

DRAWING TASK STRATEGY IN FACILITATING READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This study investigates the application of drawing task strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. In this study were involved sixty randomly selected Albanian speaking pupils where both genders were included. The results reported here are part of an experimental study which sought to look at the benefits of using drawing task strategy for pupils' reading comprehension in EFL classroom. The data were collected through reading tests. The results of the data collected through reading tests revealed that drawing task strategy facilitates pupils' reading comprehension in EFL classroom. The study proves that this creative and effective strategy in reading comprehension will serve pupils throughout the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: *Drawing task; Reading comprehension; EFL classroom; Teaching strategy; Reading skills.*

1. Introduction

In this world of language diversity, English is spoken in many countries as a main language, in some as a second language and the vast majority learns it as a foreign language. One language "is considered foreign if it is learned largely in the classroom and is not spoken in the society where the teaching occurs" (Aleidine & Theresa, 2015, p. 327).

An important aspect while learning a foreign language is to improve reading comprehension skills. Reading comprehension can be defined as "the perception, making sense of and comprehension of written matters [...] (as cited in Aksan & Kisac, 2009, p. 835) and may be considered as a challenge for the learners of a foreign language. Many researchers claim that finding a useful reading comprehension strategy is essential and crucial to master our reading skills because learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations" (as cited in Zare, 2012, p. 164). Some researchers argue that "reading strategies are considered as one of the features of cognitive psychology which are essential for a successful comprehension" (as cited in Zare & Othman, 2013, p. 188).

A successful reading comprehension is accomplished when the student is able to complete the following activities: explaining the plot of the story, to list the characteristics of each character included in the story, to give details about the setting, retell the story, to discuss and share opinion about the reading material. Using drawing task strategy in reading activities in EFL classroom facilitates student's reading comprehension and this creative strategy encourages them to be more precise about the details of the reading material. Wolfe, a researcher in neuroscience, explains that creating a mental image is important in reading comprehension because the "visual components of a memory are so robust" (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 7). Therefore, drawing task strategy is used in this study as a significant strategy which facilitates reading comprehension at learners who study English as a foreign language.

This study reveals the impact of practicing drawing tasks strategy in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom as a helpful strategy for pupils to comprehend reading texts. The purpose of this study is to find out whether drawing task strategy is a useful strategy which facilitates reading comprehension. The reason why I have chosen to test these particular tasks in a classroom where English is learned as a foreign language is because drawing has the potential to help people comprehend and memorize new words easily and it makes them "elaborate the physical features and create an image of that specific item which remains as a visual image in their memory and it is easy to recall it later" (Wammes, Meade, and Fernandes, 2016, p. 1755).

Drawing strategy focuses mainly on depicting the visual image of a certain word or the context of the text. The usage of drawing task strategy in EFL classroom will lead us to the conclusion of this study and will clearly reveal whether this teaching strategy is efficient in reading comprehension while learning English as a foreign language.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This study is conducted in the elementary school "Brakja Miladinovci" in Struga, North Macedonia. North Macedonia considers English as an essential course in the teaching curriculum which is applied and taught as a special course starting from the first grade in primary school to University level. The participants are 60 Albanian speaking pupils that attend 6th grade, respectively 10-11 years old, which were divided into two groups equally (i.e. each group had 30 participants). Both genders (boys and girls) with different English speaking/reading skills are included in this study.

2.2. Procedure

This experiment was conducted online by using the online application JotForm. JotForm is an online application which allows anyone to create online tests and to receive responses by email. For this experiment are prepared two tests. Each of the test consist of a reading text and reading comprehension (open-ended) questions in order to define whether drawing task strategy improves reading comprehension skills. These texts are considered appropriate for the pupils' language proficiency. The pupils were divided into two groups: the experimental and the control group. The first group of 30 pupils represents the experimental group and the other group represents the control group. Drawing task strategy was used only with experimental group. The texts and comprehension questions would be the same for both groups (experimental and control group). The first test includes the text "From North to South" and reading comprehension questions which are taken from the pupils' textbook *Messages 1 Student's Book* (2005). This test was sent to each pupil individually via e-mail.

The experimental group had to read the text and then they had to summarize the text or the context of the text by drawing pictures. They had the opportunity to draw on a paper and after they finish, they had to upload their drawings on the test that was sent to them via e-mail. In the next activity, after the drawing task they had to answer the comprehension questions which are designed as open-ended questions. On the other hand, the drawing task strategy was not used with the control group. The control group had to read the same text as the experimental group and answer the same comprehension questions without summarizing the text by drawing pictures. The second test was sent to students via e-mail in the following week. The second test includes “Mountain Gorillas” text and reading comprehension questions created by Victoria Barachman (2009). The same procedure is followed as in the first test.

2.3. Research tools

Two different tests with reading comprehension questions were used for data collection. Each one of them has 6 open-ended questions in accordance with the text. These tests were designed by using the online application JotForm. In the first test the questions are taken from pupils’ textbook *Messages 1 Student’s Book* (2005) and in the second test the questions are taken from the author of the text Victoria Barachman (2009). The questions of each test are the same in terms of content and number for both the experimental and control group. The experimental group had one additional task therefore after they read the text, they had to illustrate the context of the text by drawing pictures. This task was designed in a way that allowed the students to upload their drawings online. The tests were sent to each student individually by e-mail.

2.4. Method of Analysis

Data analysis regarding the second research question is accomplished by using two different reading comprehension tests. The same scoring system will be used for both tests. For the assessment of open-ended questions was used the scoring rubric for open-ended questions (Table 1) applied by Janine Elliot (2007). The students had to complete the test in 45 minutes and then they had to submit their test online. In the end the results of both reading comprehension tests were transferred to SPSS for data analysis and paired sample t-test was used as a statistical procedure.

Table 1. *Scoring rubric for open-ended questions*

Score	0	1	2	3
Description	Does not answer the question or answer is incorrect	Answer is minimal/ demonstrates a limited understanding of the text	Demonstrates a moderate level of understanding but lacks detail or is not specific enough	Demonstrates a high level of understanding and includes specific details

2.5. Limitations

It is important to mention that there are some limitations about this study that should be taken into consideration when reviewing the results. First, the results would have been more reliable if I had included more than 60 pupils in my study. Second, it would have been more efficient if the experiment was repeated more than twice. Third, the results would have been more reliable if the experiment was conducted in a classroom. On the other hand, what was beneficial about this study is that all 60 pupils included in this study followed all the instructions given in the test very carefully even though the test was conducted while no observation from the researcher took place and it was clear from the results that they made an effort to complete each activity.

3. Results and Analyses

3.1. Results of the first reading comprehension test

The first reading comprehension test was conducted after the pupils read the first text. Results of the first test from both groups have been analyzed and the difference between the experimental and the control group are presented in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Test 1 - Experimental group	14,9000	30	3,15518	,57605
	Test 1- Control group	10,4000	30	3,82009	,69745

Table 3. Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Test 1 – Experimental group Test 1- Control group	4,50000	5,38677	,98348	2,48855	6,51145	4,576	29	,000

Table 2 and 3 explain whether there is any significant difference between control and experimental group. The Paired Samples Statistics clearly demonstrates that the mean score of pupil's reading comprehension of control group in the first test was $M= 10,4$ (see Table 2) and the mean score of experimental group was $M= 14,9$ which indicates that there is a significant difference between both groups in the first test. From the results of the Paired Samples Test we can see that the test was significant ($p= .000$) because $p>0,05$.

3.2. Results of the second reading comprehension test

The second reading comprehension test was conducted after the pupils read the second text. Results of the second test from both groups have been analyzed and the difference between the experimental and the control group are presented in Table 4 and 5.

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Test 2- Experimental group	15,2000	30	2,85754	,52171
	Test 2- Control group	10,2000	30	4,20509	,76774

Table 5. *Paired Samples Test*

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Test 2- Experimental group Test 2- Control group	5,00000	5,05828	,92351	3,11121	6,88879	5,414	29	,000

From the results presented in Table 4 and 5 it can be noticed whether there is any significant difference between experimental and control group. The Paired Samples Statistics clearly demonstrates that the mean score of pupil's reading comprehension of control group in the second test was $M= 10,2$ (see Table 4) and the mean score of experimental group was $M= 15,2$ which indicates that there is a significant difference between both groups in the second test. From the results of the Paired Samples Test we can see that the test was significant ($p=.000$) because $p>0,05$.

4. Discussion of findings

The aim of this study was to examine the usage of drawing task strategy as a useful strategy to improve reading comprehension skills in English as a foreign language classroom. From the results of the first test and second test it can be noticed that there is a difference between the mean score of two groups even though the grouping of the participants was made randomly. In both situations the tests were significant, which means that the groups differ from each other in terms of reading comprehension skills.

The comparison of the results of both tests between control and experimental group, clearly define that there is a difference between both groups. From the results in Table 2 and 4 it can be realized that there is an improvement in reading comprehension skills. Findings of my study reveal that drawing task strategy improves reading comprehension skills in English as a foreign language classroom.

5. Pupils' drawing creativity throughout this study

Pupils' positive attitude, interest and dedication are considered a great advantage for this study because it helped me to collect the data and to achieve reliable results. Surprisingly, the pupils' drawings that they draw throughout the experiment show that they were so talented. They have represented an explicit content related to the text, which indicates that all components of the drawing were logically represented and the additional details as well. In addition to that, a great creativity and imagination have been exposed. Apparently, they have understood the context of the text and tried to visualize it properly. Moreover, some of the pupils in their drawings have depicted different details from the text which indicates that the students have read the text carefully and analyzed every sentence of the text. The pupils have followed each instruction of the test and made an effort to complete the drawing task activity, even though this experiment was conducted online.

The use of drawing task strategy as a creative teaching strategy in EFL classroom has the tendency to stimulate students to think deeper, to concentrate longer, to use their imagination and to reveal their creativity. As long as drawing is considered “situational authentic” it means that the students can easily engage in drawing tasks or follow the instructions because they have practiced drawing in their everyday life (Sukma, Rozimela, and Ratmanida, 2019, p. 11). Many researchers claim that the application of drawing task strategy in EFL classroom increases students’ motivation in learning a foreign language. Jerrold Kemp is an associate professor in education and media production coordinator who agrees that drawing plays a significant role in teaching a foreign language because drawing strategy makes the teaching process more entertaining and impressive, also enhances students’ memory and their language skills (as cited in Fidyati, 2018, p. 119).

James, another researcher in language teaching, asserts that any visual representation of an item “can create a visual impression of students, attract attention and help concentration; so that students can describe the meaning directly and quickly into a verbal explanation” (as cited in Fidyati, 2018, p. 119). Art can be used in any setting for different purposes and most importantly it can be applied in school which “shows great benefits for retention of content, building community, and general excitement about learning” (as cited in Rooney, 2020, p. 4).

6. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to observe the importance of drawing task strategy which facilitates reading comprehension while learning English as a foreign language. Based on the results of the first test and second test it can be concluded that the application of drawing task strategy after reading activity enhances pupils’ reading comprehension skills. Moreover, this strategy helps the pupils to answer reading comprehension questions easily. In contrast, the results of this study indicate that answering reading comprehension questions immediately after reading the text does not facilitate pupils’ reading comprehension. Drawing task helps pupils to analyze and conceptualize the context of the text, also to visualize the story in their mind and to represent it on a paper. For these reasons we can conclude that drawing task strategy is a useful strategy which improves pupils’ reading comprehension skills and facilitates answering reading comprehension questions in English as a foreign language classroom.

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