

Instructing Reading Comprehension Strategies: Effects on EFL Learners' Self-Efficacy in Reading

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Abstract

This experimental study, using pretest-intervention-posttest design, investigated whether or not teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to use comprehension strategies when they read English passages, increases their self-efficacy in reading. The participants were 55 EFL learners in Turkey who were at lower-intermediate level based on the results of the Oxford Quick Placement Test. Data were gathered via a Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. The whole treatment/control period lasted for 11 weeks during a reading course. The experimental group (n = 28) received instruction in reading comprehension strategies (i.e., previewing, scanning for details, skimming, identifying the topic and main idea, finding supporting details, making inferences, understanding the author's purpose, making predictions, dealing with unfamiliar words, using context clues, and summarizing). The control group (n = 27) received instruction by traditional teaching methods (i.e., reading, paraphrasing, translating, and answering the exercises). The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test indicated that instruction in English reading comprehension strategies had a positive effect on EFL learners in terms of increasing their self-efficacy in reading.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), Reading comprehension strategies, English reading self-efficacy

Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills for second language (L2) learners to master in academic contexts (Grabe, 1991). Based on Zainol-Abidin and Riswan to (2012), English language learners need to acquire abilities to read academic texts. Instructing the English language learners in reading strategies helps them enhance reading ability (Cho & Krashen, 2016; Krashen & Mason, 2017; Sung, Chang, & Huang, 2008). Additionally, one way of exerting positive effect on learning is increasing learners' self-efficacy (Zarei, 2018). Self-efficacy has been interpreted as the beliefs in one's abilities to perform tasks (Bandura, 2010). Literature has also shown a significant relationship between the use of reading strategies and reading self-efficacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Ahmadian & Gholami-Pasand, 2017; Gahungu, 2007; Li & Wang, 2010; Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012; Shang, 2010; Zare & Mobarakeh, 2011; Sönmez, 2016; Zarei, 2018).

Previous studies have indicated that highly self-efficacious learners tend to utilize language learning strategies more frequently than less self-efficacious learners (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). It has been shown that the use of reading comprehension strategies can help L2 learners enhance their reading self-efficacy (Bakhtiari, 2020; Liao & Wang, 2018; Raissi & Roustaei, 2013). Considering this important role, it is necessary to gain insight in the development of learners' self-efficacy and the ways in which proper education can support this development. However, this issue is under-investigated in the context of Turkey. As a result, the researcher of the present study investigated the issue by addressing the following research questions:

1) Is there any significant difference between the English reading self-efficacy level of the group that receives reading comprehension strategies instruction (RCSI) and the group that receives traditional instruction of reading skill (TIRS)?

Method

Participants

Eighty-one EFL learners in Turkey, who were studying at lower-intermediate levels, were informed about the research and invited to participate. Sixty-eight of them accepted. They were given the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OPT). The score of 55 learners ranged from 24 to 30 out of 40; they were at the lower-intermediate level, based on Geranpayeh's (2003) guideline. Thus, those 55 learners (43 females and 12 males) were recruited as the participants and were assigned randomly to an experimental group, named, Reading Comprehension Strategies Instruction (RCSI) (24 females and 4 males) and a control one that received the traditional instruction of reading skill, including reading, paraphrasing, translating, and answering the exercises, (TIRS) (19 females and 8 males). The participants' native language was Turkish and their ages ranged from 18 to 26 with an average age of 21.11 years ($SD = 2.123$).

Design

The study was a pretest-treatment-posttest as well as a comparison-group one. There were two independent variables called 'Reading Comprehension Strategies Instruction' and 'Traditional Instruction of Reading Skill'. There was a dependent variable named, 'Self-Efficacy in Reading English'.

Instruments

To ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their language proficiency level, the Oxford Quick Placement (OPT) was utilized.

The textbook *Select Readings* (Pre-Intermediate) (Lee & Gundersen, 2011) was mainly utilized for the training in selected English reading comprehension strategies. The experimental group received instruction in the following English reading comprehensive strategies: previewing, scanning for

details, skimming, identifying the topic and main idea, finding supporting details, making inferences, understanding the author's purpose, making predictions, dealing with unfamiliar words, using context clues, and summarizing.

To measure the participants' reading self-efficacy, the Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (RSEQ), created by Bakhtiari (2020) was utilized. The questionnaire had already been validated Bakhtiari (2020), yet it was also piloted by the researcher of the present study with a similar group of 10 learners. Reliability of the questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach Alpha, was .877, indicating a good level of internal consistency (Pallant, 2013). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items. The participants were required to express their belief about their abilities in reading tasks by answering the items of the questionnaire, which were on a five-point base Likert-scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) Not Sure, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. The maximum and minimum possible scores which can be obtained from the scale are 100 and 20, respectively. The lower the Reading Self-Efficacy (RSE) scores on RSEQ, the lower the RSE level.

Data Collection Procedure

At the outset, on 1st. session, all the 55 participants were given the RSEQ and were required to complete it. Their responses were collected and analyzed to investigate their English reading anxiety level prior to the provision of the intervention. Then, the participants in each group received their selected intervention during 11 sessions (one session in each week, totally during 11 weeks). Each session lasted for one and half hour. On session 13 of the research study, the participants were provided with the same RSEQ and were required to complete it based on their perceptions after experiencing the received reading course. Their responses were gathered for further analyses.

Data Analyses and Results

The Normality Tests

The assumption of normality was examined using both the graphic of histogram and numerical ways as Larson-Hall (2010) recommended. They indicated that the data were normally distributed

for the OPT and posttest of TIRS group, but not for the pretests of both groups and posttest of RCSI group. Unlike the OPT and posttest of TIRS group, the values of skewness and kurtosis statistics for the other tests in this study were not within ± 1 , based on Phakiti (2010); additionally, the outcomes of the ratio of skewedness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors were not within the ranges of ± 1.96 , based on Field (2013) for the pretests of both groups and posttest of RCSI group, unlike the OPT and posttest of TIRS group. Considering the Shapiro-Wilk test (Thode, 2002), the p-values of pretests of both groups and posttest of RCSI group were lower than .05, unlike the values of OPT and posttest of TIRS group. That's why the parametric t-test was used for the OPT, while the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was utilized to test for the differences between the groups on the pretest and posttest of reading self-efficacy.

Ensuring the Homogeneity of the Groups

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the RCSI and TIRS groups in OPT. There was no significant difference in scores for the RCSI group ($M = 26.82$, $SD = 1.744$, $N = 28$) and TIRS group ($M = 27.00$, $SD = 1.641$, $N = 27$); $t(53) = -0.391$, $p = .698$. Therefore, the two groups were homogeneous in terms of their English language proficiency levels.

Then, a Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare the median scores of the RCSI and TIRS groups in the pretest of self-efficacy in reading English prior to the intervention. The test revealed no significant difference in the reading self-efficacy level of the RCSI group ($Md = 53.00$, $n = 28$) and the TIRS group ($Md = 52.00$, $n = 27$), $U = 341.500$, $z = -0.621$, $p = .534 > .05$, $r = -0.072$.

Finding of the Research Question

A Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare the median scores of the RCSI and TIRS groups in the posttest of self-efficacy in reading English immediately after the intervention. The test revealed a significant difference in the reading self-efficacy level of the RCSI group ($Md = 77.50$, $n = 28$) and the TIRS group ($Md = 56.00$, $n = 27$), $U = 6.000$, $z = -6.284$, $p = .000$, $r = -0.847$, indicating

a very large effect size statistic, based on (Cohen, 1988). The RCSI group showed higher level of reading self-efficacy than the TIRS group.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated whether instructing EFL learners' in the use of comprehension strategies when they read English passages increases their English reading self-efficacy, and promising result has been revealed. The group that received reading comprehension strategy instruction indicated a higher self-efficacy level in comparison to the group that did not receive it.

The finding of the current study supports what Raissi and Roustaei (2013), Liao and Wang (2018), as well as Bakhtiari (2020) found. The finding of this study is also in line with several previous studies investigating the relationship between reading strategy use and self-efficacy in reading (Ahmadian & Gholami-Pasand, 2017; Gahungu, 2007; Li & Wang, 2010; Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012; Shang, 2010; Zare & Mobarakeh, 2011; Zarei, 2018). This finding further corroborates the previous findings that learners need to acquire skills and strategies as well as a belief in their capabilities for successful achievements (Bandura, 1993; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

As for the development of learner self-efficacy, based on social cognitive theory, mastery experiences are known as the most powerful source of creating a strong sense of efficacy because they show learners evidence that they are capable of succeeding at the task (Palmer, 2006). Based on the result of the present study, it can be concluded that the reading strategies which the participants learned in this study may have helped them in their reading comprehension and led to their success, and consequently resulted in enhancement of their self-efficacy. In short, successes, which are achieved by overcoming obstacles and hardships, build a robust sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

As the concluding remarks, like Raissi and Roustaei (2013), the researcher of the present study recommends EFL teachers introduce a variety of reading strategies in their classes to help their learners increase their reading self-efficacy. However, it is highly acknowledged that even though reading

strategy instruction is an effective way to improve reading abilities of EFL learners, there should be a suitable environment for the EFL instructors to create proper conditions for implementing strategies in the classroom, and to prepare opportunities for learners to apply reading strategies (Sung et al., 2008). Moreover, the effectiveness of strategy instruction is pertinent to differences in the learning styles of learners (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989); in other words, different learners with different learning styles learn strategies differently (Zarei, 2018). As a result, curricular developers worldwide should revise their educational curriculum in a way that teachers could introduce various reading strategies in their classes (Raissi & Roustaei, 2013).

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