

THE EFFECT OF MOTIVATION ON DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Zahir Adam Daff-Alla Ahmed

*Department of English Language, College of Science & Arts – Qelwah,
Al-Baha University, Al-Baha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

ABSTRACT: *This study is set up to examine how motivation affects on comprehending English texts. It concentrates on reading comprehension mainly because reading is the important one of the four skills in English as foreign language (EFL). The participants are university teachers of English language and undergraduate English language students at Blue Nile University in Sudan. The researcher used the descriptive analytical approach because it is suitable for such studies. The data of this study collected by means of questionnaire and tests. This study leads to the findings that there are: motivational techniques improve the EFL intrinsic motivation to read, motivation and attitudes affect on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills, and different techniques of teaching reading comprehension are helpful in comprehending English texts. Finally the researcher recommends that reading strategies should be taught to EFL students and using games, elements of fun and humors in the classroom motivate students to read and understand.*

KEYWORDS: EFL learners, Motivation, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is an essential skill to handle the demands of the 21st century and it is the most important skill of the four skills in English as foreign language. Reading is the visual recognition of symbols, letters, word and sentences and the comprehension of their meaning. Teaching reading comprehension as mentioned by (Robert, 1982:194) has attracted the attention of educationalist as early as the 14th century. Even earlier than this, teachers invented novel ways to teach reading. Reading skill plays a role in the learning process and it may be the only way students can keep contact with English.

According to (Al Noursi 2014), the ability to read for various purposes is a precursor of successful learning in schools, colleges and universities. (Dagget and Hasselgring, 2007) on the other hand consider reading as the key enabler of learning for academic proficiency. Reading comprehension is an attractive process of deriving meanings from a text (Rumelhart, 1981). Reading involves the reader, the text and the interaction between reader and text (Aebersold and Field 1997: 156).

It is essential for educators to make conscious effort in improving the motivation of students. (Guthrie et al., 2006) found that the motivation of students predicted the student's growth in reading and comprehension. For the purpose of developing EFL learners reading comprehension abilities, this study tries to determine the effectiveness of motivation on EFL learners reading comprehension skills. This study aimed to investigate the effect of motivation on reading comprehension, while the previous studies focused on determining the relationships of two variables: motivation and reading comprehension.

Research Questions

This study tried to answer the following questions:

1. Is motivation important for comprehending English texts?
2. To what extent EFL learners attitudes are directed towards reading comprehension?
3. Are positive motivation and attitudes considered as effective ways on improving students reading comprehension skills?

Hypotheses

The study was also guided by the following hypotheses:

1. Motivation enhances comprehending English texts.
2. EFL learners' attitudes are favorably affected when making use of reading strategies.
3. Positive motivation and attitudes are effective ways on improving learners' reading comprehension skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Reading

More than a hundred years ago, when methods of teaching foreign languages were drawn from the methods of teaching Latin, the scope of reading skills was within the limits of using reading as a means of recitation and translation from the foreign language into the mother tongue and vice versa. Although some linguists refer to that period of "Grammar Translation Method" as the time of reading, was not taught or developed further more reading for translating foreign literature. When a person reads a text, he is attempting to discover the meaning of what he is reading using the visual clues of spelling, his knowledge of probabilities of occurrence, his context pragmatic to a meaningful interpretation to the text. The same notion confirmed by Lado (1964:132) states that: "To read is grasp language patterns from their written representation. Grabe & Stoller, (2002:9) state, reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. Byrrne, (1971:102) states, reading are an association between the sound of the spoken sentence and visual symbols." The most important resource that any potential reader processes whether reading in a first or any other language, is an awareness of the way in which language used.

Reading Comprehension

It is only recently that teachers and text-book writers have come to realize that reading comprehension has been a neglected area in English as a foreign language teaching. Grabe & Stoller, (2002:17) state, reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately. Reading materials at intermediate and advanced levels have consisted on the whole of a text followed by a set of direct reference question or multiple choice questions. The main objective here is to teach the students to read the text and to understand it by understanding and relating its constituents to teach other and to the student own experience.

The process of reading comprehension constitutes the first issue in defining the meaning of the word "literary". Traditionally, the word literary is defined as the ability to read and write. A person who is not capable of reading a word for instance, is totally illiterate. Fighting against illiteracy has become as important issue in most countries especially in the third world. Those who are in

charge of education have started educating people in areas of reading to eliminate or at least diminish and root-up the amount of illiteracy exists in their countries.

Reading comprehension is captured the attention of many linguists, instructors and teachers. The fact behind that, reading has become an indispensable aspect of human interactions. People interact with written, printed or on-line texts and daily basis for the purpose of getting information, self-entertaining, broadcasting background knowledge, obtaining facts, verifying information, conducting international proficiency texts i.e. TOFEL, ILETS, GRE, ...etc., In its simplest definition, reading comprehension can be defined as the ability to grasp a deeper understanding of written texts.

The main purpose of teaching comprehension is to develop students understanding of a piece of written language. Martin, (1991:131) cited that, the purpose of reading is to connect the ideas of the page to what you already know." If you don't know anything about a subject, the pouring words of text into your mind are like pouring water into your hand. You don't retain much. "Most of the objectives being set in EFL classroom are to help students to read effectively and professionally. Every one reads with some kind of purpose in mind; generally speaking, the purpose is either to enjoy oneself or to obtain information of some kind. In the same stream, Chorney, (2005) stated that, interactive reading can be defined as a process in which readers have control over the text they are reading. This control enables them to influence the nature of the reading process in that they are able and free to participate actively in the construction of meaning of whatever they are reading.

Motivation

According to Schunk, et al, (2008), motivation is the process by which goal-directed activities are initiated and sustained. Brophy, (2010) describes student motivation as the extent to which students will invest time, energy, and attention towards various tasks, goals or activities. Student motivation can affect current learning as well as the skills and strategies learnt previously Schunk, et al, (2008).Guthrie et al., (2006), many teachers think of motivated reader as a student who is having fun while reading. This may be true, but there are many form of motivation that might not be related to fun and excitement. We mean by motivations are values and beliefs, and behaviors surrounding reading from an individual. Some productive values and beliefs may lead to excitement, yet other values may lead to determined hard work.

There are three powerful motivations that drive students' reading. They operate in school and out of school, and they touch nearly every child. Some students may have all of these motivations and some may have only one. For some students, these motivations appear in the positive form driving students toward reading. For other students, the motivations are negative and push students away from books. When we talk about reading motivations we refer to interest, dedication, and confidence. An interested student reads because he enjoys it, a dedicated student reads because believes it is important, and a confident student reads because he can do it.

Previous Studies

Christopher L. Knoll, (2000) examined the relationship between motivation and reading comprehension. He found, the resulting correlation (0.73) between motivations and reading

comprehension indicates that there is indeed a strong relationship between the two variables. This strong relationship seems to indicate that a focus upon the motivation of students with low reading scores would be beneficial to those individuals. Alsamadani (2011), in Saudi Arabia, “the level of reading motivation of the students is low.” He revealed that 50% of his respondents mentioned that they don’t read unless it is required. Al-Nujaidi cited in Alsamadani (2011) also found Saudi EFL learners don’t voluntarily read English materials outside the class. Oistein Anmarkrud & Ivar Braten, (2009) “Motivation for reading comprehension”, results showed that even after removing variance from these variables, the motivation constructs accounted for additional variance. However, only reading task value was a statistically significant positive predictor of reading comprehension.

Ahmadi, et al, (2013) examined the relation between students’ reading motivation reading comprehension in Malaysian context. In their study they included motivation constructs (interest, perceived control, collaboration involvement, and efficacy), text genres, specific versus general contexts and the self-versus other evidence sources about motivation as multiple components under investigation. Using qualitative research, they found out that reading motivation has a positive impact on reading comprehension. Students with higher motivation can score higher in reading comprehension tests.

In the study conducted by Margret Elizabeth, (2011), “Reading motivation and reading comprehension”, she found that reading motivation was significantly correlated with reading comprehension. The studies above indicated that motivation and attitudes are ways in improving EFL learners’ reading comprehension skills, and there is strong relationship between motivation and reading comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to examine the effect of motivation on EFL learners’ reading comprehension skills. The researcher used the Descriptive Analytical method. This study is conducted in Sudan, English language teachers from different universities and students from Blue Nile University, Faculty of Education during the academic year (2013/2014). In the first phase, the questionnaire was distributed to English language teachers, and the respondents for the test were selected randomly and they were given the pre-test, and then attended for reading comprehension course, then they were given the post-test. The data gathered and tabulated using SPSS to analyze.

Sample

The respondents of the study were 20 English language teachers randomly selected from different universities in Sudan to answer the questionnaire. Therefore 33 male & female students were randomly selected from different sections for the post-test, and then they were attending a reading comprehension course in order to apply reading strategies, after that they had given post-test.

Data collection

The process of gathering data started with help from the researchers’ co-teachers. The researcher used two tools to collect data. These tools were a questionnaire and a test; they were designed to

give accurate evaluation of the effect of motivation on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills.

Questionnaire: 20 copies for teachers of English language questionnaire were distributed to teachers from different universities, which served to verify the hypotheses and achieved the objective of the study. The questionnaire was handed out by the researcher to the participants. The data were gathered and analyzed.

Tests: The tests were designed to evaluate students reading comprehension skills by using motivation reading strategy. The tests were composed of five questions.

Procedures

All the students were first asked to answer the pre-test and then attending reading comprehension course. This course consisted of seven lectures, one lecture per week. In each lecture the participants were first asked to read the passage, and then were instructed to answer different assignments. During the lecture the researcher used different ways of motivations to motivate students in order to achieve the objective of the study. After the course of reading comprehension the students were given a post-test.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher used two methods: first a descriptive analytical method was used to show the directions of the sample size of analytical study to show the effect of motivation on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. Second factor analysis was used to discuss the following hypotheses: motivation effect on comprehending English texts, EFL learners' attitudes are favorably affected when making use of reading strategies and positive motivation and attitudes are effective ways on improving learners' reading comprehension skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher analyzed the data and discussed the results; to respond to the research questions.

1. Is motivation important for comprehending English texts? 2. To what extent EFL learners attitudes are directed towards reading comprehension? 3. Are positive motivation and attitudes effective ways on improving students reading comprehension skills?

Results of questionnaire

Results of questionnaire were discussed here in relation to the study of hypotheses.

Table (1)

<i>No</i>	<i>Statement.</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>No</i>
1.	Motivated students react positively in reading comprehension.	50%	40%	10%
2.	Using elements of fun and humors in the classroom motivate students to read and understand.	35%	50%	15%

Motivation affects on comprehending English texts.

1. Motivated students react positively in reading comprehension. The above table indicates that (50%) of the subjects agreed with this statement, while (40%) agreed "to some extent" and small number which is (10%) replied no.

2. Using elements of fun and humors in the classroom motivate students to read and understand. (35%) of the respondents reply with "Yes", (50%) agreed "to some extent" and (15%) completely disagreed with this point.

Table (2)

No	Statement.	Yes	To some extent	No
1.	Learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension are influenced by using interesting strategies.	45%	35%	20%
2.	Positive attitudes enhance motivation for reading comprehension.	40%	45%	15%

Motivation affects on EFL learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension

1. Learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension are influenced by using interesting strategies. The above table indicates that (45%) of the subjects agreed with this statement, while (35%) agreed "to some extent" and (20%) disagreed.

2. Positive attitudes enhance motivation for reading comprehension. (40%) of the respondents replied "Yes", (45%) who agreed "to some extent" and (15%) completely disagreed with this point.

Table (3)

No	Statement.	Yes	To some extent	No
1.	Motivation strategy is affected way in improving learners' reading skills.	35%	45%	20%
2.	Positive attitudes improve learners' reading comprehension skills.	44%	38%	18%

Motivation and attitudes are effective ways on improving learners' reading comprehension skills.

1. Motivation strategy is affected way in improving learners' reading skills. The above table indicates that (35%) of the subjects agreed with this statement, while (45%) agreed "to some extent" and (20%) disagreed.

2. Positive attitudes improve learners' reading comprehension skills. (44%) of the respondents replied with "Yes", (38%) who agreed "to some extent" and (18%) completely disagreed with this point.

According to the data analysis, the following findings are revealed: motivational techniques affect on comprehending English texts, because the statistical results in table (1) shows that the majority of the subjects agreed with the topic "motivation effect on comprehending English texts". With reference to the analysis of table (2): It reveals that motivation affects on EFL learners' attitudes towards reading comprehension, this can be seen from the most of the respondents agreed with this claim. The responses on table (3) show that: motivation and attitudes are effective ways in

improving learners' reading comprehension skills, the majority of the subjects agreed with the statement.

Results of pre-test and post-tests:

The Paired Samples T Test:

The Paired Samples T Test compares the means of two variables. It computes the difference between the two variables for each case, and tests to see if the average difference is significantly different from zero.

Hypothesis:

Null hypotheses: There is no significant difference between the means of the two variables.

Alternative hypotheses: There is a significant difference between the means of the two variables.

Table (4)

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE	46.6061	33	11.17458	1.94524
	POST	66.1212	33	16.24184	2.82734

The statistical analysis of paired data is performed on the differences between the pairs, and for this data the mean difference (post - pre) is (20) degrees. The standard deviation (SD) of the difference is (5) degrees. The post-test mean scores are higher.

Table (5)

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PRE & POST	33	.433	.012

There is positive correlation. People who did well on the pre-test also did well on the post-test.

Table (6)

Paired Samples Test

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PRE - POST	-7.367	32	.000

The T value = -7.367

Significance is (.000)

If the significance value is less than .05, there is a significant difference. If the significance value is greater than .05, there is no significant difference. Here, one can see that the significance value (0.000) Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected with this data, and conclude that there is sufficient evidence to suggest pressures is difference between pre- and post-test scores.

CONCLUSION

The study deals with the effect of motivation on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. Therefore the study aims at helping EFL learners to understand and identify different purposes of reading and master strategies that are suitable to achieve them and showing to them that different materials require different degrees of understanding.

Literature review gives a historical background of the study, discusses definitions of reading, reading comprehension, and motivation. Also shows how reading is to be taught, learned and tested. For the empirical study two tools are employed. The questionnaire and the test are used to measure the factors that influence reading comprehension abilities. The questionnaire was given to teachers of English language and the tests were given to a group of undergraduate students at Blue Nile University. The researcher hopes that this study will offer suitable solutions of the difficulties in reading comprehension.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results and findings of the study, it is recommended that: teaching reading should focus on topics that suit students' interest to improve reading comprehension skills. Using games, element of fun and humours in the class room motivate students to read and understand. Reading strategies should be taught to the EFL students. Teachers should use reading strategies and different techniques in teaching reading comprehension.

REFERENCES

- Aebersold J. A; Marry Lee Field (1997): From Reader to Reading Teacher (Issues and Strategies for Second Language Classroom), Cambridge University Press.
- Ahmadi, R. A., Ismail, H. N., & Abdullah, M. K. (2013). The relation between students' reading motivation and reading comprehension.
- Al Noursi, O. H. (2014). To read or not to read. In R. Al-Mahrooqi & A. Roscoe (Eds.), Focusing on EFL reading. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alsamadani, H.A. (2011). Saudi students' awareness of reading strategies and factors affecting their EFL reading comprehension. British Journal of arts and social sciences. Retrieved from [www.bjournal.co.uk/paper/BJASS 2 2 / BJASS 02 02 01 pdf](http://www.bjournal.co.uk/paper/BJASS%2022/BJASS%2002%2001.pdf).
- Brophy, J. (2010). Motivating students to learn (3rd ed.) Madison Avenue, Ny: Routledge.
- Byrne, D.C (1971): English teaching extracts, Longman group limited, England.
- Chorney, T. (2005). Interactive reading, early modrn texts and hypertext: A Lesson from the past. Academic Commons, 1, 27
- Cristopher L. Konoll. (2000). Grand Valley University. The relationship between motivation and reading comprehension. /[http:// scholarworks.gvsu.edu theses](http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses).

- Dagget, W., & Hasselbring, T. (2007). What we know about adolescent reading. International Center for Leadership in Education. Retrieved from [http://www. Leader.com/](http://www.Leader.com/) pdf.
- Grabe, W. and Stoller, F. L. (2002): Teaching and Searching reading, Great Britain, Person Education limited.
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., Humerick, N. M. Perencevich, K. C. Taboada, A. & Barbosa, P.(2006. Influences of stimulating tasks on reading motivation and comprehension.The journal of educational research, 99(4) 232-245. <http://dx.doi.org/ 10.3200/ JOER./ 99.4.232-246>
- Lado, R. (1964) Language teaching New York. Guilford PressMargaret Elizabeth Middleton (2011) Reading Motivation and Reading Comprehension. The Ohio State University.
- Martin C.L. (1991). Attitudes about children with traditional and nontraditional roles. Sex Roles, 22, 15-165.
- Oistein Anmarkrud, Ivar Braten (2009) Motivation for Reading Comprehension. Institute of Educational Research, University of Oslo, Norway
- Robert S. (1982) Teaching Reading Strategies. www.greatergood.org /Donate to literacy- related causes.
- Rumerlhart. D.E & Mc Clelland, J.L. (1981). Processing through spreading activation. In A.M. Lesgold, & C.A. Perfetti (Eds) Interactive processing in reading (pp.37-60). New Jersey: Lawrence Elbaum.
- Schunk, D.H., Pintrich. P. R., & Meece, J.L. (2008). Motivation in education theory, research, and application (3rd ed). Upper Saddle River, N.J. Person Prentice Hall.