



IMPROVING ENGLISH STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION AND LEARNING DIFFICULTY BASED ON SOME VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

Experimental study in this article is aimed to investigate the effect of reading comprehension improvement for English language students toward their learning difficulty by using the reading speed strategy and identify the effect of gender and teaching method on the improvement of students' reading comprehension. To achieve the objectives, a test was prepared to measure students' reading comprehension after ensuring validity and reliability. The study involved 200 English students of the schools registered in Direktorat Pendidikan Wilayah Irbid II in the academic year of 2020/2021. They were 80 males and females, who are selected by using a simple method. The sample was categorized into two experimental groups with training and two control groups with the same material learning in a traditional method. The test was distributed to the groups before applying the strategy to ensure the whole group. The result showed that there are differences between the mean score of experimental group and the mean score of control group, and in favor of the experimental group. The result also showed that there are no differences among the mean score of students, which is attributed to gender.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, English language, learning difficulty, reading speed*

MENINGKATKAN KETERAMPILAN PEMAHAMAN MEMBACA SISWA BAHASA INGGRIS DENGAN KESULITAN BELAJAR MENURUT BEBERAPA VARIABEL

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengaruh pengembangan pemahaman membaca di kalangan siswa bahasa Inggris dengan ketidakmampuan belajar menggunakan strategi kecepatan membaca dan mengidentifikasi pengaruh gender dan metode pengajaran pada pengembangan pemahaman membaca. Untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian, tes disiapkan untuk mengukur pemahaman bacaan setelah memastikan validitas dan reliabilitasnya. Populasi penelitian ini adalah seluruh (200) siswa bahasa Inggris di sekolah-sekolah Direktorat Pendidikan Wilayah Irbid II semester II tahun ajaran 2020/2021. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari (80) siswa laki-laki dan perempuan, yang dipilih dengan metode sederhana. Sampel dibagi menjadi dua kelompok eksperimen, yang menerima pelatihan, dan dua kelompok kontrol lainnya, yang mempelajari materi pendidikan yang sama dengan metode tradisional. Tes diterapkan pada kelompok belajar sebelum memulai pelaksanaan penelitian untuk memastikan kesetaraan kelompok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan antara nilai rata-rata siswa kelompok eksperimen dan nilai rata-rata siswa kelompok kontrol, dan mendukung kelompok eksperimen. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan antara skor rata-rata skor siswa yang dikaitkan dengan jenis kelamin.

Kata Kunci: *pemahaman membaca, bahasa Inggris, ketidakmampuan belajar, kecepatan membaca*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is the heart of the reading process. The educational system, with all its categories, seeks to provide students with this skill to help them increase the level of awareness and to be owners of basic reading skills that enable them to understand vocabulary.

Reading comprehension also helps students to perceive the different meanings of the read text, and the ability to analyze and evaluate. Reading comprehension skills are very important in determining the success or failure of the student in academic life. The development of reading

speed skills for students is important in the basic stages, as the student in these stages is expected to be able to read quickly, and they are expected to read to benefit from new information (Elizabeth, Juliana & Bloom, 2010). Students who read slowly due to their lack of speed in reading will not develop reading speed as other students who read quickly (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding, 2010).

Because reading speed is so important to students, they should be trained to acquire this skill to achieve understanding. The faster the comprehension increases, the faster students can access important information, or obtain quick facts. There is no doubt that every student needs this kind of reading to keep pace with the rapid developments in this era (Bani Issa, 2010). Because of using traditional methods in schools to teach reading, a generation appeared that had reading difficulties, and many skills that students must master in reading are missing. Reading disability, if not addressed early, prevent students' progress and continued with them into other grades (Khasawneh, 2021).

Reading comprehension is a product of conscious reading that broadens and develops students' experiences, activates their intellectual skills, and provides students with the necessary information to solve many personal problems, to identify tendencies and increase them in breadth and depth, and develop a sense of self and the selves of others. It is appropriate for them, and pushes the mind to curiosity, reflection, and thinking, raises the level of understanding in social issues, raises the spirit of criticism for books, magazines, and newspapers, and makes the individual feel a sense of belonging to culture (Raslan, 2015).

Students face many difficulties in reading in English language, which constitutes an obstacle to their education and limits their activities and tendencies towards learning. Therefore, it is important to find more effective methods through the use of methods that attract their attention and excite them, and to eliminate the problems that they may face in learning to read (Rahimi & Babaei, 2021).

The problem of weakness in reading speed is one of the biggest problems that students face, especially in the basic education stages. This creates negative effects represented in the weak level of comprehension among students. Addressing this problem is still below the standard, as several studies have been interested in this topic, but we notice the deficiency in the number of Arab studies that tried to develop reading speed skills. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop an experimental program to improve reading speed skills for students with learning disabilities to present results on which educational applications are based to raise the level of students in reading speed and then raising their level of understanding and comprehension. Therefore, it is hoped that the current study will contribute to filling a gap in this area (Quinn, Wagner, Petscher, Roberts, Menzel, & Schatschneider, 2020).

This study aims to identify the effect of using the reading speed strategy on developing the reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities in English language compared to the traditional methods.

The present study seeks to give answers to the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences in reading comprehension between the mean scores of students with learning disabilities due to the teaching method (reading speed, the traditional method)?
2. Are there any differences in reading comprehension between the mean scores of students with learning disabilities due to the student's gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension should elevate students to the level of awareness and cognition so that they become readers who possess reading skills that enable them to comprehend the linguistic units at advanced levels. It also helps students to raise their ability to accurately comprehend the reading, understand the vocabulary, the perception of the surface and deep meaning, and the ability to understand the aim and significance of the writer to make objective

judgments about the text. Abu Riach (2009) defined reading comprehension as the process by which previous experiences and features of the reader are used to form meaningful meanings for each reader in a specific context, and that process includes selecting specific ideas and understanding them in one sentence.

Fadlallah (2015) stated that comprehending the reading material, especially in educational situations, is a guarantee of upgrading the learner's language, providing him with rich ideas, being familiar with useful information, acquiring the skills of criticism, and accustoming him to expressing opinions and passing judgments, and helping him to pursue everything new. Jad (2013) defined reading comprehension as a complex process that goes on at different levels, requires mental capabilities and abilities, and needs a lot of practice, training, interpretation, analysis, balance, and criticism.

It is clear from the above that reading comprehension is important for students, and that it is the main goal of the reading process. Indeed, some educators regard reading and comprehension as one thing. Therefore, reading comprehension skills must be present in the curriculum and the classroom due to the importance of comprehension in language communication, and understanding the linguistic message between the writer and the reader (Harthi, 2020).

Previous Studies

Several studies have been conducted to investigate reading comprehension among students, and these studies have come up with different results. Bani Issa (2010) conducted a study aimed at identifying the effect of Paul Skelly's method of reading speed and reading comprehension among outstanding students in the elementary stage in Jordan. The study sample consisted of (60) students. The results of the study showed differences in reading comprehension skills and differences in reading speed skills on the two tests due to Paul Skelly's method and in favor of the experimental group.

Randy, Andrea, Christine, & Emily (2011) conducted a study aimed at accelerating

the reading ability of children with slow reading ability. Reading was the first element among all groups, as children with low reading ability showed low goals in speed compared to their children's counterparts, and it indicated that the speed component was negatively associated with adult age.

Babayigit (2019) examined the speed of reading the uppercase and lowercase texts of primary school students. The study used the survey of quantitative research methods. The sample of the study included 732 students. The data were collected in three primary schools in the Sorgun district of Yozgat province in March 2018. The number of words a pupil reads in a minute is noted. The reading speed of text written with lower case letters is more than the reading speed of text written with capital letters at all grade levels. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in the reading rate of the capital letters and lower case letters. The speed of reading lowercase letters text is 13% higher than the speed of reading capital letters character text. The results also showed that secondary school students' reading aloud texts with lower case letter scores significantly higher than primary school students read.

Durukan (2020) investigated the impact of speed reading training on reading speeds and comprehension skills of secondary school students. The sample of the study consisted of 40 students studying at the level of secondary school 8th grade in Trabzon province. The study used the experimental approach by applying the single-group pretest-posttest. The reading speeds and comprehension levels of the students were determined during the research, and then 20 hours of speed reading training was provided to the students every other day for 5 days. The results of the study indicated significant improvement in the level of students after the implementation of the study.

Deniz and Yavuz (2020) investigated reading error types, reading levels, and reading speeds of students with special learning difficulties. The study used the case study model. The sample consisted of 34 students enrolled in Grades 3–8, who were diagnosed with SLD in

Konya in the 2019–2020 academic year. The results of the study revealed that the error types displayed by the students with SLD in the texts were misreading, hesitating while reading, repeating, omitting a sound/syllable/word or skipping a line, substituting a sound/syllable or a word, pausing while reading, correction and reversing sounds.

REASERCH METHOD

This section provides information on the methodology of the present study, which includes

population and sample, research instrument, and validity and reliability of the instrument.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all students of the fifth grade of primary school in government schools in the Second Irbid District. The sample of the study was (80) male and female students. Table (1) shows the demographic information of the study sample.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of the Study Sample

Group	Males	Females	Total
Experimental	20	20	40
Control	20	20	40
Total	40	40	80

Research Instrument

The Reading Comprehension Test:

The test consisted of (20) items of a multiple-choice type and each item was assigned one mark. The test time was determined to be (40) minutes, and the pre-test was used to ensure the equivalence of the study groups. The same test

was used after the completion of the implementation of the work plan.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the correlation coefficient was calculated. The correlation coefficients are shown in Table (2) below.

Table 2. The correlation coefficients of the study instrument

Item No.	Correlation Coefficient	Item No.	Correlation Coefficient
1.	**0.637	23.	**0.661
2.	**0.736	24.	**0.633
3.	**0.725	25.	**0.730
4.	**0.648	26.	**0.790
5.	**0.832	27.	**0.825
6.	**0.694	28.	**0.763
7.	**0.816	29.	**0.779
8.	**0.836	30.	**0.852
9.	**0.820		
10.	**0.747		
11.	**0.887		
12.	**0.754		
13.	**0.814		
14.	**0.811		
15.	**0.542		
16.	**0.887		
17.	**0.908		

18.	**0.824		
19.	**0.899		
20.	**0.876		
21.	**0.617		
22.	**0.705	Overall	**0.822

As illustrated in Table (2), the correlation coefficient for all the test items was above 0.40, and the overall correlation coefficient for the test was 0.822, which means that the test was valid to administer in the Jordanian environment. To ensure the reliability of the test, the internal consistency was calculated using the (Cronbach Alpha) statistical method to verify the consistency of the students' responses. The internal consistency results revealed that the Cronbach Alpha of the responses was (0.96.8), and this

value is acceptable to accept the reliability of the test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings obtained from the present study. These findings are presented based on the research questions that guide the present research.

To answer the questions of the study, the mean scores and standard deviations of the sample's marks were calculated on the Reading Comprehension Test as shown in Table (3).

Table 3. The mean scores and standard deviations of the sample's scores in the post-test according to the study variables

Gender	Group			
	Experimental		Control	
	Means score	Standard deviation	Means score	Standard deviation
Males	19.81	3.56	14.39	4.00
Females	20.90	3.08	14.28	4.47
Total	20.35	3.32	14.33	4.24

It is evident from Table (3) that the mean score of the experimental group of male students was (19.81) with a standard deviation (3.56). The mean score of the female from the experimental group was (20.90) with a standard deviation (3.08). On the other hand, the mean score of the control group of male students was (14,39) with a standard deviation (4,00), and the mean score of the control group of females was (14,28) with a standard deviation (4,47). The experimental

group of males and females reached (20.35) with a standard deviation (3.32), while the total sum of the mean score of the control group was (14.33) with a standard deviation (4.24).

It is noticed that there are apparent differences between the mean scores of the groups of the study. To verify the statistical significance of these differences, the Two-way ANOVA analysis was used as shown in Table (4).

Table 4. Results of the Two-Way ANOVA analysis for the post-test according to the study variables

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom value	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Method	1236.405	1	1236.405	93.657	* 0.000

Gender	5.438	1	5.438	0.412	0.522
Interaction between method and gender	14.741	1	14.741	1.11	0.292
Error	1821.805	139	13.201		
Total	3378.280	142			

* Statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$)

It is clear from Table (4) that the results were as follows:

Results of the first question:

It is evident from Table (4) that the calculated F-value was (93.657) with a level of significance (0.000). This indicates the existence of statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) on the reading comprehension test attributable to the teaching method (speed reading, traditional method) in favor of the experimental group that studied using speed reading strategy.

The reason for this result is that the use of speed-reading in teaching is considered a different method from the usual ways in which students learn to read. The change in the method of teaching led to great activity, suspense among students, and a tendency towards learning to read. Perhaps the reason for this result is that the speed-reading program is characterized by providing the student with the opportunity to participate in the learning and teaching process, being self-reliant and increasing self-confidence, which in turn increases motivation, interaction, and participation in the learning process.

Results of the second question:

It is evident from Table (4) that there are no statistically significant differences due to the gender of students, as the calculated F-value was (0.412) and its level of significance was (0.522), which is not statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$). The reason for this may be that the speed-reading strategy included educational units from the Arabic language book for the sixth grade,

prepared by the Ministry, and intended to be taught to students, whether males or females.

This result can also be attributed to the fact that the speed-reading action plan is designed to suit both genders. It provides elements of excitement for male and female students, and it attracts the attention and involvement of the student in the learning process through exercises that are suitable for students of the basic sixth grade of both genders. This strategy also increases their motivation towards learning, as the speed-reading action plan is concerned with developing reading skills for all students, male and female, and it did not target a specific group of students, but rather viewed the student as an educated individual with abilities and skills seeking to develop and improve them.

The reason for this result can be attributed to the tendency of students of both genders to get rid of the routine method and shift to modern methods, which makes them serious in their dealing with the speed-reading strategy. It helps students realize that they are facing a method that increases their activity and level of motivation, and opens up horizons of knowledge for them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

In light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the diversification of teaching methods to be suitable with the educational position, with a focus on the method of speed-reading, which the study revealed its positive effect. The study also recommends paying more attention and focus on helping

students to develop their attitudes towards speed-reading, from teachers and parents, by encouraging students to speed-reading, and increasing their demand for it, as this has a positive impact on their reading comprehension.

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