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استخدام إستراتيجية ما وراء المعرفة للتفكير بصوت مرتفع في تحسين مهارات القراءة لدي طلاب الثانوي وعلي اتجاهاتهم نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

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ملخص البحث

إن الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو تحديد تأثير استخدام استراتيجية ما وراء المعرفة للتفكير بصوت مرتفع علي تحسين مهارات القراءة لدي طلاب الثانوي وعلي اتجاهاتهم نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

وخضعت الدراسة الحالية للنظام التجريبي القبلي و البعدي ، حيث تم اختيار خمسون من طلاب الصف الأول عشوائياً ، وتقسيمهم لمجموعتين إحداها ضابطة والأخرى تجريبية وتم تدريس البرنامج المقترح ، بينما تلقت المجموعة الضابطة نفس المادة العلمية بطريقة تقليدية.

وتمثلت أدوات الدراسة الحالية في اختبار لمهارات القراءة ، إضافة إلى مقياس اتجاهات نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتشير النتائج إلى وجود فروق فردية ذات دلالة إحصائية في مهارات القراءة لصالح طلاب المجموعة التجريبية مقارنة بأداء المجموعة الضابطة ، كما بينت الدراسة وجود تحسن ملحوظ في الاتجاهات نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة
مهارات القراءة ، إستراتيجية التفكير بصوت مرتفع

معلم لغة إنجليزية بمدرسة الفيصل الثانوية بالطائف ، المملكة العربية السعودية

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6. Providing the library of the Saudi secondary schools with many different reading English texts.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

The following topics are suggested as areas that need further investigations:

1. Investigating the effects of using authentic texts in improving first year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills.
2. Investigating the effects of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy in improving female Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills.
3. Investigating the effects of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy in improving slow-learners' language skills in Saudi secondary schools.
4. Investigating the effects of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy in improving female learners' attitudes towards learning English.

reading programs are taught through other recent approaches.

Conclusion

It is empirically tested that first year secondary school students' reading comprehensions skills have been improved with the help of think-aloud strategy. The present study is in line with the goal of think-aloud of training reading strategies in order to build students" comprehension. It also confirms earlier studies that it encourages students' use of metacognitive strategies.

Recommendations of the study:

In the light of the results of the study, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Using authentic reading texts in reading classes.
2. Making reading classes success-oriented by offering more time for reading texts.
3. Encouraging students to talk with each other about what they are reading in order to build background and expand comprehension.
4. Using suitable reading texts to enhance first year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills.
5. Holding workshops to train teachers on how to teach reading comprehension skills through using metacognitive think-aloud strategy.

experimental group in the post testing achieved a higher significant degree of improvement than on pre-testing.

It is worth mentioning that results obtained on the Attitude-Scale towards EFL, showed that students who scored high in their pre-attitude assessment were found to be scoring much higher in the post measurement on the same scale. Also, students who scored relatively low in the pre-scale tended to score higher in the post performance on the same scale. This means that both successful and less successful students have benefited from the suggested reading texts as well as the metacognitive think-aloud strategy. That made them feel more positive about learning EFL.

Thus, authentic challenging reading texts proved to be useful for foreign language learners because they could help the students read with understanding and with pleasure.

In short, the current study aimed at investigating the effects of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving 1s^t year Saudi students' reading comprehension skills, and their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. Based on the results of the study, there is clear and unambiguous evidence that the challenging reading texts-based program could successfully improve the students' reading comprehension skills and build positive attitudes towards learning EFL.

The results of the present study agree with the results of other studies such as those of Nuttall (2000),Adler (2001),Oczkus (2003), Serafini (2004), Takallou (2011),Wichadee (2011), Ketabi (2012) and Bentley (2013) who concluded that learners achieve low scores in reading comprehension tests when reading is taught in traditional ways; whereas, they achieve significant improvements when

Hypothesis (2) :

The second hypothesis predicted that the experimental group would surpass the control group in scoring on the Attitude-Scale towards learning EFL.

Analysis of data using "t"- test showed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group on the post-performance on the Attitude Scale, since "t"-value (10.33) is significant at (.01) level and beyond. (See Table 4)

Table (4)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of means and significance of differences of the two groups in the post-performance on the Attitude Scale

Group	Number of Subjects	Means	Standard Deviation	Degree Of Freedom	"t" Value
Cont.	20	36,10	7.83		
				38	10.33 *
Exp.	20	55.19	9.21		

Analyzing data using the "t"-test of significance showed a significant difference favoring the experimental group post performance on the post-test of the Attitude Scale where the

Analyzing data using the "t"-test of significance showed a significant difference favoring the experimental group post performance on the reading comprehension skills test where the experimental group in the post testing achieved a higher significant degree of improvement than on pre-testing.

The experimental group surpassed the control group in the post-performance on the reading comprehension skills test This result may be attributed to the effectiveness of the suggested reading texts and the use of the metacognitive think-aloud strategy.

Initially, many students showed some hesitance, awkwardness and sometimes loss of confidence during reading. However, with time they showed a good level of fluency in reading. That means that the students could read the reading texts properly, quickly and with understanding when they were encouraged. Those good readers could do that because they did not have problems with word recognition. As a result, they could focus on the meaning of what they read. Their achievement was significant as most of them were able to achieve better with regard to the three levels of reading comprehension: literal, referential, and critical successively. The students' most difficulties were found in the last level.

On the other hand, the improvement achieved by the control group students in post testing cannot be neglected. This improvement may be attributed to the accidental discussions held by the students of both groups when they met each other.

Results:

Hypothesis (1) :

The first hypothesis predicted that the experimental group would surpass the control group in the post-performance on the pre-post test of reading comprehension skills favoring the post application.

Analysis of data using "t"- test showed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group on the post-performance of the test of reading comprehension skills, since "t"-value (9.44) is significant at (.01) level and beyond.

Table (3)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of means and significance of differences of the two groups in the post-performance Reading Comprehension Skills Test.

Group	Number of students	Means	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom	"t" Value
Cont.	20	32.00	7.199	38	9.44 *
Exp.	20	55.11	11.61		

Maximum score = 100.

Group	Number of Subjects	Means	Standard Deviation	Degree Of Freedom	"t" Value
Cont.	20	30.01	7.41	38	0.48
Exp.	20	31.04	6.60		

Hypothesis one predicted a statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-post test of reading comprehension skills favoring the post application.

Most students of the experimental group were successfully able to suggest titles, discover the item referred to by certain pronouns. However, it was not easy for many of them to guess the meaning of certain items or to predict certain events to finish the story. Later, they could do that job successfully. With more practice in reading, the students showed that they were more interested in reading the selected challenging reading texts and were successfully able to do the exercises based on each story.

Table (1)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of means and significance of differences of the two groups in the pre-performance on reading comprehension skills test

Group	Number of Students	Means	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom	"t" Value
Cont.	20	31.82	8.83	38	0.04
Exp.	20	31.90	7.11		

Maximum score = 100.

Pre test data on the **Attitude Scale** (AS) towards learning EFL were obtained to ensure group equivalence. Pre-test data on the Attitude scale showed group equivalence as the t-value (0.48) was insignificant at .05 level. See Table (2):

Table (2)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of means and significance of differences of the two groups in the pre-performance on the Attitude Scale

2. A pre-post Attitude Scale for judging students' attitudes towards learning EFL.
3. A semi-structured interview about using metacognitive think-aloud strategy.

The teaching sessions were 12 periods including 12 reading texts. The researcher adapted the material of these lessons from different sources. The researcher considers certain criteria (according to the advice of the jury members) for selecting the reading materials, i.e. being interesting, challenging and appropriate to students' age, educational level, with an appropriate length and within their linguistic background.

To achieve that end, the reading texts as well as the Reading Comprehension Skills Test were submitted to the judgment of a group of eleven jury members who agreed on their validity and suitability. four jury members suggested some modifications and accordingly modifications have been made.

Pre test data on the pre-performance on reading comprehension skills test were obtained to ensure group equivalence. Pre-test data on reading comprehension skills test showed group equivalence as the t-value (0.04) was insignificant at .05 level. See Table (1):

Variables of the Study:

The independent variable was:

- using metacognitive think-aloud strategy

The dependent variables were:

a) Students' reading comprehension skills.
b) Students' attitudes towards learning EFL.

Design of the Study:

It is a pre-post test design. Forty male students from Al Faisal Secondary School in Taif City, Saudi Arabia were divided into two groups: experimental and control. Twenty students of Saudi secondary school students were in each group.

Subjects: *The sample of the study consisted of forty male from Al Faisal Secondary School in Taif City. The students were assigned to either the experimental or the control group on a random basis. Pre -test data on the reading comprehension skills test and on the attitude scale were obtained to ensure group equivalence.*

Tools of the study:

1. A pre-post reading comprehension skills test.

After modification, estimated internal consistency measures revealed that the adequate reliability of 0.78 was attained. To establish the empirical validity of the reading comprehension test, the Pearson product-moment correlation between the reading comprehension tests (authentic and inauthentic) and TOEFL were calculated respectively as 0.68 and 0.63 which are significant at 0.05 level of significance.

2- An English proficiency exam was administered to all the students to homogenize students regarding language proficiency

3- The experimental groups received instruction using metacognitive think-aloud strategy for twelve sessions of forty minutes each.

Experimental Treatment (Think-aloud Strategy)

The present study applies ten steps to scaffold students" reading comprehension with think-aloud strategy as outlined by Anderson (1999: 77), which can be divided into four main steps. The first step is modeling the strategy in which the teacher models and talks about the strategy through the use of think-aloud and students observe them. The teacher stresses what, why, and when the strategy is used. The second step is the apprenticeship of use in which the teacher uses the strategy and students talk about it and seek for helps when needed. The third step is scaffolding strategy use in which students use and talk about the strategy with the help of scaffolding technique like think-aloud, usually in small groups. The teacher observes, provides feedback, and helps as needed. The forth step is independent use in which students independently use strategy demonstrating competence through techniques like think-aloud. The teacher observes and assesses; plans future instruction.

exact definition of metacognition. Block, Gambrell, and Pressley (2002:327) define metacognition as "an awareness of and knowledge about strategies for planning, monitoring, and controlling one's own learning". Kuhn (2000) claims that metacognition has two components; the learners self awareness of a knowledge base in which information is stored about how, when and where to use various cognitive strategies and their self awareness of and access to strategies that direct learning so the learners' awareness and self controlling are developmental

Metacognitive strategies: According to Alderson (2000), metacognitive strategies can simply be defined as thinking about thinking. Students who are metacognitively aware and know what to do when they do not understand; that is they have strategies to find out of to figure out what they need to do. In the present study, they are conscious processes that regulate cognitive strategies and other processing. For the present study, predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning and summarizing are concerned strategies.

Think – aloud technique: Kymes 2005) defines the think-aloud as a technique by which the individual voices her or his thoughts during the performance of a task. According to the present study, the think-aloud has been used to provide information about cognition and processing during reading to help learners know how they develop reading strategies.

Procedure

Pilot Study
1- In order to assess the reliability of the reading comprehension test, the reading comprehension test was pretested with a sample group of 15 students. Then after interpreting the collected data, three items were removed from the whole test, and four items were modified.

1. There are statistically significant differences (favouring the treatment group) between means of scores of the control and the experimental groups in the post measurement of reading comprehension skills test.
2. There are statistically significant differences (favouring the treatment group) between means of scores of the control and the experimental groups in the post measurement of the Attitude Scale towards Learning EFL.

Limitations of the study:

This study was limited to:

1. The sample of this study includes 40 male students enrolled in Al Faisal Secondary School in Taif City, Saudi Arabia
2. Most of the texts included in the study are authentic, and they are within the linguistic background of the sample of the study according to the judgment of some jury members.
3. The results of the study are limited to improving first-year male Saudi secondary school students', at Al Faisal Secondary School in Taif City, Saudi Arabia where the researcher used to work during the time of the study.
4. The reading comprehension skills included are: literal, referential, and critical reading comprehension skills.

Definition of Terms :

Metacognition: *There seems to be no agreement on an*

- Does using metacognitive think-aloud strategy enhance improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?

- Are there any differences between learners' attitudes before and after the application of metacognitive think-aloud strategy?

Objectives of the Study:

The present study aims to:

- investigate the effectiveness of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills.

- to investigate the effectiveness of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English.

Questions of the study:

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1.   What is the effect of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?
2.   What is the effect of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English?

Hypotheses of the study:

The following hypotheses are tested.

Although reading comprehension is a very important skill required to learners, most teachers spend very little time teaching comprehension strategies. Instead, they focus on asking no more than literal questions based on the reading text. Block, Gambrell, and Presley (2002) state that "reading comprehension is the thinking process used to make meaning of what a person reads." Many secondary school teachers in Al Faisal secondary school in Taif City, Saudi Arabia are unaware of reading comprehension as a cognitive skill. In an informal interview with some of them, the students showed that they did not know how, when and why reading skills and strategies should be utilized. The teachers did not inform the students about the nature of the strategies they use and how these strategies could be used to improve their reading comprehension skills. Moreover, the types of tasks that are set for English reading classes frequently reflect artificial objectives that depend mainly on grammatical exercises and simple answers for questions based on a reading text. As a result, the students do not master reading comprehension skills in reading, such as skimming, scanning, inferring meaning and the like. Based on a pilot study, the researcher found out that most of the students showed poor achievement in their use of predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning and summarizing. As learners are in need of raising their awareness of such learning strategies and utilizing them, the present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving first-year Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills and their attitudes towards learning English..

The present study tries to find out answers to the following questions:

teaching meta-cognitive strategies to students and shows how it enhances learning more than repetitive revision.

One method that teachers can use to teach meta-cognitive strategies is the think aloud method. The think aloud method asks students to say out loud what they are thinking when they are engaging in various types of learning activities including math problems, reading comprehension or simply answering the questions of peers and teachers (Think Aloud, 2012). This method forces students to think about their own thinking and can be utilized during planning, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving while learning.

Since reading comprehension plays an important role in EFL contexts, it seems to be necessary to train learners to become proficient readers. In order to have an overview related to training the learners to be more successful, Brown and Palincsar (1984) developed a training method which involved four concrete reading strategies: summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting.

To sum up, metacognitive strategies are conscious processes that regulate cognitive strategies and other processing. Because the sample of the present research is different from the samples of the previously mentioned studies in the literature review, the researcher thinks that there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills and their attitudes towards learning English.

Statement of the Problem

control group remained intact and the regular process of reading instructions went on. The participants in experimental group outperformed those in control group.

Reading strategies can help students read in a very efficient way. It means that students can transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. If students face the difficult tasks and are able to use the strategies to overcome the problem. Effective readers often monitor their understanding, and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they usually select and use a reading strategy (such as rereading or asking questions) that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text. Therefore, it's necessary to know reading strategies which indicate how the readers understand the tasks they read.

Bentley (2013) investigated the effect of the metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving kindergarten pupils' reading comprehension. Five Kindergarten pupils participated in read-aloud lessons using high-quality children's literature. The researcher taught students to use the metacognitive think-aloud strategy to increase story comprehension. The pupils then employed the strategy during read-aloud lessons in order to increase their comprehension. There were treatment versus non-treatment sessions. Findings showed that the metacognitive Think-Aloud strategy improved kindergarten pupils' reading comprehension. There was an increase in overall comprehension assessment scores by all participants.

A study done by Pressley and colleagues (1998) found that reading comprehension was enhanced not by reading more text but by the use of even just one of the meta-cognitive strategies. This study highlights the importance of

counterproductive effects of poor strategies, and are less effective in their monitoring activities during reading

Alexander and Jetton (2000: 295) claim that during reading, metacognitive processing is expressed through strategies which are " procedural, purposeful, effortful, willful, essential, and facilitative in nature" and the reader must purposefully, willfully or intentionally invoke strategies and does so to regulate and enhance learning form text.

Wolters and Baxter (2000) claim that there are three main components of metacognition; a) metacognitive knowledge, b) metacognitive monitoring, c) self regulation and control. Wine and Hadwin (1998) suggest another model of metacognitive strategies which consist of four basic stages; task definition, goal definition, planning, enactment and adaptation. According to this model they claim that the learners generate a perception of what the task is, and the available resources, and they construct a plan for addressing the task, exact study strategies and make changes to their own cognitive structure based on perception of their performance.

Ketabi (2012) investigated the effects of metacognitive strategies on enhancing reading comprehension in Iranian intermediate learners of English. For this purpose, 70 English major students studying at Isfahan Payam-Noor University were invited to take part in a reading comprehension TOEFL test (2007 version) to homogenize them then a total number of 40 participants whose scores were within the range of one standard deviation below and above the mean were divided into two groups of experimental and control. Participants in experimental group received twelve sessions of two hour classes, every other week, on reading comprehension instruction as well as metacognitive strategies while the

university in Thailand. A metacognitive questionnaire and a reading test were administered at the beginning and at the end of the course to find the changes in both the questionnaire responses and test scores. It was found that after the instruction, the reading score and metacognitive strategy use of the three groups namely: high, moderate, low were significantly higher than those before the instruction at the . 05 level. In addition, different types of learners exhibited different responses to the strategy instruction. This study's findings contribute to a better understanding of strategy instruction and support the belief that strategy training should be conducted to enhance reading performance of the learners.

Takallou (2011) examined the effect of metacognitive (planning & self-monitoring) strategy instruction on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance and their metacognitive awareness. Two tests (TOEFL and a reading comprehension test) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning were administered to 93 male and female EFL learners. A reading comprehension test and SILL questionnaire were administered to all groups. Data analysis revealed that two experimental groups which received instruction on 'planning' and 'self-monitoring' outperformed the control group on the reading comprehension test. The results showed that experimental groups' awareness to metacognitive strategies significantly increased after instruction.

Pressley & Afflerbach (1995) classified the readers as skillful readers versus unskillful ones and the way they use their characteristics as well as exploiting metacognitive strategies may have influence on learning procedures. Poor readers are less aware of effective strategies and of the

learners take control of their own learning. The model of strategy instruction, utilized in this study, is the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, or CALLA (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999). This approach focuses on the integration of three aspects of learning: content area instruction, academic language development, and explicit instruction in learning strategies. It is particularly targeted toward students who have at least an advanced-beginning or intermediate level of English proficiency. This model is presented very simply through five basic steps: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation, and expansion:

Another model for strategy instruction is termed "Completely Informed Training," or sometimes "Strategy-Plus-Control Training." It was introduced by Oxford, et al. in 1990. It is actually presented as one part of an overall strategy training model, which focuses on steps that teachers should take when implementing strategy training, including "preparation on behalf of both students and teachers, issues that teachers should consider for instruction, the 'Completely Informed Training' method for instruction, and how teachers should follow up instruction with evaluation and revision" (Iverson, 2005, pp. 44-45).

The third instructional framework was presented by Oxford and Leaver in 1996. "It is a little different in that it is not so much a list of steps for the instructor to go through, but a division of types of instruction that can be carried out, according to the level of consciousness that each type of instruction promotes" (Iverson, 2005, p. 46).

Wichadee (2011) examined the effectiveness of explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies over a 14-week semester with a group of 40 EFL learners at a private

Wichadee (2011) examined the effectiveness of explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies over a 14- week semester with a group of 40 EFL learners at a private university in Thailand. A metacognitive questionnaire and a reading test were administered at the beginning and at the end of the course to find the changes in both the questionnaire responses and test scores. The data obtained were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-tests. Qualitative data from a semi-structured interview were also analyzed to explore students' views on the strategy-based instruction. It was found that after the instruction, the reading score and metacognitive strategy use of the three groups namely: high, moderate, low were significantly higher than those before the instruction at the . 05 level. In addition, different types of learners exhibited different responses to the strategy instruction. This study's findings contribute to a better understanding of strategy instruction and support the belief that strategy training should be conducted to enhance reading performance of the learners.

Research on learning strategies focus on diverse issues of the reading comprehension process (Li & Munby, 1996; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Schoonen et al., 1998; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).
Some Studies are conducted on the relation between language learning strategies specifically metacognitive strategies, reading comprehension and text authenticity in EAP context for example Li and Munby (1996), Schoonen and co-researchers (1998), Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001), and Smith (2003).
Based on Talbott and Halleck (1990)' strategy instruction is effective in promoting learner autonomy, or helping

a representation of the reader's interpretation of the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Inferring, as clarified by Serafini (2004), refers to reading between the lines. Students need to use their own knowledge along with information from the text to draw their own conclusions. Questioning is a process readers use before, during, and after reading. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state that the questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information. The process of summarization requires the reader to determine what is important when reading and to condense the information in the readers own words (Adler, 2001).

Nuttall (2000:38) claims that conscious development of reading skills is important because we are trying to equip students for the future, and so it is impossible to familiarize students with every text they will ever want to read; but what we can do is give them techniques for approaching texts of various kinds, to be used for various purposes, that is the essence of teaching reading.

Nilsson (2003:4) states that psychological and psycholinguistic research strongly indicate that the quality of reading as psychological processing of the target language input depends on whether the reader finds the text personally significant. That is, if the text relates to the reader's background knowledge and experiences, interests and information need.

Some Studies are conducted on the relation between language learning strategies specifically metacognitive strategies, reading comprehension and text authenticity for example

There are many different classifications of reading comprehension types. For example, Day & Park (2005) categorize reading comprehension into six types. These include literal comprehension, reorganization, inference, prediction, evaluation, and personal response. For Burns, Roe, & Ross (1999), comprehension can be divided into two levels: literal and higher-order comprehension. The literal comprehension is the most basic type whereas the latter involves specific types of comprehension. Among these are interpretive, critical, and creative comprehensions (Kirin, 2007). Reading comprehension may be affected by the difficulty of the text, the vocabulary words used in the text, and the students' familiarity with the subject matter. Therefore, many researchers have introduced different types of models of reading to help readers understand the process of reading and how to get meaning from the written materials. As the students' problems in understanding the reading text are realized, a variety of reading strategies has been introduced to EFL classes to develop their reading skill.

Predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning and summarizing are metacognitive reading comprehension strategies. Oczkus (2003) states that good readers have a purpose for reading and predicting is a strategy for improving comprehension and helps the readers set a purpose for their reading. Duke and Pearson (2005) clarify that without this aspect of the prediction process, it becomes meaningless to improving the student's comprehension. Students can make connections based upon how characters in a story relate to each other, or how story elements relate between stories or by comparing characters in a story to characters of today. As stated by Adler (2001), visualization requires the reader to construct an image of what is read. This image is stored in the reader's memory as

were recruited as subjects in the study. A 2-by-2 ANCOVA measure was employed to assess whether metacognitive strategy training can bring significant outcomes on the EFL reading comprehension. Erskine (2010) conducted a study to assess first-year university students' metacognitive awareness and usage. Four of the six classes were trained in metacognitive skills and strategies using the Metacognitive Skill Instruction. Two of these four classes were prompted to specifically reflect on their use of metacognitive skills and strategies. The other classes were not prompted about their use of metacognition. Students' metacognitive performance was assessed at the end of the semester using the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory. Results showed there was no initial difference between groups yet a significant difference between posttest and retrospective pretest scores was found for all three groups at the end of the term.

The above-mentioned effectiveness of metacognitive strategy training or instruction proves to have significant gains in performance, and many researchers strongly agreed that students need to receive more effective instructional practice so as to enhance their reading achievement. Readers can become skilled readers and learners of whole text if they are given instruction in effective strategies and taught to monitor and check their comprehension while reading (Cubukcu, 2008). Based on these reasons, the researcher felt very interested in teaching students these effective comprehension strategies to enhance the awareness of their own learning when they are reading texts. The results obtained will clarify how strategy instruction and training affects students' reading comprehension and confirm the findings of previous studies conducted in language learning settings.

comprehension instructional model using metacognitive strategies for undergraduate students and reported that the students' achievement in the use of metacognitive strategies and their English reading comprehension were higher than the standard criteria. Similarly, Cubukcu (2008) taught metacognitive strategies for reading in a five week program. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of systematic direct instruction of multiple metacognitive strategies designed to assist students in comprehending text. Specifically, the reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement of 130 third year university students has been investigated to determine whether instruction incorporating metacognitive strategies has led to an increase in the reading comprehension of expository texts. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The metacognitive strategies that were engaged to facilitate Taiwanese university learners' EFL reading comprehension revealed a strong achievement level effect on the reading comprehension outcomes.

Likewise, Akkakoson & Setobol (2009) investigated the effects of metacognitive strategies instruction on Thai students' English reading comprehension. The findings revealed that the high and moderate reading proficiency subjects used more metacognitive strategies when reading texts than before. The mean scores of the post-test gained by the subjects of the high, moderate and low reading proficiency groups were significantly higher than those of the pre-test.

Fan (2009) explored how metacognitive strategies can be implemented most effectively in Taiwanese universities to improve EFL students' reading comprehension. One hundred forty three first-year students at the Lung Hwa University

strategic, discourse and sociolinguistic competence), personal characteristics (e.g., learning and cognitive style, gender, motivation, socioeconomic status, educational levels) and external contexts (such as topics, text characteristics, reasons to read, stakes of reading, and time constraints).

Wichadee (2011) claims that metacognitive strategies are effective tools which help learners to be consciously aware of what they have learned and recognize situations in which it would be useful. Alderson (2000) explains the connection between metacognition and reading comprehension that the ability to use metacognitive skills effectively and to monitor reading is an important component of skilled reading. Readers who are metacognitively aware know what to do when they do not understand because they have strategies to find out what they need to do. The use of metacognitive strategies ignites one's thinking and leads to more profound learning as well as improved performance. As for the benefits of metacognitive strategy use, teachers can help increase students' reading comprehension when reading a story by modeling different types of planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies and these types are what most teachers recognize as before-, during-, and after- reading processes (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

Obviously, promoting metacognitive awareness among EFL readers have been conducted in many studies. Rasekh and Ranjbary (2003) investigated the effect of metacognitive strategy training through the use of explicit strategy instruction on the development of lexical knowledge of EFL students and the result of the study showed that explicit metacognitive strategy training has a significant positive effect on the vocabulary learning of EFL students. La-ongthong (2002) assessed an English reading

selection. Students who do not use metacognitive skills are usually low-achievers in reading. These students quit trying because they believe their efforts will not pay off, or they fail to recognize when they no longer understand what they are reading.

Metacognition clearly involves more executive components such as setting goals, selecting strategies and monitoring their effectiveness in the accomplishment of learning tasks. According to Kuhn (2000), metacognition has two components, firstly, the students' self awareness of a knowledge base in which information is stored about how, when, and where to use various cognitive strategies and secondly, their self awareness of and access to strategies that direct learning (e.g. monitoring difficulty level, a feeling of knowing).

Literature Review

To understand what we read is the ultimate goal of any kind of reading. Reading comprehension is the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text. In this concept, the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought. According to Carnine et al (1997), comprehension is regarded as the principal point of reading. Therefore, a successful reader must be proficient in decoding to comprehend. However, there are a number of reasons why students might have difficulty in comprehending information of what is read. According to Anderson (1999), reading involves interactions among the reader's interlanguage competence (e.g., incomplete, fragmented or not fully-developed linguistic,

Introduction:

Increased concerns have been expressed about students' comprehension of what they read. Among the generalizations that have been discussed are that most of students know how to decode but a large number of them have serious problems with comprehension. Such concerns have stimulated a good deal of attention. The strategy of looking at how students comprehend, recall, and summarize reading texts for which they do not have an appropriate schema available provides the rationale for a study of how they understand reading texts.

About the importance of teaching reading, Hedge (2003) states that any reading component of an English language course may include a set of learning goals for the ability to read a wide range of texts in English. This is the long-range goal most teachers seek to develop through independent readers outside EFL/ESL classroom; building a knowledge of language which will facilitate reading ability; building schematic knowledge; the ability to adapt the reading style according to reading purpose (i.e. skimming, scanning); developing an awareness of the structure of written texts in English; and taking a critical stance to the contents of the texts.

Reading proficiency is an important skill and according to Teele (2004: 92) "The goal of all readers should be to understand what they read". Brunning (1995) shows that metacognition refers to the knowledge people have about their own thinking which is considered as an important key to learning and learning performance.

Good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and control their reading before, during, and after reading a

Using Metacognitive Think-Aloud Strategy to Improve Secondary School Students' Reading Comprehension Skills and Their Attitudes Towards Learning English

By:

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of using metacognitive think-aloud strategy on improving Saudi secondary school students' reading comprehension skills and their attitudes towards learning English. The tools of the study included a) Reading Comprehension Skills Test, and b) Attitude Scale Towards Learning English as a foreign language. c) A semi-structured interview. The study used a pre-post control group design. Fifty students were randomly assigned to either a control or an experimental group. Students of the experimental group were instructed using metacognitive think-aloud strategy, whereas, the control group received traditional treatment. The results of the present study showed that, compared to the students of the control group, the students of the experimental group showed significant differences in their acquisition of reading comprehension skills. The experimental group students' showed more positive attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Metacognitive strategies,

Reading comprehension skills,

Think-aloud instruction

Using Metacognitive Think-Aloud Strategy to Improve Secondary School Students' Reading Comprehension Skills and Their Attitudes Towards Learning English

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