtained, a set of recommendations is put forward.
Keywords: Collaborative Reading, the effect, Reading Comprehension.

أثر القراءة الجماعية على القراءة الاستيعابية لطلبة المدارس المتوسطة لدارسي اللغة الانكليزية في العراق

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الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة تأثير القراءة التعاونية على فهم القراءة لدى تلاميذ المدارس المتوسطة في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ولتحقيق أغراض هذه الدراسة تم اختيار (٦٠) تلميذا من الصف الثاني متوسط عشوائيا ليكونوا عينة الدراسة الحالية. وهي مقسمة إلى مجموعة تجريبية (٣٠) ومجموعة ضابطه (٣٠). خلال التجربة، يتم تدريس المجموعة التجريبية القراءة بشكل تعاوني، في حين يتم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة تقليديا. بعد إجراء الاختبار البعدي، تشير النتائج إلى وجود فرق كبير في فهم القراءة بين أداء المجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة في الاختبار البعدي. وبعبارة أخرى، وجدت القراءة التعاونية أن يكون لها تأثير إيجابي على فهم الطلاب للقراءة. واستنادا إلى النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها، طرحت مجموعة من التوصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة التعاونية، التأثير، فهم القراءة.

Section One: Introduction:
The Problem and Its Significance:

The importance of English as a means of international communication as been recognized all over the world. It is widely used as a first language, second language or as foreign language. It is now days an effective means of communication. The four basic skills required to learn any language are known as LSRW i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

A child learns very informally any language taught to him/her in the initial years of the life through listening and speaking. But an extra edge is needed for the development and growth of an individual which comes from developing the skills of reading and writing. The ability to read is generally regarded not only as the basis of education but also most universal and the most useful for everyone today.

Reading comprehension is the ability of perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents. The main concept in reading skill is comprehension'. It is greatly valued by students and teachers alike since it increases the process of language acquisition and helps students to read for different purposes. The most successful readers are those who use cognitive strategies to comprehend the text better (Behjat, Bagheri& Yamini, 2012).

Most students, especially EFL learners, find difficulties in learning the skills required for effective reading (Barrionuevo & Pico, 2006). These difficulties included finding the main idea in the text, inference in the text, specific information in the text, and understanding the unfamiliar English vocabulary or content terms used in the text.

Most students have reading difficulties because they have insufficient knowledge of vocabulary. Knowledge of vocabulary is very important for helping students to understand the various textbook reading tasks containing diverse concepts and technical vocabulary (Kinzer & Leu, 1995). Suwantharathip(2011) stated that students are required to summarize a reading Passage but many of them fail in doing so. They often copy sentences from a reading passage instead of using their own sentences. In addition, some students are not able to comprehend main ideas of reading passages; hence, they produce incorrect summaries.

Many students faced problems while trying to understand texts written in English. Therefore, there is a point to be considered that reading comprehension in English can be problematic for Iraqi students, as the education system does require reading English for pupils .In Iraq, teachers normally instruct their students to read passages and memorize difficult and new vocabularies. Teachers and pupils do not pay much attention to

reading comprehension. Generally, due to how reading in English Language is taught and learned in Iraqi schools, students faces difficulties in reading comprehension. (Abdual-Ameer, 2016:7)

Many research indicated that teaching effect can be greatly improved through collaborative learning (Garfield, 1993; Gregory & Thorley, 2013). Instructors are well advised to make use of interesting techniques in order to avoid boredom caused by too much exposure and to add spice to the lessons. In the present times, educationists have started giving weightage to collaborative learning over individualistic learning because of its benefits in academic, social as well as psychological domains. Learning in small groups is highly likely to boost students' motivation. Working as a group, students tend to feel that they are responsible for and deal critically with the reading material (Suwantharathip:2011).

According to Banerjee (2000) Collaborative Reading is known to be effective in developing learners' reading skills in group work.

In the field of second and foreign language education, cooperative learning has gained popularity over the years. In the past three decades, many studies have been conducted on the cooperative learning approaches and reading comprehension. The studies which have been conducted in this field confirmed that students who work in collaborative

groups also appear more satisfied with their classes, and have shown the efficiency of cooperative learning in EFL reading classes (Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004; Pan & Wu, 2013).

Aim

The present study aims at finding out the effect of collaborative reading on Iraqi EFL intermediate school pupils' reading comprehension.

Hypothesis
To achieve the study aims, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

There are no statistically significant differences between the experimental group students instructed cooperatively and those of the control group instructed conventionally in the reading comprehension post test .

Limits
This study is limited to second year intermediate school pupils in Baghdad governorate during the academic year 2017-2018.

Value

This study is likely to be of value to all teachers and pupils in the intermediate schools as it suggest a new strategy for teaching reading comprehension in which the target pupils are reported to have poor performance.

It may also be valuable to curriculum designers to attract their attention to the importance of including collaborative activities in the prescribed textbooks.

Procedures

To achieve the aims of the present study, the following procedures will be adopted by the researcher to collect data:

1. Randomly selecting a sample of second-class pupils to be assigned as experimental and control groups.

2. Conducting a reading comprehension pre-test on the experimental and the control group for the equalization purpose.

3. The experimental group is to be taught by the collaborative reading comprehension.

4. At the end of the experiment, the post reading comprehension test is Applied and results are analysed.

Section Two : Theoretical Background

Collaborative Learning:

In education, collaborative learning is a technique teachers use to group students together to impact learning in a positive way. Proponents of collaborative learning believe it helps students in many ways. (*Firestone*:2017)

According to Gerlach, "Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants talk among themselves (Gerlach, 1994:12). It is through the talk that learning occurs."

Collaborative teaching and learning is a teaching approach that involves groups of students working to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product (MacGregor, J.T., 1990).

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually students are working in groups of two or more,

mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most centre on student's exploration or application of the course material, not simply the

teacher's presentation or explication of it (Smith, B.L. & MacGregor, J.T., 1992).

Student-centered approaches to instruction provide a learning environment that invites students to actively participate in and help shape their own learning experiences (Moore, 2007:151).Because learners work with each other cooperatively, a classroomatmosphere is created in which learners' stress is reduced and learners' motivation is supported (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:193).

Reid, Forrestal, and Cook (1989) presented five phases of collaborative learning: (1) engagement, (2) exploration, (3) transformation, (4) presentation, and (5) reflection. In the engagement phase, instructor and students engage in organizing activities that are collaborative in nature. In forming groups, students feel free to choose their own group members. In the exploration phase, students have the opportunity to work together as a team. The instructor only serves as a facilitator. In this phase, students are introduced to new topics, concepts, and ideas and have the opportunity to make predictions and hypotheses, discuss with their group members, and make decisions. In the transformation phase, students in each group explore and compare information. Moreover, students clarify, elaborate, and learn how to synthesize ideas as all group members are required to discuss, contribute, and share ideas. In this phase, students are expected to take part in the learning activity such as classifying information, giving examples to support opinions, and discussing outcomes. The fourth phase relates to the presentation of knowledge. Here, each group is given the opportunity to present their findings to the class. Students are also required to give feedback to the findings and check for accuracy. The last phase in the learning activities is the reflection phase. In this phase, students reflect on both progress and process in reading comprehension.

Reading Comprehension:

Reading may be considered as the process of recognition and perception of the written or printed material. In other words, it is the understanding of the meaning of the written material and covers the conscious strategies that lead to understanding.

Therefore, it can be said that the process of reading deals with language form, while comprehension, the end product, deals with language content where meaning is one primary purpose for reading (Sheng, 2000:14). Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning of a written communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message (Harris and Hodges,1995: 39).

This process of interchange and involvement with the text is a function of both reader and text variables that take place within a larger social context (Snow, 2002:11).

Nelson, Smith, Taylor, Dodd, and Reavis (1991)cited in Abdual Ameer, 2016:3) pointed out comprehension and problems associated with it, which may be assessed by giving students a reading passage with a reading technique assessment. In the context of reading comprehension, there are two problems; the first is poor comprehension leading to poor decoding, which affects comprehension, while the second is the student not knowing how to read for comprehension, and they may not actively focus on the meaning of what they read or know in order to enable them to monitor their comprehension.

During reading process the readers should make use of their background and linguistic knowledge to reconstruct the writer's intended meaning. "Comfortable reading needs to be unafraid. These feelings make one feel it difficult to concentrate, to remember the ideas, and to learn anything new. If one is reading for fun, usually one will not have the feeling of worry and nerve and anxiety" (Huang, 2012, p. 1521).

Each language context may lead to a specific form of anxiety. Therefore, they can be classified into speaking anxiety, listening anxiety, writing anxiety, and reading anxiety. Reading anxiety in a foreign language ends in anxiety and finally poor language achievement " (Saito, Thomas & Horwitz, 1998, p. 202).

MacIntyre (1995:92) explains that "when learners feel anxious during reading task completion, cognitive performance is diminished, performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self-deprecating cognition which further impairs performance and so on". Therefore, it is necessary to make use of various methods and techniques which minimize the anxiety and help learners to study with more confidence. One of those approaches which is related to the theories and concepts of second language learning and teaching is cooperative learning (Nejad&Keshavarzi,2015:170)

As the importance of reading as well as English language has been established for the growth and overall development of the individual, the researcher tried to focus on it by pairing it with collaborative work. Hence, the present study was undertaken to ascertain the effectiveness of collaborative learning on reading comprehension of the students who learn English as their second language

Section Three: Methodology
The Experimental Design:
Due to the nature and aims of the present study, non-randomized control group Pretest – Posttest Design has been used(Van Dalen, 1973:288).

Table 1
The Experimental Design of the Study

Group	Pretest	Independent variable	Post test
Experimental	Reading Comprehension	Collaborative Reading	Reading Comprehension
Control	Reading Comprehension	X	Reading Comprehension

Population and Sample of the Study:

The population of the present study covers all the pupils of the second intermediate grade in the intermediate schools for girls in Baghdad Governorate which is divided into six directorates of education, namely ; Al – Karkh/1, Al – Karkh/2, Al – Karkh/3, Al – Rusafa/1, Al – Rusafa/2, and Al – Rusafa/3.

Al – Karkh/1 has been chosen randomly. Al- Yarmuk sector also has been chosen randomly from among the many sectors into which Al – Karkh/1 is divided.

After dropping the names of secondary& intermediate schools for boys& girls in Yarmuk sector, Al- yarmuk secondary school for girls has been chosen randomly.

There are four sections in Al- yarmuk secondary school for girls . Section (B) which includes (30) pupils has been chosen randomly to be the experimental group, and section (D) with (30) pupils as the control one.

Equalization of the experimental and control groups:

 The equalization of both groups is checked according to the age, level of fathers' education, level of mothers' education .

Age :by using t-test formula, it is indicated that the mean of the experimental group is 168.06 , whereas it is 167.72 for control group. Clearly, the computed t-value 0.22 is lower than the t-tabulated value 2 at 0.05 level of significance. The comparison has indicated that there are no significant differences between the ages of the two groups(see Table.2).

Table 2
T- Values of the Subjects' Age for the Control and Experimental Groups

Group	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test values	
				Computed	Table
Experimental	30	168.06	6.25	0.22	2
Control	30	167.72	5.73		

2- Fathers' level of education:

        After applying chi-square, the results show that there is   no statistically significant difference between the two groups in this variable (see Table. 3).

Table (3)
Frequencies and the Chi–square Value for the Level of Fathers' Education

Stages of Education	Frequency		Chi- square value	
	Exp.	Con.	Computed	Table
Primary & Intermediate	13	13	0.116	12.59
Preparatory& Institute	8	9		
B.A.	9	8		
Total	30	30		

3—Mothers' level of education: Both groups are found to be equal in this variable. The computed chi-square value is 2.43 which is less than the critical value of chi-square (12.59) at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in this variable (see Table(4)

Table (4)
Frequencies and the Chi– square Value for the Level of Mothers' Education

Stages of Education	Frequency		Chi- square value	
	Exp.	Con.	Computed	Critical
Primary	8	5	2.43	12.59
Intermediate & Preparatory	14	17		
Institute & B.A.	8	8		
Total	30	30		

Instructional Material:
   The instructional material includes four reading texts in the first (3) units of the prescribed textbook " English for Iraq". These texts are :
1- Meet a local personality

2- Keep fit

3- Eat the right food

4- London 2012

Instrument of the Study
The RC Test
   Reading Comprehension test consists of five questions the first one consists of unseen passage and its questions and the other fourth depend on textbooks' passages(see appendix A)

Validity:

In order to ensure the face validity of the test, its initial form has been exposed to a number of experts in the field of ELT and Linguistics to decide their validity(see Appendix C). In the light of the experts' view, all the items are judged valid except for the last two items and therefore were replaced by new ones.

The pilot administration of the test:

The pilot administration of the test is given to 30 second-lesson students, section "C" at the Al- yarmuk secondary school for girls The pilot administration of the instrument is carried out to check the clarity of the test, and to estimate the time allocated for answering its items. Consequently, no serious ambiguity is found concerning the test's items. Concerning the allocate time, it has been found that students need 35 minutes to respond to the survey.

Test Reliability:

The method that has been used for estimating the reliability of the test is the test- retest method. Where the reliability coefficient is found out to be (0.95). The reliability coefficient of a test would be acceptable if it is not less than (0.50)(Cortina. 1993:101).

The pilot administration of the test is given to 30 second-lesson students, section "C" at the Al- yarmuk secondary school for girls. The pilot administration of the instrument is carried out to check the clarity of the test, and to estimate the time allocated for answering its items. . Thus, the formula of difficulty level has been used on these two groups , the results have indicated that all the items are of acceptable level of difficulty, since the level of difficulty of the written part items range between (0.30 to 0.80). While the oral part items range from (0.50 to 0.80) (Harrocks and Schannover, 1968: 54) In order to measure the discrimination power of each item, the formula of discrimination power has been applied and it has been found that the discrimination power of the test items range between (0.30 to 0.70) which are considered suitable discrimination levels (Ebel, 1978: 397). (See Appendix B).

The Experimental Application:

Two days before the beginning of the training lessons, all subjects in both groups are submitted to a pre-test in reading in comprehension. The reason behind conducting a pre-test in reading comprehension is to check the equalization of the two groups in reading comprehension.

The experiment lasts for eight weeks starting from 8 / 10 / 2017 to 5 / 12 / 2018. During the experiment, the experimental group is taught RC according to the collaborative reading strategy in which pupils are asked to:
1. think about the topic of the passage.

2. write down everything you already know on the Learning Log, under *What Ialready know about the topic*.

3. share ideas with a partner.

4. skim the passage. Look at the text features (headings, tables, pictures, graphs,

figures) to make a prediction about what you might learn.

5. write down your predictions on the Learning Log, under *What I think I will learn.*

6. share your *best* ideas with the class.

Administration of Post – Test:

At end of the experiment, the post – test is administered to the both groups on 7 / 12 / 2018 . The purpose of the post- test was to evaluate the impact of the collaborative reading on the experimental group subjects' reading comprehension performance in comparison with that of the control group subjects who have been taught reading by using conventional techniques of teaching reading comprehension.

Section Three: Results , Conclusions, and Recommendations

Analysis of Results:

The RC test scores of the experimental and control groups are compared (see Tables.5). The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pupils in the two groups. The mean score experimental group pupils is (14.63) with the standard deviation of (3.146), whereas the mean score of the control group pupils is (8.80) with the standard deviation of (3.156).

The results of applying the t-test formula for two independent samples to point out the difference in the post test scores of the two groups are as follows: the computed t-value is 7.171), and the tabular one is (2). Since the computed t-value is higher than the tabular one, the difference between the scores of the pupils in the two groups is significant at the level of significance of (0.05). In other words, there is significant difference in RC performance between the the experimental group and the control one in the post – test. Thus, initially, it can be decided that the hypothesis of the present study is rejected.

Table (5)

The t-Value Concerning the Difference between the Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-test

Group	No.	Mean	*Standard Deviation*	*t-test values*	
				Computed	Table
Experimental	30	31.53	6.569	6.26	2
Control	30	16.34	8.342		

Conclusions:
In the light of the results obtained, It is concluded that ;
1. the Collaborative Reading proved to be beneficial for enhancing the reading comprehension of the students of 2nd class.
2. Collaborative Reading is rather time consuming, so it may have to spend quite a lot of time.
3. the students had gained more confidence because they had studied and worked together with their classmates. Reading together or collaborative reading could make them feel less stressed out.

Recommendations:
    According to the conclusion of the present study, it is recommended that ;
1. Collaborative Reading as an effective teaching strategy should be utilized by EFL reading classroom teachers to develop their pupils performance in reading comprehension.
2. More care, attention and time should be given to the to developing pupils reading skills. It is a well known fact that reading stands as an important skill for EFL pupils.
3. EFL teachers are recommended to utilize different instructional procedures to teach the reading activities one of which is collaborative reading strategy.
4. EFL teachers are also required to involve their learners in various intensive reading activities to enable them develop positive attitude toward reading and promote their reading skills.

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Appendix A

The RC Post-Test

Q1: / Read the following passage carefully

    Mr. Adnan is a policeman. He gets up at seven thirty morning . He is late that morning. He doesn't have time for breakfast . He goes to the station, he tries to catch the train . He often like being in bed . Mr. Adnan usually eats nothing in the morning .

Now, answer these sentences with (true) and (false) (12 marks)

1-Mr.Adnan gets up at 7. 30 a.m

2-Mr.Adnan works in shop .

3-He has a big breakfast in the morning .

4-mr . Adnan is a policeman

5-He goes to the station by train .

6-He gets up early that morning.

Q2:Answer these sentences from your text book(12m)

1-why is it important to be fit?

2-How long has mr.James worked in the café?

3-Which things are very good for us?

4-why is exercise good for you?

5- What does mr.James dislike doing?

6- Which three things should we be careful about?

Q3: choose the best words from the box:,

Apple , burger, water, sugar , cucumber, crisps

Very good for you	Not so good for you

Q4: Write words that means the same(14m)

1-famous---------------   2-the opposite of the ''like''------------   3-kind --------------

4-the opposite of ''polite''-----------   5-often --------- 6-aroad round a town----------

7-oppsite of fit------------

Q5: Tick the correct answer : (10m)

1-Where were the Olympic games of 2012?

A)Jamaica   b)Brazil c)London

2-How many Olympic gold medals did Usain Bolt win 2012?

a)three   b)four   c) one

3-Who did Andy Murray beat in men's singles tennis final?

a)Serena Williams   b)Roger Federer   c)Greg Rutherford

4- The record for the men's long jump, set in 1991, is:

a) 8.31 metres   b)9.63 metres   c)8.95 metres

5- Which country won gold in the 2012 long jump?

a)Britain   b)Brazil   c) jamaica

Appendix (B)

Discrimination Power and Difficult Level of Test Items

Item No.	DL	DP
1	0.36	0.37
2	0.42	0.42
3	0.55	0.35
4	0.77	0.33
5	0.78	0.45
6	0.31	0.35
7	0.51	0.36
8	0.60	0.42
9	0.74	0.32
10	0.56	0.76
11	0.50	0.47
12	0.62	0.31
13	0.55	0.51
14	0.74	0.35
15	0.72	0.43
16	0.32	0.53
17	0.56	0.38
18	0.49	0.48
19	0.70	0.36
20	0.43	0.45
21	0.31	0.39
22	0.71	0.37
23	0.77	0.38
24	0.49	0.48
25	0.32	0.32
26	0.34	0.31
27	0.54	0.34
28	0.58	0.33
29	0.40	0.38
٣٠	0.69	0.39

Appendix C

List of Jury Members

1	Prof, Abdul–Jabbar Ali Darwesh	Ph.D in Methods of ELT	College of Teachers, Al-Mustansiriya University
2	Asst.Prof. Abdul–Kareem Fadhil	Ph.D. in Language and Linguistics	College of Education,Ibn-Rushd,University of Baghdad
3	Prof. Nejat Al-Jubouri	MA in Methods of ELT	Al-Nusoor Private University College
4	Asst.Prof.Salam Hamid Abbas	Ph.D in Methods of ELT	College of Education,Ibn-Rushd,University of Baghdad