

## Investigating Using Reading Strategies for Improving Secondary School Students' Reading Comprehension

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### Abstract

The current study aims to improve secondary school students reading comprehension by using reading strategies. To ensure that, the study sets three hypotheses, Secondary school students' are not weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension, Reading strategies has an effected on secondary school students' reading comprehension, English language teachers do not use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary schools. The study applied the experiment by selecting two groups of (100) students randomly, experimental group (50) students and control group (50) students from (940) students from some secondary schools in Khartoum Locality. The study used the quantitative and descriptive methods. After applying the pretest and the treatment; the study gave posttest and questionnaire for both groups and another questionnaire to EFL teachers. The study results revealed that: reading strategies had improved positively secondary school students reading comprehension; there is statistical difference on the standards of the students who are trained according to the reading strategies than the one who were not trained.

**Key words:** Reading ,Reading strategies, reading comprehension.

### (Abstract: Arabic Version) المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحسين فهم القراءة لدى المتعلمين باستخدام استراتيجيات القراءة. وللتأكد من ذلك حددت الدراسة ثلاث فرضيات: أن طلاب المدارس الثانوية ليسوا ضعفاء في استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة في فهم القراءة. أن استراتيجيات القراءة تؤثر على فهم القراءة لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية. أن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لا يستخدمون استراتيجيات القراءة في فهم القراءة في مدارس المرحلة الثانوية. وقد طبقت الدراسة التجربة على مجموعة قوامها (20) معلم و (100 طالب) من جملة (940) طالب من بعض المدارس الثانوية بمحلية الخرطوم مجموعة تجريبية من (50 طالبا) ومجموعة ضابطة من (50 طالبا) و بعد تطبيق الاختبار المسبق وتدريبهم، أعطت الدراسة الاختبار البعدي والاستبانة لكلا المجموعتين واستباننا آخر لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وقد افادت نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة قد حسن بشكل إيجابي فهم القراءة لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية، وهناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية في معايير الطلاب الذين تدربوا وفقا لاستراتيجيات القراءة من الذين لم يتدربوا.

الكلمات المفتاحية : استراتيجيات القراءة ، القراءة الشاملة ، القراءة .

### INTRODUCTION

Reading strategies are central to better reading comprehension in English language. Accordingly, it is important to teach students' strategies that are used in reading comprehension in the field of reading strategies in English as a foreign language. Reading strategies are of basic importance in all languages reading comprehension.

(Johnson, 1993:58) states that reading strategies are very essential point in reading comprehension.

(GU, 2012:56) and mentioned that reading strategies are the bridges learners cross to get the main ideas and meaningful concepts of reading text. Therefore, it is believed that reading strategies in any language whether a second or foreign language is essential as tool that readers use to cover the whole written text. When reading a foreign language written text, most people have strong positive feeling towards reading text. One cannot understand

a written text without knowing what most paragraphs mean.

Lack of reading strategies knowledge affects reading comprehension. Therefore, particular attention has been given to the study of reading strategies of reading comprehension exploring the effect of them on students' reading comprehension ability (O'Mally and Chamot, 1990:85 Oxford: 1990:54). Using reading strategies needs special effort because some proportions of reading strategies are done outside the classroom. It is impossible for the teachers to introduce all reading strategies in the classroom. Reading strategies are among significant issues in the fields of reading skills in English language that have been taken into consideration, students have always complained about reading comprehension strategies.

Additionally, some studies were carried out that the lack of sufficient training for students to practice reading strategies is the main problem. This point necessitates the use of specific reading strategies geared towards reading comprehension to secondary school students. Therefore, to find solutions to this problem the present study intends to investigate reading strategies for improving secondary school students reading comprehension.

**Objective of the Study** The study tries to achieve the following objectives.

**To** identify reading strategies for secondary school students' reading comprehension ability.

**To** examine the effects of using reading strategies on secondary school students' reading comprehension ability.

**To** suggest some solutions for improving reading comprehension skill for secondary school students

**Methodology of the Study** The study used the Analytical Descriptive Method and a test. A sample was used of (20) English language teachers and (100)

students from four different secondary schools in Khartoum Locality for the year (2016 – 2017) the study used two questionnaires: for teachers and students and a test for students to collect the relevant data. The study used (SPSS) Statistical Package for Social Science to analyze the data.

#### **Tools of the Study**

The questionnaire of the teachers is divided into two parts: (A and B). The first part (A) includes the personal information about the teachers (their schools, gender, and training). Part (B) contains eight statements that teachers were requested to report about using reading strategies. The student questionnaire also contains seventeen statements which focused on checking students' awareness of using reading strategies in reading comprehension.

Also, the test was used for students to find out whether the students have difficulties, problems or whether they are training or not in using reading strategies in reading comprehension.

#### **Study Questions Hypotheses of the Study**

The study formulated three hypotheses:

1. Secondary school students' are not weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension.
2. Reading strategies can affect secondary school students' reading comprehension.
3. English language teachers do not use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary schools.

**Literature Review** Of language skills, it is well known that reading strategies are very important part in reading skill. (Alderson, 1991:60) claims that reading strategies are "cautions and cognitive measures adopted by the reader for acquiring, storing and amending new information" Reading strategies are part of the language learning strategies that are important factors of effective reading.

The term reading strategies is more accurate since comprehension is the final input that is achieved through the process of reading. The concern here is with the strategies that facilitate the (process) not the (product). So, in the field of reading and reading strategies many researchers show various definitions of reading strategies.

**These definitions are as follows:**

(Brantmeir, 2002:35) defines reading strategies as “the comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read”. Another definition of reading strategies shows that they are the specific strategies designed to assist readers in “inferring the meaning of unknown words, and synthesizing meaning in larger segment of the text.” (Kern, 1989:136) Moreover, (Alderson, 1991:60) claims that reading strategies are “cautions and cognitive measures adopted by the reader for acquiring, storing and amending new information”.

Many researchers define reading strategies in terms of two views (Bottom-up) and (Top -down). “A bottom-up view of reading describes reading as a one way flow of information starting with the visual (graphic) proceeding, and follow a series of progressively higher-order processing stages until meaning is derived.”(Cziko,1980: 101).

In bottom-up models, the reading process is considered “a text-driven decoding process wherein the only role of the reader is to reconstruct meaning embedded in the in the smallest unit of the text. This is done so by focusing on identifying the meaning and grammatical category of a word, sentence syntax, text details and so forth.”(Salataci& Akyel, 2002:2) On the other hand, top-down view of reading “emphasizes the role of the cognitive processes that generates meaning

hypotheses based primarily on contextual information.”(Cziko,1980: 102). Readers use this method to check how new information fits with the overall text, using background knowledge, making predictions or skimming.

Additionally, there are many types of reading strategies available to help learners with their comprehension at different levels and with their different kinds of text. Hence, the reading strategies used by readers, directly or indirectly in the process of doing reading takes not only solves the specific comprehension difficulties, but is also helpful in improving the reading comprehension. Reading strategies are purpose tools of comprehending the author’s message (Olshavsky, 1997:89). And in the context of reading comprehension, strategies can be defined as a deliberate action that readers take to establish and enhance their comprehension (Jimenz,Garcia and Person, 2008:36). Therefore, there are many types of reading strategies that can be seen such as follows:

**Types of Reading Strategies:**

**Skimming Strategy:**

Skimming strategy is one of reading strategies types for gist; it is a type of rapid reading which is used when reader wants to get the main idea or ideas from a passage (Richards et al, 1992:54). Skimming is important to know the general meaning of a passage, to know how the passage is organized, that is the structure of the text-to get an idea of intention of the writer. It requires the reader to organizer and remembers some of the information given by the author, not just to locate it. It is also a tool which the authors’ sequence can be observed. tegies:Scanning strategy is one of reading strategies types selectively to achieve very specific reading goals; it is a reading strategy which is used to find specific information.

It is used when the reader wants to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or passage. The main feature of scanning is that any part of the text which does not contain the pre-selected piece of information is dismissed.

**Summarization Strategy:**

Summarization strategy is one of reading strategies types, it is a process of restating the meaning of text in one's own words used in original text. It is a brief retelling of text and includes the main idea or theme, the focus is on describing in brief from the text's major points. It is usually done by choosing the main idea from the text. It is suitable for secondary levels. This strategy involves systematically deleting unimportant part of the text and using what is left as the text for the summary.

**Visualization Strategy:** Visualization strategy is one of the reading strategies types that involve learners creating mental pictures in their mind while they are reading or stopping at certain points in reading selection to make the visualizations. Learners can draw or create pictures of their visualizations and they can simply visualize in their own mind. Visualization requires the reader to construct an image of what is read. This image is stored in the reader's memory. **ART Strategy:** ART strategy is one of the reading strategies that stands for read and tells, it is easy and it can help learners to understand. It involves activities before, during and after reading which help learners to enhance their comprehension. During the asking questions step learners are taught to read the section titles and ask themselves questions about the title. In this strategy some teachers require learners to write these questions down. This enables the teachers to see that learners are actually using the strategy properly and learners will come back to answer the question later. In the second step read the learners could actually read the selection and stop in each

paragraph. In the third step tell, when learners finished from reading they ask themselves what they read.

**Inferring Strategy:**

Inferring strategy is one of the reading strategies types. According to (Duffy, 2009:25), inferring is the ability to "read between the lines" or to get the meaning an author implies but does not state directly, all comprehension strategies involve inferring in the sense that comprehension requires readers to note text clues, to access prior knowledge associated with those clues, and then, on the basis of that background knowledge, predict (or infer) what the meaning is. So, in this sense inferring is something a reader does as part of all comprehension strategies.

**TELL Strategy:**

TELL strategy is a type of reading strategies that can be used at secondary levels. The first step is title, learners are taught to look at the titles and guess what the materials are going to be about. The second step is to examine, within this step learners skim the text and for clues about the content. During the third step look; learners are supposed to look for important words could be repeated. In the final step setting; learners could read the text again searching for information related to setting.

**Taxonomy of Reading Strategies:**

This section deals with the taxonomy of reading strategies (classifications). Researchers use different ways to classify reading strategies and apply different criteria in classifying them. However this difference in classification does not represent problems because each taxonomy has its own function and role i.e. some classification work in classrooms contexts, other are made for research purpose. One of these classifications that suggested by many researchers is made according to the three-phase approach of reading. Here, strategies are divided into three groups pre-reading, while reading, and post reading.



(Varaprasad, 1997:38) suggests some classroom strategies in terms of the three-phase approach. For, pre-reading stage learners should find answers to given questions, give their opinions about topic, and predict the progressing text. For while reading stage, suggested strategies of annotating, underlining, and questioning. Strategies that should be done at post-reading stage are summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting and reflecting (pp.25- 30)

The more systematic and comprehensive classification of reading strategies that suggests four major strategies to be used, “they are cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies and test taking strategies.” (Zhang, 1994, pp.2-3).

#### **Cognitive**

strategies are the most important of them, since reading itself is cognitive process that a set of cognitive techniques.

**Examples** of cognitive strategies are predicting the content of the upcoming text, monitoring one’s comprehension, analyzing text organization by looking for specific patterns, self questioning, and meaning construction.

**Another** class of reading strategies according to above classification is memory strategies. Examples of memory strategies include creating mental/visual image, grouping, story mapping, and organizing information in meaningful patterns. However learners are differ in their ability to compose images from verbal or written strings. The last type of strategies in this classification i.e. tests taking strategies.

These strategies go in parallel with the increasing use of multiple choice questions in the standardized tests.

**Researchers** should design tests that not only investigate the levels of comprehension, but should also be linked to the development of students reading skills. To achieve this, researchers use the Barret Taxonomy that recognizes five levels of comprehension such as: i) Literal: that focuses on information which is explicitly stated in the text. To work out question of this type, students should simply refer to the text and reread it with little focus in the key word/s.

1.Reorganization: at this level the learner has to organize for himself some of the information explicitly expressed.

2.Inferential: In this level the learner is required to go beyond the immediate text, and make use of his own experience and intuition and possibly predict outcomes.

3.Evaluative: This level requires the learner to make judgments, and to make use of his own knowledge of a particular subject.

4.Appreciative: This is the most advanced level of comprehension. The learner here has to be emotionally and aesthetically sensitive to what he is readin

Barrett taxonomy is useful in that it presents the level of comprehension and suggests the ways that learners should employ to respond to comprehension tests of these levels

effectively. The present study will utilize the Barrett taxonomy to design the test that the subjects respon to.



### Data Analysis

The following tables show the teachers' and students' personal information.

#### Gender of teachers: **Table No (1)**

Valid	Frequency	Percent %
Male	12	0.60
Female	8	0.40
Total	20	

#### Source: The researcher from applied study, by using SPSS (24)

The table No (1) shows that the majority of the teachers are males the number of those was (12) persons with percentage (0.60). The female respondents number was (8) persons with the percentage (0.40)

#### Age of students

**Table No (2)**

Valid	Frequency	Percent %
From 15 to 16 years	70	0.70
More than 16	30	0.30
Total	100	100

#### Source: The researcher from applied study by using SPSS (24)

Table No. (2) Shows that most of the study respondents ages are between 16 and 18 (from 15 to 16), the number of these was (70) persons with percentage (70%) the students with age distribution more than 16 years were (30) persons with percentage (30%).

#### **Table No (3 ) Chi- square test for hypothesis NO(1): Secondary school students' are not weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension.**

No m	Statement	Mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	my teacher show me what to do to help me understand what I read .	2.7	4.1	22	0.000
2	I do very well in reading excises	2.6	0.5	19	0.000
3	before you read a text to you set clear goals for reading	2.5	0.9	31	0.000
4	do you predict and check your production while reading	2.9	1.6	22	0.000
5	do you preview the text	2.6	0.7	36	0.000
6	can you infer the meaning of un known words from the context or understanding of the given text	2.7	1.5	23	0.000



7	i skim the passage quickly to have a general understanding of the given text	2.8	0.6	22	0.000
8	I pay attention to the to the question and memorize them before reading text	3.1	3.5	38	0.001
9	I connect what I read to my prior experience	2.8	2.1	27	0.000
10	I guess the meaning of unknown words according to the text	2.7	1.5	29	0.000
11	I imagine sense or draw picture of what I am reading	2.6	0.5	34	0.000
12	if I find difficult word in passage ,I let it and keep reading	2.4	1.6	27	0.000
13	I used context like familiar words , title or picture to guess the meaning of new words	2.9	2.7	23	0.000
14	summarize in my mind importance information that I read	2.7	1.5	30	0.000
15	after reading I check whether I accomplish my goals for reading	2.8	0.6	24	0.000
16	prefer reading English news papers magazine ,stories ,etc. then school reading	3.2	3.5	33	0.001
17	I try to visualize information to remember what I read	2.7	4.1	22	0.000
18	while I was reading I look for important words that may be separated	2.6	0.5	19	0.000

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the difference for the respondents' answers.

According to above results it is clear that the hypothesis is rejected.

**T-test analysis of the means value of Experimental and control groups posttest (2): Reading strategies can affect on secondary school students' reading comprehension.**

**Table No (4 )**

Groups	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	T-value	p-value	95% confidence interval	
						L	U
experimental	41.65	7.05	49	3.54	0.002	3.32	12.72
control	23.3	7.7	49			3.30	11.40

For the scores gained from the posttest, the mean value was calculated. The mean for the control group was (23.3) whereas; the mean for experimental group was (41.65). Moreover, a T-test was employed on these scores for hypothesis testing purposes. As the result of T-test suggested (P-value 0.002 being less than 0.05), showed that there is a significance difference between two groups, because the Experimental was instructed according to the reading strategies. This



indicates that, this is strong evidence to the use of reading strategies can affect on Secondary school students in reading comprehension.

**Table (5) Chi-square test for hypothesis NO. (3): English language teachers do not use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary schools.**

Nom	Statement	Mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	What do you think of reading ability of the majority of students in classes	2.7	4.1	22	0.000
2	How do think the students in your class use reading strategies	2.6	0.5	19	0.000
3	Do you think the students in your class have acquired knowledge of reading strategies?	2.5	0.9	31	0.000
4	Do you think the lack of using reading strategies will impede the students	2.9	1.6	22	0.000
5	Do you think that teaching reading strategies is important?	2.6	0.7	36	0.000
6	Do you think reading strategies teaching helps students improve reading comprehension?	2.7	1.5	23	0.000
7	Do you think it is important to teach reading strategies in class	2.8	0.6	22	0.000
8	How often do you teach reading strategies in class room	2.1	3.5	38	0.001

The table (4) above, shows that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of differences for the respondents' answers.

According to the pervious results it is clear that the hypothesis is accepted.

**Results** After the statistical analysis of the test and the two questionnaires (EFL learner's questionnaire and EFL teachers' questionnaire) the results showed that:  
1. **Secondary** school students' are weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension.  
2. **Reading** strategies can affect on secondary school students' reading comprehension.  
3. **English** language teachers use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary school.

**Discussion** This study is an investigation into reading strategies for improving secondary school students reading comprehension in Khartoum locality, pointing to the students' lack of using reading strategies in reading comprehension. For the purpose of

investigation the study questions, the following hypotheses were formulated by the study. Secondary school students' are not weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension. Reading strategies can affect on secondary school students' reading comprehension. English language teachers do not use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary schools. The results of the study showed that, secondary school students are not weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension. The study discovered that reading strategies affect positively on secondary school students' reading comprehension.





**Findings** After the statistical analysis of the data, the study has shown the following results:

1. Secondary school students' are weak in using reading strategies in reading comprehension.
2. Reading strategies can affect on secondary school students' reading comprehension.
3. English language teachers use reading strategies in reading comprehension at secondary school.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends the following:

- Reading** Strategies are so effective in developing reading comprehension at secondary schools.
- Secondary** school students should read more English texts and apply reading techniques.
- English** language teachers should facilitate and encourage the student's to use Reading Strategies in reading comprehension.

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