

The Effect of Using the Summary Strategy on Improving Birzeit University EFL Students' Reading Comprehension *

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أثر استخدام استراتيجية التلخيص في تحسين
مهارة الاستيعاب لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية
في جامعة بيرزيت

ملخص :

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى قياس أثر استخدام استراتيجية التلخيص في تنمية مهارة القراءة والاستيعاب لدى طلبة مساق اللغة الانجليزي (141) في جامعة بيرزيت. واشتملت أدوات الدراسة على برنامج يتضمن استراتيجية التلخيص، واختبار القراءة والكتابة، لقياس مهارة الاستيعاب قبل تطبيق البرنامج وبعده، الذي استمر ثمان أسابيع. لقد استخدم المنهج شبه التجريبي في هذه الدراسة، حيث تكونت عينة الدراسة من مجموعة تجريبية واحدة شملت (27 طالب وطالبة) ومجموعة ضابطة (32 طالبا). وتم تطبيق الاختبار القبلي على مجموعتي الدراسة قبل تدريس البرنامج القائم على استراتيجية التلخيص، وتلاه مباشرة الاختبار البعدي، وذلك لقياس أثر البرنامج على تطوير مهارة الاستيعاب لدى المجموعة التجريبية. لقد تم تدريس كلا المجموعتين من قبل نفس الباحث، وذلك للتحكم في متغيرات الدراسة. ولتحليل النتائج الكمية، وحساب اثر البرنامج، تم استخدام رزمة SPSS و t-test، وقد اظهرت نتائج الدراسة فروقا ذات دلالة احصائية بين متوسطي التطبيق القبلي والبعدي، لصالح المجموعة التجريبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : القراءة، القراءة والاستيعاب،
استراتيجيات القراءة، التلخيص

Abstract:

This study investigates the effect of using the summary strategy in developing reading and comprehension skills among students of English Language Communication course (ENGC141) at Birzeit University. The study tools included a program that contained a summary strategy and a literacy test to measure the comprehension skills before and after the program, which lasted eight weeks. The quasi-experimental approach was used in this study. The study sample consisted of one experimental group that had 27 students and a control group of 32 students.

The pre-test was applied to the two study groups before the teaching of the program, which is based on the summary strategy, followed immediately by the post-test to measure the impact

of the program in developing the understanding skills among the experimental group.

Both groups were taught by the same researcher to control the study variables. SPSS and t-test were used to analyze the quantitative results and to calculate the effect of the program. The results of the study showed statistically significant differences between the pre and post application, in favor of the experimental group.

Keywords: Reading, reading and comprehension, reading strategies, summary.

Introduction

Reading is a receptive language skill that requires special attention. Abu Shamla (2010) stated that reading is the process of recognition, interpretation, and perception of written or printed materials, and reading proficiency plays a great role in understanding a written statement accurately and serves as an important tool in all professional services. Abu Nejme (2011) believed that students are no more lifelong readers since reading has not been given due care in English language classrooms, and "reading as a major skill was ignored by pedagogues and researchers for a long period of time (p.3).

Recently different views concerning the nature and the process of reading have resulted in the emergence of several reading models. Reading has historically been regarded, as either a bottom-up or a top-down process. Being viewed as a bottom-up process indicates that fluent comprehension entails sequencing language input in an expedite manner. Here, linguistic processes are considered more as a skill, proportional to the amount of exposure to texts and the efficiency of processing. The more fluent and automatic these processes are, the more skillful and proficient the reader becomes; accordingly, fluent L2 readers are required to have a minimum vocabulary store in long-term memory (English,2011). In the bottom-up reading model, reading generally happens in the following sequence: readers get knowledge input sequentially from the grapho- phonics (letter-sound) to the syntax (structure), and at last to the semantics, or meaning (Gao, 2013).

However, reading as a top-down process

relies on cognitive higher-level processes, or global reading strategies. Here emphasis is put on the reader for reading with a purpose in mind, extracting and directing enough information from a text in order to confirm or reject various expectations or prior knowledge. Less successful readers tend to be those who use more local reading strategies for an attempt to understand specific linguistic units, perhaps because they are more dependent on bottom- up skills, rather than higher-level processing that entails access to background knowledge and making inferences (English, 2011).

Reading for university courses is demanding, and it is the skill upon which success in every academic area is based (Nel, Dreyer & Kopper, 2004). "Many adult learners enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) classes have poor functional literacy comprehension" (Kruidenier (2002b, cited in Jacobson & Ianiro, 2007: 2). According to Kruidenier, adult learners might perform daily comprehension tasks like locating a piece of information in a simple text, but might not synthesize information from more difficult texts. Many departments in different countries have also become worried about students' reading skills, and "teachers are seeing a number of students who either cannot comprehend what they read, or in some cases, cannot even read the textbooks" (Hendricks, Newman & Stropnik, 1995:12).

Blue 1993 (cited in Nel, Dreyer & Kopper, 2004) stated that students at tertiary level are required to understand the overall content, distinguish main points from supporting detail, skim, scan, question, look for assumptions and intentions, analyze, synthesize and evaluate. However, research indicates that a significant number of first-year university students start their studies with less than adequate reading comprehension abilities and reading strategy use. Researchers believed that many English learners fail to be effective readers because they lack knowledge of vocabulary and appropriate reading strategies (Teo, Shaw, Chen and Wang, 2016: 20).

Accordingly, improving reading skills is a top priority for all educators. This is reflected at the national level in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, n.d.), which passed Congress with

overwhelming bipartisan support in 2001 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. NCLB put a special focus on ensuring that states and schools boost the performance of certain groups of students, such as English-language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children, whose achievement, on average, trails their peers.

Since reading is an important skill in the first and second language, failing to read and comprehend what is read in early learning stages leads to educational problems in a learner's life (Seif, 2012). In the Palestinian context, in spite of such an emphasis on the reading comprehension skill, many English teachers have always complained that their students are slow readers; they spend much time on reading a comprehension lesson and lack the ability to comprehend reading texts or answer factual questions (Abu Nijmeh, 2011).

Kaddoumi (1995) maintained that a reading knowledge of a foreign language is important to academic studies, professional success and personal development. Kaddoumi said that parents, schoolteachers, and university instructors expressed their dissatisfaction with the low achievement level of Palestinian students in English reading comprehension texts. As known, texts in reading comprehension books often aim at improving both language and reading skills. The majority of current reading comprehension books in English as a foreign or a second language contains both traditional and innovative approaches, with the referring to comprehension questions based upon a text. However, "it is unfortunate that Middle Eastern students, particularly Palestinians, are not fully equipped with the proper English language proficiency" (Abu Humos, 2012: 768). Abu Humos claimed that teachers assume dominating roles in the classroom environment with little opportunities for students to develop advanced learning employing the critical thinking mind.

In the same vein and from her experience in Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), the researcher and her colleagues have voiced concern about the weak level of students enrolled at universities. Students leave

high schools without being equipped with the necessary language skills required at tertiary level. Following traditional teaching methods at schools, teachers often recommend memorizing vocabulary items and even composition subjects just to help students pass the General Secondary Examination (TAWJIHI).

To capitalize on new developments in teaching/ learning methodology and using technology in teaching English Language skills, a project was conducted by the Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit University (BZU). It started in 2006 and ended in 2009; it involved around 1,300 students who join the university annually and need a certain amount of instruction in English depending on their performance in the placement test. The project sought ways to improve the students' performance in subject areas and job opportunities, and to develop their level in both reading and writing as well as functional vocabulary needed for comprehending academic texts. Needs assessment was directed to determine the students' level in English, areas of need, and issues that motivate or demotivate them in English classes. It was revealed that English language courses were above the students' level and irrelevant to their field of study; the students were demotivated and had to study just for passing those courses.

Instructors of different disciplines also complained that BZU students face difficulty in studying the materials since their English language hinders their comprehension, the thing that leads to low achievement. One of their recommendations was that courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should be taught. "It was suggested that the strong focus inside the project would be on English for Study Skills, with different degrees of subject specificity. Depending on the degree to which the addressees of the proposed English courses are already subject specialists, and the degree to which subject-specific courses can be set up with the teaching resources available" (Department of Languages and Translation, 2006: 3). It is worth mentioning that some courses in General English are obligatory at BZU for all students before they register for specific subject courses.

Based on that, the collected data were used

and disseminated; the syllabi were developed and evaluated in a variety of ways such as reports by teachers, the pilot teaching for selected groups, and colloquia and open forums between students and teachers. New materials were compiled for each of the English Communication Courses at the university.

Another concern at BZU is the weak language proficiency among learners at the Masters level. Instructors noticed that students enrolled in the Masters programs face much difficulty when reading an English text or coping with their teachers. Therefore, it became a policy at the university to offer an English assessment test for most of the programs where English is the main language of instruction. It was also decided by the committee members, the researcher was one of them, that English should be a prerequisite course if students get a score below 55 out of 100 in the assessment test.

Teaching and Learning Reading

Teaching and learning methods are vital factors in students' success in all academic subjects. The number of second/ foreign language learners all over the world has increased since 1960s, and so educators and researchers have been working on developing new methods and strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension at schools and tertiary levels. Abu Shamla (2010) stated that learning to read is one of the most important strategies students can accomplish in schools because it is the foundation for all academic endeavors.

Traditionally, teaching methods relied on the teacher presenting the new vocabulary in the reading passage and asking the students to read either silently or aloud. This was always followed by answering the book questions, which were usually directly copied from the reading passage. This did not only demotivate students, but it also discouraged them from thinking critically about the text. From his personal experience as an EFL teacher and supervisor, Samadani (2009) claimed that EFL teachers' practices in Saudi schools are far from teaching reading skills and strategies. Rather, they spend the time devoted for reading in practicing one skill, silent reading, and on what

they believe are comprehension questions. Block & Israel (2005) indicated that instead of spending much time teaching comprehension strategies, teachers focus on asking literal questions, assigning workbook pages, and giving directions.

The literature on the teaching and learning of reading comprehension recommended a variety of strategies and techniques to help learners develop this skill. McKown & Barnett, (2007) recommended teaching reading strategies to increase student comprehension and found that the integration of different strategies in language classrooms proved to develop language skills. Visualization (graphic organizers), reciprocal teaching question generating, directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA), predicting, and summarizing are some of these strategies.

Various theories and models regarding the reading process have taken place in different periods. Implications for teaching second or foreign language reading have been drawn from these reading models. Akkakoson (2011) presented the main teaching approaches such as the Grammar translation method, the Audio-lingual method, and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach.

However, due to the importance of reading as a macro skill necessary for understanding all subject matters, especially with the expansion of technology and internet, the researcher of the current study attempted to use modern strategies to improve language skills. For this reason, the summary strategy was implemented as a model of comprehension instruction.

Research on Approaches to Reading Strategies

One way for enhancing learners' reading comprehension is through teaching learning strategies (Khajavi & Ketabi, 2012). The article "Reading Comprehension Strategies Overview" indicated that good readers always think of questions, make connections and inferences about what the story may mean, decide whether a given piece of information is significant, summarize what they read, and try to create understanding as they go.

Qudha (1987) stated that comprehending any reading text is affected by many variables. These are sentence structure and length, vocabulary difficulty, and number of the new concepts introduced. Research design regarding L2 reading comprehension ability has been divided into two approaches. Reading ability is considered either as a product of the number of meaning representations gained over the course of reading texts, or as processes of mental activities whilst engaged in a text in order to construct meaning (English, 2011). Researchers and educators employed multiple strategies for enhancing students' reading comprehension, which reported many successful results. These strategies include "asking and answering questions, generating questions, summarizing and clarifying text, and predicting the intent of text" (Abu Humos, 2012:772).

Researchers recommended that teachers must raise students' awareness on the importance of the reading skill and of the necessary reading strategies that help them comprehend any reading text. Research showed that more successful language learners are aware of the strategies they use and why they use them (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Many studies have investigated the effectiveness of various methods of reading strategy scaffolding. In a study of 7th grade low-level L1 English readers, Brown and Palincsar (1984) investigated the effectiveness of individual strategy training based on four reading strategies: summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting. Results indicated statistically significant reading improvement, and adaptations of this study have led research to investigate strategy training within other learning environments (English, 2011).

Summary, as a way to guide English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) learners to read and learn, improves their reading abilities (Gao, 2013). Gao analyzed the relevant studies and elaborated the reasons for the positive effect of summary writing on EFL readers' reading comprehension. Analysis was based on the tenets of mediation theory in language learning derived from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Researchers (Kozulin 2003; Donato & McCormick, 1994, cited in Gao, 2013) maintained that Vygotsky originally proposed that children's high-order thinking develops through mediating agents that interact with the environment. Children's development involves several types of mediators: material objects (e.g., textbooks), symbolic tools (e.g., language), human beings (e.g., teachers or peers) and organized activities (e.g., classroom tasks). Mediators, in the form of objects, symbols, and persons, transform natural and spontaneous impulses into higher mental processes including strategic orientations to problem solving.

Gao (2013) concluded that reading materials can be regarded as the language mediators, and summary writing as a task mediator that helps language learners achieve self-regulation/comprehension through symbolic tools. When approaching a summary task, Gao advised teachers to first select the appropriate reading materials, and make sure the texts are suitable, not demanding for their students. However, if the reading text is over-demanding and readers face difficulty in comprehending most of the words, they will probably fail to complete a reading summarization.

Teaching different English Communication Courses at Birzeit University, the researcher of this study remarked that when assigning a difficult reading task for summary, students do waste time looking up the meaning of unfamiliar items. This impedes comprehending the text and, in turn, students resort to copying the text as is instead of summarizing it. Therefore, she recommended selecting reading passages, which are a little bit above the students' level. This is consistent with Krashen's «Input Hypothesis» (1979), which stated that learners make progress in acquiring their language knowledge when they comprehend the language input that is slightly more advanced than their current levels.

Some of the studies about reading strategies reported by Gao (2013) are presented below:

◆ Graham and Herbert (2011) concluded that writing about the material students read and teaching students how to write improves their

reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word reading. Therefore, researchers recommended increasing students' writing.

- ◆ Zhou and Siriyothin (2008) did a pilot study on the effects of reading tasks on the reading comprehension of 72 Chinese EFL participants. They found that reading with summary or journal writing could be a good way to improve learners' reading ability.
- ◆ Emam (2011) conducted a study on 120 EFL students in Iran divided into 4 groups, with one control and three experimental groups. The three experimental groups were exposed to different teaching arrangements, namely, one in discussion-task, one in personalizing-task and the last one in clustering-task. Two written summary tasks were assigned to them, one in English and the other in Persian. The result highlighted the facilitating effect of the mediating tasks in improving reading comprehension of a source text.
- ◆ While some research confirmed the effect of summarization writing on developing reading comprehension, some other relevant studies showed no significant influence. The following studies were reported in Gao (2013):
- ◆ Crowhurst (1991) did a quasi-experimental study on persuasive discourse through a 5-week writing experiment; he found no differences between groups on reading recall scores.
- ◆ Bangert - Drowns and some scholars (2004) conducted a study on 48 school - based writing - to - learn programs. They found that although the use of metacognitive prompts enhanced students' academic achievements, writing has only a small, positive impact on conventional measures of academic achievement.

Based on the above studies, Gao (2013) explained two reasons regarding mediation theory. First, readers should be guided to select the most appropriate types of mediators. For example, EFL learners at the intermediate level need more mediators for their English learning. Students should also be supported with their decision-making in choosing the appropriate sorts of mediators. Therefore, when giving a summary

task, teachers should select the appropriate reading materials for the students and make sure the texts are suitable and not much demanding.

Another reason could refer to the individual differences in the executive functions of the writing process, which might affect one's composing process (Graham, 1997; Singer & Bashir, 1999 cited in Gao, 2013). Even with the readable texts, lower level students are in need of more scaffolding, and teachers should offer these students more mediators in their learning process. Research based on the mediation theory concluded that objects-regulation (reading texts) and self-regulation (summary writing) should be interconnected with others-regulation (teachers' scaffolding).

Statement of the Problem

Students in secondary schools and universities have low English proficiency level and face many language-learning problems. The researcher's continuous observation revealed that this situation existed due to the lack of language learning strategies, which could be an obstacle to understanding any reading text. In addition, being dissatisfied with the low level of reading comprehension achievement of university students in reading English texts, the researcher realized a need to improve EFL reading comprehension. Therefore, it is hoped that utilizing the summary strategy might improve students' reading comprehension.

Research Objective

The current study attempted to investigate the effect of using the summary strategy on developing students' reading comprehension.

Research Question

The study was designed to answer the research main question: What is the effect of employing the summary strategy on improving BZU students' reading comprehension?

The following Null hypothesis was proposed:

There is no significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the English reading

comprehension test between students in the experimental group and those of the control group because of the intervention.

Significance of the Study

The current study highlights the major importance of the summary strategy and its effectiveness in developing reading comprehension among ENG C (141) students. It also offers applicable exercises to help university teachers implement the summary strategy effectively through a given program. Therefore, this study is expected to be important for students and teachers to achieve the intended learning outcome, which is improving reading comprehension.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

- ◆ Two groups of first year students of different majors: One experimental (32 male and female students), and another control group (27 students) enrolled in ENG C (141) at Birzeit University
- ◆ Using 'summary' as the only reading strategy.
- ◆ Implementing a program for improving students' reading comprehension skill during a limited period, eight weeks, in the first semester, 2015.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms have been defined:

Reading

Reading is defined as the process between decoding written/ graphical series and understanding of meaning (Norato Pena & Canon, 2008). It is viewed to be an understandable, unobservable internal and mental process (Ur, 1996), and "an active process—a dynamic, meaning- making interaction between the page and your brain. Understanding the reading process helps people become critical thinkers" (Critical thinking, reading, and writing, 2015: 74).

The procedural definition for the current study is adopted from Seif (2012). Reading is considered as an interactive skill in which readers

interact with the text and employ their experience and previous knowledge to get the intended meaning. Besides, readers use their cognitive and metacognitive strategies in order to make sense and to get the target message the author wants to convey

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension indicates being able to “gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences” (Woolley, 2011: 15). Learning reading comprehension requires a strategy with lesson plans that progressively develop and reinforce reading comprehension skill. A student does not seem to really get comprehension by reading; which indicates that the student is successfully decoding words, “but decoding without reading comprehension will not get him further” (Abu Nejme, 2011: 2). Reading successfully goes well beyond fluency and word recognition and relies heavily upon comprehension of text (Reading Strategies for Parents, n. d).

Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are deliberate, conscious techniques that readers employ to enhance their comprehension or retention of the textual information (Li, 2010). They are purposeful cognitive actions students take when they are reading to help them construct and maintain meaning. Reading strategies are behavioral and mental; deliberate, conscious plans and techniques as well as skills aiming to enhance reading comprehension and overcome comprehension failures. They are of interest for what they reveal about the way readers manage their interaction with the written text and how these strategies are related to text comprehension (Carrell, 1989).

Summarizing

Summarizing is a complex process where students spend time “restating the essence of text or an experience in as few words as possible or in a new, yet efficient, manner” (Wormeli, 2005: 2, cited in Zafarania & Kabganib, 2014: 1961). Summarization is associated with complex “mental

processes and involves a number of cognitive and metacognitive activities” (Hosseinpur, 2015:70). Based on several harmonious definitions, making a good summary involves three important processes: comprehending and identifying the main propositions in the text, condensing the main propositions, and writing concisely in one's own words.

Methodology

Context

The study was carried out in two ENGC (141) sections in The Department of Languages and Translation at BZU. Originally, BZU was founded as a small school for village girls in Birzeit in 1924, but it is now a distinguished Palestinian university with a newly built modern campus equipped with all the requirements needed for the teaching / learning process. It offers the bachelor and Master's degrees in a variety of specializations in addition to the PhD degree in social studies.

In accordance with its mission, the Department of Languages and Translation considers English as a major tool for learning and teaching at BZU and elsewhere. It provides English communication courses to all university students. Textbooks and reference materials for almost all academic disciplines are in English. Internet resources, including periodicals and communication skills, are becoming a dominant source of knowledge and information in academic life.

The Department offers four English courses (101,102,141.231), but the number of courses each student takes depends on his cut score mark on the placement test all students take before entering the university. These courses aim at developing the students' four language skills. Besides English, the Department offers other language courses such as Spanish, Greek, German, Italian, and Hebrew.

ENGC (141) is an English Communication course that reinforces the development of the four skills and raises the students' language proficiency to the level of efficient communication and accuracy. Emphasis is placed on reading and writing. The writing component enables students to write cohesive and coherent paragraphs and

essays. The aural/oral skills are to be practiced mainly in connection with the reading materials. Students who pass 141 will be transferred to ENGC 231.

Participants of the Study

The sample consisted of fifty- nine ENGC (141) students whose cut off scores in the placement test ranged from 56% to 79%. They were placed by the registrar office in two groups; one group was chosen as the experimental (n. 27) and the other as the control group (n. 32). Both groups were similar in terms of social and cultural characteristics; their ages ranged from 18 to 20 years, so they were considered homogeneous. The total population was 800 students.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed:

A pre/post-reading test validated by a committee of EFL teachers was administered to both groups before and after the intervention to investigate the extent of effectiveness of the reading strategies. Based on instructors' recommendations for content and face validity and reliability, the test comprised a reading comprehension text followed by comprehension questions of different levels of difficulty, vocabulary in the form of fill in the blank spaces, match words with their definitions, guess the meaning of unfamiliar items, give the synonyms, and a summary section.

An intervention program comprising one reading strategy. A model of comprehension instruction was followed in teaching the summary strategy (Appedices: I, II, III, 1V).

Procedures

The proposed program lasted for eight weeks, and each group had three fifty-minute class a week. The same textbooks were required for the two groups (Appendix V). However, the experimental group was trained to focus on the summary strategy, while the control group was taught traditionally without further concentration on the summary. The post-reading test was

administered after the intervention. Descriptive statistics - means and standard deviation - were calculated, and t-test was employed to find out if there was a significant difference in the reading comprehension scores between the two groups in favor of the experimental one.

Results and Discussion

To explore the effect of the intervention on students' reading comprehension, the post-test was administered to both groups. Descriptive statistics of the experimental pre / post tests were calculated as presented in Table (1) below.

Table (1)

Comparison between participants' pre/post test scores in the Experimental Group

Score	No.	Mean	Median	S D	Std. Error Mean	df	Correlation	Sig.	t
Pre test	27	17.34	18.50	3.06	.5617	26	.423	.000	-6.83
Post test		21.18	22.00						

Table (1) shows that the post-test mean (21.18) was higher than its pre-test mean (17.34). A matched - paired t-test was performed to check whether the difference was significant or not. It was found that there was a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group after the intervention at $p < 0.05$ level. As a rule, if the mean difference is statistically significantly different from 0, it means that the post scores and the pre scores are not the same. According to the formula $P(T \leq t) \text{ two - tail (sig)} = P < 0.05$, the t - statistic was significant at the .05 critical alpha level, $t(26) = -6.83$, two - tail $p = .000$. Since the probability is less than the critical alpha level, then it is said that a significant difference exists between the two means, providing evidence of the effectiveness of the strategy.

In order to examine the difference between the control group pre and post-test results, descriptive statistics were also calculated. The results are displayed in Table (2).

Table (2)

Comparison between participants' pre/post test score in Control Group

Score	No.	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Correlation	Sig.	t
Pretest	32	16.09	16.40	2.49	.4414	31	.241	.000	-7.75
Posttest		19.95	20.00	2.02	.3588				

Table (2) illustrates that the mean of the post - test (19.95) was higher than the pre - test result of the same group (16.09). To determine if the difference was significant, a paired sample t-test was run. The analysis indicated that the difference between the pre - test and post - test results of the control group was statistically significant at P - level ($p < 0.05$).

As demonstrated in the tables above, both groups progressed after the intervention. As far as the means of both groups before the intervention were concerned, the researcher found that they were almost equal (CG = 16.09; EG = 17.34). The result of the independent samples t-test was 0.08 which is bigger than 0.05. Therefore,

there were equal variances with no significant difference between the mean scores of two groups as presented in Table (3) below:

Table (3)

Comparison between participants' pre-test scores in both groups

Score	No.	Mean	S D	T Stat	df	t Critical two-tail
Pretest CG	32	16.09	2.49	0.08	57	2.00
Pretest EG	27	17.34	3.06			

An independent samples t-test was employed to find out if there was a positive change in the performance of the experimental group after the intervention. It was revealed that the students' level of reading comprehension in the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the students in the control group. The results indicated that the summary strategy was an effective technique to improve the reading comprehension of the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Accordingly, the hypothesis reads that there is a statistically significant difference between the performance of students in the experimental group and control in favor of the experimental one (Table 4).

Table (4)

Comparison between participants' post-test scores in both groups

Score	No.	Mean	S D	T Stat	df	Actual Confidence Level	P(T<=t) two-tail	t Critical two-tail
CG	32	19.95	2.034	0.49	57	97.16	0.028	2.01
EG	27	21.185	2.18					

To wrap up, the current study, based on a program focusing on the summary strategy, has shown the positive effects on improving students' reading comprehension. The results of this study are consistent with other studies based on strategy-based programs to improve students' achievement or performance in language skills. For example, Boke & Hewitt (2004) proved through various research that using reading strategies to develop the reading skill is like using any other strategies to accomplish any task.

The results of this study are also in line with Gao's (2013) conclusions. Gao saw that the summary strategy is a way to guide English

Language learners to read and proved that writing a summary can better improve EFL readers' comprehension.

The findings are also consistent with the action research project conducted by Mckown & Barnett (2007). It proved that using other higher-order thinking skills such as summarizing, inference and questioning improved students' reading comprehension,

Other researchers like O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Abu Shamla, 2010; Blacklock et al. 2010; Abu Armana, 2011; Abu Nejme, 2011; Akkakoson, 2011; Ghanimi, 2014; Zafarania,

& Kabganib (2014) showed that using reading strategies in English language classrooms had positive effects on developing students' language skills.

Conclusion

The previous discussion clarified the effect of using the summary as a reading strategy to develop students' reading comprehension. Although the eight-week period of implementing the study was short, it proved that the students who were trained to use the summary strategy in the experimental group performed better in the post-test than students in the control group. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant development in the experimental group's reading comprehension after the program. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study, which targeted the effect of using the summary strategy on developing ENGC 141 students' reading comprehension was rejected.

The study also showed that there was a slight development in the post-test of the control group, which used the traditional teaching methods without much concentration on summary, as compared to the pre-test results. The researcher attributed that to the progress made by some university students to learn the English language as an essential language at BZU, or by the efforts made by others just to pass the prerequisite English courses.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Based on the previous literature and on the findings of this study, training students to utilize reading strategies in order to gain better comprehension of any reading text is a necessity. Teaching reading strategies can help second/foreign-language learners overcome their reading problems, especially when starting instruction in elementary school (Teo, Shaw, Chen, & Wang, 2016). Through teaching different levels at school and university, the researcher noticed the difficulty students face when learning English. Students cannot comprehend a reading text with unfamiliar vocabulary items, and so cannot summarize. Thus, she definitely supports Krashen's (1979)

statement that reading texts should not be very demanding but a little bit above the students' level of comprehension.

In addition, teachers should be aware of the mediators necessary for language learning. They should also be aware of the individual differences to be able to scaffold students with the necessary strategies and decision-making in choosing the appropriate sorts of mediators. "Since learner centeredness is the focus in Education nowadays, learners are expected to take a more active role in their education. It is expected that students be aware of their learning styles and adapt their language learning strategies to fit with their styles" (Abu Armana, 2011: 4).

Moreover, teachers should adopt up - to-date reading strategies like KWL, Think - Pair-Share, visualizing, inference, and using Graphic organizers such as T-Chart and Venn Diagram, for reading is a major and fundamental skill in all academic subjects at tertiary level. There is also a vital need to involve more writing tasks to facilitate students' comprehension. Above all, teachers should encourage students to practice summarizing not only in English language classrooms, but also in other academic areas.

For further research, a wider sample can be tested to generalize the findings. More strategies and methods can be investigated to test their effect on developing language comprehension. Studying the effect of other variables, for example age, gender and major, in developing reading comprehension is also recommended.

Moreover, the researcher recommended integrating the strategy of summarization in all communication courses, taking into consideration selecting suitable and non-demanding reading texts to improve students' comprehension.

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Appendices

Appendix I

The Model of Comprehension Instruction

Summarizing

Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading and to put it into their own words. Instruction in summarizing helps students:

- Identify or generate main ideas
- Connect the main or central ideas
- Eliminate unnecessary information
- Remember what they read

Effective comprehension strategy instruction is explicit

Comprehension strategies are conscious plans — sets of steps that good readers use to make sense of text. Comprehension strategy instruction helps students become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension. The seven strategies here appear to have a firm scientific basis for improving text comprehension.

Research shows that explicit teaching techniques are particularly effective for comprehension strategy instruction. In explicit instruction, teachers tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them. The steps of explicit instruction typically include direct explanation,

teacher modeling (“thinking aloud”), guided practice, and application.

- Direct explanation

The teacher explains to students why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy.

- Modeling

The teacher models, or demonstrates, how to apply the strategy, usually by “thinking aloud” while reading the text that the students are using.

- Guided practice

The teacher guides and assists students as they learn how and when to apply the strategy.

- Application

The teacher helps students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently.

Effective comprehension strategy instruction can be accomplished through cooperative learning, which involves students working together as partners or in small groups on clearly defined tasks. Cooperative learning instruction has been used successfully to teach comprehension strategies. Students work together to understand texts, help each other learn and apply comprehension strategies. Teachers do help students learn to work in groups. Teachers also provide modeling of the comprehension strategies

Adapted from

Adler, C.R. (Ed). 2001. *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*, pp. 49-54. National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved August, 2013, from <https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/PRFbooklet.Pdf>

Appendix II

How to Write a Summary

Preparing to Write:

To write a good summary it is important to thoroughly understand the material you are working with. Here are some preliminary steps in writing a summary.

1. Skim the text, noting in your mind the subheadings. If there are no subheadings, try to divide the text into sections. Consider why you have been assigned the text. Try to determine what type of text you are dealing with. This can help you identify important information.
2. Read the text, highlighting important information and taking notes.
3. In your own words, write down the main points of each section.
4. Write down the key support points for the main topic, but do not include minor detail.
5. Go through the process again, making changes as appropriate.

For example:

Global Implications of Patent Law Variation:

<p>A patent is an exclusive right to use an invention for a certain period of time, which is given to an inventor as compensation for disclosure of an invention. Although it would be beneficial for the world economy to have uniform patent laws, each country has its own laws designed to protect domestic inventions and safeguard technology. Despite widespread variation, patent laws generally fall under one of two principles: the first-to-file and first-to invent. The first-to-file principle awards a patent to the person or institution that applies for a patent first, while the first-to invent principle grants the patent to the person or institution that was first to invent – and can prove it. Most countries have adopted the first-to-file system. However, the United States maintains a first-to-invent system, despite obvious shortcomings. A result of countries employing different patent law principles is inconsistency of patent ownership. Include a description of the problem surrounding variation in patent laws.</p> <p>Patent ownership is not recognized globally. On the contrary, ownership may change depending on the country. It is not uncommon for an invention to have two patent owners – one in the United States and one in the rest of the world. This unclear ownership often has economic consequences. If a company is interested in using a patented invention, it may be unable to receive permission from both patent owners, which in turn may prevent manufacture of a particular product. Even if permission is received from both owners, pay royalties to both may be quite costly. In this case, if the invention is useful enough, a company may proceed and pass on the added cost to consumers.</p> <p>International economic tension has also been increasing as a result of differing policies. Many foreign individuals and companies believe that they are at a serious disadvantage in the United States, with regard to patent ownership because of the logistical difficulties in establishing first-to invent status. Further, failure of the United States to recognize patent ownership in other countries is in violation of the Paris Conventions on Industrial Properties, which requires all member nations to treat all patents equally. The conflict surrounding patents has prompted the World Intellectual Properties Organization (WIPO) to lobby for universality in patent laws. WIPO maintains that the first necessary step involves compelling the United States to reexamine its patent principle, taking into account the reality of a global economy. This push may indeed result in more global economic cooperation.</p>	<p>This first sentence is a general definition. It may be safe to assume that your audience is already familiar with patents; thus, you do not have to include it in your summary.</p> <p>This is the main idea.</p> <p>The classification of the two principles is important.</p> <p>Ignore specific details about the different principles. The terms are self-explanatory. It is important to point out that most of the world follows one system and the United States another.</p> <p>Provide some support/explanation for the problem, but not all the details</p> <p>Describe this other problem associated with differing patent principles.</p> <p>Provide some explanation, but not all the details.</p> <p>Describe the action taken to solve the problem</p>
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Writing the Summary:

When writing the summary there are three main requirements:

1. The summary should cover the original as a whole.
2. The material should be presented in a neutral fashion.
3. The summary should be a condensed version of the material, presented in your own words.

** Also do not include anything that does not appear in the original. (Do not include your own comments or evaluation.)

and

Be sure to identify your source.

For example:

In his paper "Global Implications of Patent Law Variation," Koji Suzuki (1991) states that lack of consistency in the world's patent laws is a serious problem. In most of the world, patent ownership is given to the inventor that is first to file for a patent. However, the United States maintains a first-to-invent policy. In view of this, patent ownership can change depending on the country. Multiple patent ownership can result in economic problems; however, most striking is the international tension it causes. The fact that the United States does not recognize patent ownership in other countries, in violation of the Paris Convention on Industrial Properties, has prompted the World Intellectual Properties Organization (WIPO) to push the United States to review its existing patent law principles.

Adopted from: Courtesy the Odegaard Writing & Research Center <http://depts.washington.edu/owrc>

Based on: Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feat. Academic Writing for Graduate Students, Essential Tasks and Skills. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1994. 105-130.

Appendix –III

Sample Summary Exercise Reading Comprehension

Name: _____

Section: _____

Read the passage carefully and then answer the questions below

Much has been said and written about the declining numbers of and disappointing lack of diversity among American college students majoring in engineering. Among the factors cited to explain this phenomenon are the lack of exposure of high school students to the very idea of engineering and the fact that many have insufficient mathematics and science background to gain entrance to engineering school, even if they do identify the profession as a possible career. This is unfortunate, for the ideas of engineering should be integrated into the curricula not only of high schools but also of middle and primary schools. Our children are being done a disservice by not being exposed properly throughout their education to engineering activities identified as such. After all, even pre-school children have the prerequisites in their play for appreciating exactly what engineering is: design. Indeed, design is everywhere around them throughout their school day, even in their before-school and after-school activities. It should only be pointed out to them that they are designing something, and therefore being engineers of sorts, in virtually everything that they do.

I. Choose the letter that best gives the correct answer:

I. The writer of the passage feels strongly that

A) Children should be involved in engineering activities at an early age

B) Many children are being unfairly directed into a career in engineering

C) The mathematics and science courses in schools need to be modernized

D) University engineering courses ought to be upgraded

E) The education of pre-school children is being given too much importance

2. The writer points out that children can, at a very early age.....

A) Be encouraged to take part in after-school activities

B) Develop an interest in scientific matters

C) Make up their minds to study engineering at university

D) Learn something about the basis of engineering, which is design

E) Be influenced by their school environment

3. The writer recognizes the fact that engineering.....

A) Is becoming less and less popular as a field of study among university students

B) is only suitable for highly intelligent students

C) Is a complicated subject only suitable for really mature students

D) Has become one of the most popular fields of study at American universities

E) Requires many years of training prior to qualification

4. Among the reasons given in the passage for the decline in the numbers of engineering students is that.....

A) The American schools still follow outdated curricula

B) University entrance requirements are far too demanding

C) It is generally recognized as one of the most difficult of all the courses

D) Engineering in the US is not considered to be a competitive field of study

E) Many of them fail to acquire an adequate knowledge of mathematics and science at high

Schools

5. According to the passage, all school programmes-----.

A) Should be designed to make students aware of the engineering practices and principles

B) Ought to give priority to the sciences

C) Must encourage children to make creative designs

D) Seem to put the emphasis on the need to diversify learning

E) Overlook the fact that all children are different

I. II-Summarize the passage in two sentences:

Good Luck

Adopted from: GMAT-TOEFL-SAT
SAMPLE PRACTICE TEST -3 Answers: 1.A 2.D
3.A 4.E 5.A

Appendix IV

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section: _____

Summary Writing Rubric

4. Excellent summary that includes the following:

- Clear main idea in the first sentence
• All important details are included
• Details are in a logical order
• Ideas are connected to make the writing flow
• Author restates the main idea again as a

conclusion without writing it the same as in the first sentence

3. Good summary includes the following:
 - Clear main idea in the first sentence
 - Important details are included but some might be missing
 - Ideas are in logical order
 - Restated main idea doesn't differ from the first sentence
2. Below average summary includes:
 - Main idea is unclear — not specifically stated in the writing
 - Some critical information is missing
 - Ideas are in a random order and not logical
 - Restated main idea is not in this piece of writing
1. Ineffective summary includes:
 - The main idea is not present in the 1st sentence of the writing
 - Contains only some details
 - Ideas are not in logical order
 - Missing a concluding sentence with the restated main idea

Appendix V

Course Material

Two textbooks were taught:

1. Making Connections (MC) (Intermediate) “A Strategic Approach to Academic Reading” by Jessica Mcentire and Jessica Williams,
2. “Introduction to Academic Writing” (IAW) by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue.

In addition, many tasks and assignments, based on different reading texts from the two books, were done at home and practiced daily in class to reinforce the strategy of summary.

