EVALUATING READING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION FOR FET COLLEGES ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Authors1: *Dr Yolanda Mpu*

Author 2: *Prof E.O. Adu*

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Abstract
Many students in Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges of Education have problems comprehending English Second Language (ESL) reading materials and thus cause them struggle academically because English is the medium of instruction. To some extent, methods of teaching second language reading contribute to students' reading failure. The purpose of this study was to determine what reading strategies Level 2 ESL learners use; what reading strategies should be taught; what the effect of an implemented reading strategy programme is on their reading comprehension andwhat the effect of an implemented reading strategy programme is on the reading comprehension. Two intact cohorts of Level 2 students were randomly assigned to a control and intervention group. A reading strategy questionnaire and a reading comprehension test were used to examine the relationship between strategy use and level of comprehension. A quasi-experimental pretest–post- test control group design was used. A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed statistically from each other. A statistical software package was used to analyze data. A discrepancy emerged between the responses of the participants and their actual performance in reading text. The intervention group showed significant gains in strategy use and reading comprehension after the six-week intervention period. Recommendations are that a treatment period of much longer than twelve weeks is required for possible better retention of RSI. Also, a sustained period of intensive instruction and practice in reading strategies seems to be required.

Keywords: English Second Language, reading strategy, reading strategy intervention, explicit instruction, reading comprehension.

Background
Reading is a skill essential to success in all academic areas (Anderson, 1999; Granville, 2001; Grabe&Stoller, 2002; Pretorius, 2002). In other words, reading is central to the learning process. Anderson (1999) outlines that in the English Second Language (ESL) reading class; however, one great challenge is that even when learners can read in their second language, much of their reading is not fluent because they are not actively engaged with the text in a meaningful way. For example, the learners may move through the text one word at a time and not reap the full benefits from reading. Second language teachers, therefore, face many challenges in the classroom. Creating awareness, attention, intentionality and control of reading strategies are among the most

useful contributions that teachers can make to develop their learners' reading comprehension ability (Oxford, 1990; Dreyer, 1998).

In a study conducted by Pretorius (2002), it is concluded that a fundamental feature of academic underperformance in South Africa is poor reading ability. Her findings showed that learners who fail are those who perform poorly on reading tests and attain comprehension levels of less than 4.5%. According to the READ Annual Report (1999), the average age of entry of Grade 9 pupils in rural areas is 14, 4 years. In addition, they have English as a Second Language (ESL) reading level equivalent, on average, to children at age 7, 6 years. The problem becomes more serious at higher levels, as Pretorius (2002) points out that the skill in reading becomes more demanding as learners move up the education ladder, while the gap between skilled and unskilled readers widens. A pilot study undertaken by Dreyer (1998) in a multilingual classroom in the North West Province indicates a failure rate of approximately 75% among Standard 6 (Grade 8) learners on a reading comprehension test. At the heart of this problem, according to both Pitt (1985) and Pretorius (2002), is the lack of those skills basic to learning (i.e. reading skills and reading strategy use).

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to:
Determine what reading strategies Level 2 learners' use;
Determine what reading strategies should be taught;
Hypothesis
The following hypothesis is formulated for this study:

H1: A well-developed reading strategy instruction programme significantly affects Level 2 English Second Language learners' reading comprehension.

A null hypothesis was not formulated for this study because as Hatch and Lazaraton (1991:230) state: "If we have good reason to believe that we will find a difference (for example, previous studies or research findings suggested that this is so), then we will use a one-tailed hypothesis". A single-tailed hypothesis specifies the direction of the predicted difference. A review of the literature led to a positive difference that could be expected, and therefore a null hypothesis was not formulated for this particular study.

Research Paradigm
Research paradigm is defined as an intellectual perception or view, accepted by an individual or a society as a clear example, model or pattern of how things work in the world. This term was used first by the US science fiction historian Thomas Kuhn (1922-96) in his 1962 book, *The* Structure of Scientific Revolution to refer to theoretical frameworks within which all scientific thinking and practices operate. A paradigm is simply a belief system (or theory) that guides the way we do things, or more formally establishes a set of practices (Gagne, 2001: 288). This can range from thought patterns to action. This study employs positivism as a research paradigm becausepositivism, in philosophy, generally is any system that confines itself to the data of

experience and excludes a metaphysical speculation. More narrowly, the term designates the thought of the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1997–1998). As a philosophical ideology and movement, positivism first assumed its distinctive features in the work of Comte, who also named and systematized the science of sociology. Across disciplines (and within) there are varying views of what research is and how this relates to the kind of knowledge being developed. Paradigms guide how we make decisions and carry out research. Lawyers, for example, will use an adversarial paradigm, while selection committees will use a judgmental paradigm (Guba, 1990). Your own discipline will also be guided by a paradigm and through the research papers you read in your subject, you will begin to identify through the methodology the kind of paradigm that is used. As a researcher, it is important to know where your discipline belongs, that there are different ways of viewing the world, and that your approach to knowledge is one of many. The following concepts illustrate some of the different approaches to research. Disciplines tend to be governed by particular paradigms, such as: positivism (e.g. experimental testing), post positivism (i.e. a view that we need context and that context free experimental design is insufficient), critical theory (e.g. ideas in relation to an ideology – knowledge is not value free and bias should be articulated), and constructivism (i.e. each individual constructs his/her own reality so there are multiple interpretations; this is sometimes referred to as interpretivism).

Research Approach
Quantitative approach is used for this study. Qualitative research approach is described as a paradigm in which objective data are gathered and analysed numerically (Hopkins, 2008: 210). Central to quantitative research is the understanding of how and why variables are related to each other. Thus, it is used to answer questions about relationships between measured variables (Punch, 2003:17). Quantitative research uses methods adopted from the physical sciences that are designed to ensure objectivity and generalisability (Thomas, 2003: 6). Thus, this kind of research generates statistics through the use of large-scale survey design, using instruments such as questionnaires or structured interviews, or instruments designed to test a specific construct such as locus of control, reading comprehension, or spatial skills.

It is sometimes referred to as the traditional or positivist approach. Some common research designs in quantitative research are: experimental designs, surveys, correlation design, and causal comparative designs. The purpose of this section is to give an outline of the methodology employed in this study. The main aspects addressed in this chapter include the design used in the study, the respondents that participated, the instruments that were used to collect the data, an outline of the data collection procedure followed, a justification of the data analysis techniques utilised in the study, as well as a section highlighting the ethical considerations followed in this study.

Design
Aquasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design was used in this study. A quasi-experimental design is most frequently used when it is not feasible for the researcher to use random assignment. Real- life situations in ESL classroom research create many instances when experimental research is not possible, but some type of causal inference is needed. The purpose

of the quasi-experimental design is to approximate the conditions of the true experiment (Gribbons&Herman, 1997). The majority of classroom research involves the use of classes where students have already been assigned on the basis of some principle. This is called an intact group. In intact group studies, researchers are unable to select or assign students randomly for research purposes. Thus, in this research it is impossible to select students randomly.   In classroom research where researchers wish to see the effects of a teaching learning treatment, the design often uses the intact group (Hatch&Lazaraton, 1991:86). While such designs will not allow researchers to make causal statements about the findings, they will allow researchers to give evidence in support of links between variables of these particular classrooms. The following guide was used to assess the frequency of strategy use (Oxford, 1990):

High	Always or almost used	4.5 - 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 - 4.4
Medium	Sometimes	1.5 - 3.4
Low	Usually not used	1.5 - 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1 .0 - 1.4

A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed reliably from each other. The t-test is a procedure that tests the difference between two groups for normally distributed interval data (where the mean and standard deviation and appropriate measures of central tendency and variability of the scores (Hatch &Lazaraton, 1991: 249).

The assumptions underlying the use of t-tests include:

There are only two levels (groups) of one independent variable (reading strategy use) to compare.

The data are truly continuous.

The mean and standard deviation are the most appropriate measures to describe the data (Hatch &Lazaraton, 1991: 263-264).

A relationship can be regarded as statistically significant if the results are significant at the specified alpha level (i.e. Probability of chance occurrence). Alpha is established as a criterion, and results either meet the criterion or they do not. In behavioural research, alpha is frequently set at $p<0, 05$ or $p< 0, 1$ (i.e. the odds that the findings are due to chance are either 5 in 100 or 1 in 100) (Hatch & Lazaraton,1991). A relationship can be regarded as practically significant if the results are of practical value to the researcher, language practitioner, or educator. Cohen (1977) established various scales according to which a relationship or difference between means can be regarded as practically significant. Cohen's (1977: 20-27) effect size d was used to calculate the difference between two means.

Cohen uses the following scale for the d - values:

Small effect $\qquad$ d = 0, 2

Medium effect $\qquad$ d = 0, 5

Large effect $\qquad$ d = 0, 8

Data Analysis

The data were analysed by means of the STATISTICAL software package. By definition, statistical analysis is a component of data analytics. In the context of business intelligence (BI), statistical analysis involves collecting and scrutinizing every data sample in a set of items from which samples can be drawn. A sample, in statistics, is a representative selection drawn from a total population (Holt, 1997:66). STATISTICAL includes not only general purpose statistical, graphical and analytic data management procedures, but also comprehensive implementations of specialised methods for data analysis (e.g. data mining, business, social sciences, biomedical research, or engineering applications). Some of the unique features of the STATISTICAL line of software include:

The breadth of selection and comprehensiveness of implementation of analytical procedures;

The unparalleled selection, quality and customisability of graphics integrated seamlessly with every computational procedure;

A wide selection of advanced software technologies that are responsible for STATISTICAL's practically unlimited capacity, performance (speed, responsiveness),and application customisation options;

The efficient and user-friendly user interface, and

The fully integrated, industry standard STATISTICAL Visual Basic that adds more than 11,000 new functions to the comprehensive syntax of Microsoft Visual Basic, thus comprising one of the most extensive development environments available (Stat soft, 2005).One of the most unique and important features of the STATISTICAL family of applications is that these technologies allow even inexperienced users to tailor STATISTICAL to their specific preferences.

The same version of STATISTICAL can be used by:

Novices to perform routine tasks using the default (e.g. Quick) analysis start up dialogs (containing just a few, self-explanatory buttons), or even by accessing STATISTICAL with their Web browsers (and a highly simplified "front end"), and

By experienced analysts, professional statisticians, and advanced application developers who can integrate any of STATlSTlCAL'shighly optimised procedures (more than 11,000 functions) into custom applications or computing environments, using any of the cutting edge, object-oriented,

and/or web-embedded software technologies (Stat soft, 2005). A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed reliably from each other. The t-test is a procedure that tests the difference between two groups for normally distributed interval data (where the mean and standard deviation and appropriate measures of central tendency and variability of the scores (Hatch&Lazaraton, 1991: 249).The post-test results indicated that the learners in the experimental group use certain strategies statistically ($p < 0.05$), as well as practically significantly (small to large effect sizes), more often than the learners in the control group. An analysis of the reading strategies that discriminate between the learners revealed that there is a difference in terms of the process that occurs before reading, during reading and after reading. The post-test results cited in Table 3 revealed an improvement in the frequency of usage of the reading strategies by the experimental group. During the pre-reading stage, the frequency of use of the following reading strategies improved: "I briefly skim the text before reading" (experimental group pre-test - 2.99; post-test - 3.60), and "I often look for how the text is organised and pay attention to headings and subheadings (experimental group pre-test 2.55; post-test - 2.98). During- reading strategies and after- reading strategies also show an improvement when the frequency of usage of reading strategies during the pre-test is compared to the frequency of usage of reading strategies during the post-test. Table 3 shows that learners in the experimental group used a wide range of reading strategies they did not use before (pre-test). Specifically, an improvement is witnessed in the strategies that formed the content of the reading strategy instruction. In other words, the findings regarding knowledge and use of reading strategies suggest that the reading strategy instruction resulted in an increased reported use of reading strategies.

The following reading strategies were used to train the learners during strategy instruction: The strategy "I usually make predictions as to what will follow next" was used more frequently by the learners in the experimental group during the post-test (2.88) than during the pre-test (1.00). Learners' exposure and training in the use of this strategy seem to have been effective. The strategy "While I am reading, I try to determine tile meaning of unknown words that seem critical to the meaning of the text" was also used by learners in the experimental group more frequently during the post-test (2.88) that during pre-test (2.11). The strategy "I try to anticipate information in the text" showed a great improvement during post-test (3.20) than during the pre-test (2.13)

Theoretical framework

A theoretical model for the reading process is important as a basis for explaining how reading for comprehension can be attained. Various reading models that seek to unfold the reading process have emerged, for example, bottom-up models, top-down models, interactive models and schema theory models. Bottom-up models contend that the process of reading begins with letters and their sounds, and learners are perceived as being almost passive decoders of visual stimuli (Wallace, 2001). Thus, reading is accepted as a passive skill. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), in the bottom-up model the reader goes through a mechanical pattern by creating a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text where the interaction between the

reader and the text includes little or no inference from the reader's own background knowledge. Grabe and Stoller (2002:32) state that top-down models assume that reading is primarily directed by reader goals and expectations, and that is why top-down models characterize the reader as someone who has a set of expectations about the text information and samples enough information from the text to confirm or reject these expectations. The criticism against bottom-up and top-down models led theorists to develop a new approach called the interactive model.

Interactive models combine elements of both bottom-up and top-down models (Anderson, 1999). In interactive models, the reader needs to be fast in order to recognise the letters. This is similar to what readers do in top-down models in order to skim a text for the main idea. Not only should the word recognition be fast, but also efficient. Schema theoretic models deal with what readers bring to the text they read. Schema theory attempts to describe the efficiency of prior knowledge. It is thought that prior knowledge of readers affects their comprehension of the text. Since schema theory requires schema activation or background knowledge support before starting to read in order to comprehend the text better, reading activities (especially pre-reading activities) play a vital role in schema theory reading models (Chan & Graves, 1995; Demirez, 1998). The schema theoretic model of reading is still relevant in the view of the majority of reading researchers (e g. Allen, 2003 Nassaji, 2002; Brown, 2001; Wallace, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Alderson, 2000; Khemlani&Lynne, 2003).

Social Cognitive theory
Social cognitive view of reading, coined from the social learning perspective proposed by Miller and Dollard (1994), maintains that social interaction is central to the development of knowledge and learning. In the reading field, the social learning perspective underscores the importance of social influences and social interaction on literacy learning. It is believed that the social community in which students live, the social community within the classroom, the parent-child language interactions, teacher-student interactions, and student-student interactions influence students' literacy learning. Social cognitive theory agrees with the idea of a natural component of cognitive development, but believes that cognitive development is deeply rooted in culture. It emphasizes social, cultural and linguistic factors in literacy learning. The social cognitive theory, initially known as social learning theory, believes that people learn more from observing others (their successes, failures, efforts and styles) than what they learn as a result of personal experiences. (Bandura, 1989: 55: 60).
The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is rooted in three areas of theory constructivism, which emphasises the fact that comprehending a text is very much an active, constructive process. These areas three are: cognitive information processing, which focuses on the learner's mental processes and different types of knowledge; schema theory, which emphasises how the mind organises information into schemata or mental structures; and social-cognitive theory, which explains how people interact to create learning (Allen, 2003). There is a link between motivation and self-efficacy in that if students perceive themselves as able to learn a new skill or perform a task (high self-efficacy), they will be highly motivated to work hard at successfully learning the skill or completing the task (Allen, 2003:105-108). Students who have low self-efficacy will not be motivated to learn the skill or do the task

because they anticipate failure. Thus, it is suggested that teachers create a learning environment that promotes students' self-efficacy. The above three aspects of social cognitive theory are related to cultural learning and organizational improvement (Bandura,1988:276-277), and are particularly relevant to this study. When students are taught how to be responsible for their learning, how to learn to read/comprehend and to learn by using appropriate strategies, their reading proficiency will improve and their self-esteem will increase.

Perkins (2001:43) maintained that interventions that are not based on the social cognitive view of learning might not achieve their aims. The strategy instruction procedures of the current study areconsistent with this and is based on the social cognitive theory. This is done based on the fact that in social cognitive theory (SCT), which is used in psychology, education and communication, portions of an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences. The theory states that when people observe a model performing a behavior and the consequences of that behavior, they remember the sequence of events and use this information to guide subsequent behaviors (Bandura, 33:40). This is linked to the study because the respondents are observed when they are engaged in behaviors they already learned. In other words, the respondents are observed upon the replication of the actions of others. Social-cognitive theory includes an emphasis on learners' motivation and senseof self-efficacy, a belief that one has the capacity to succeed at a given task.

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) has three main components. First, the content in the ESL classroom is aligned with the content in the mainstream grade/level classroom. Science, with its hands-on component and extensive contextual supports for L2 development, is an excellent subject to start with because most students find it interesting and motivating. However, CALLA can be used in any content area. Second, academic language development includes all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are taught in the content area subject. In this way, students can learn concepts and skills such as analysing, evaluating, justifying and persuading that are necessary in the academic world. Third, learning strategies are "taught explicitly by naming the strategy, telling students, what the strategy does to assist learning, and then providing ample instructional supports while students practise and apply the strategy" (Chamot& O'Malley, 1994:11). This theory is relevant for this study because students learn from parents, community members before starting school and tend to behave the same way and the knowledge learnt has an impact on how they learn.

Literature Review
Reading Strategies
According to Garner (1987), teaching children a reading strategy often does not result in their being able to use it in contexts other than that in which they first learned it. To transfer this skill across time and contexts, readers need to acquire meta-cognitive knowledge of what conditions warrant the use of the strategy, as well as the ability to monitor comprehension and the environment to detect when these conditions are met. Thus,readers who know a range of

strategies and when, where and why to use them are considered to be strategic readers (Paris, Oslon& Steven (1983). In addition, Anderson (1991:470) points out that it is not sufficient to know about strategies: a reader must also be able to apply them strategically. He further states that strategies are deliberate, cognitive steps that learners can take to assist in acquiring, storing, and retrieving new information.

Classification of Reading Strategies
Reading strategies are classified according to the role they play before reading, during reading, and after reading. Before Reading
According to Chastain (1988), the purpose of pre-reading activities is to motivate the learners to want to read the assignment and to prepare them to be able to read it. Ringler and Weber (1984) called pre-reading activities enabling activities because they provide a reader with necessary background to organise activity and to comprehend the material. These experiences involve understanding the purpose(s) for reading and building a knowledge base necessary for dealing with the content and the structure of the material. Ringler and Weber (1984) further stated that pre-reading activities elicit prior knowledge, build background, and focus attention. According to Chastain (1988), pre-reading activities motivate readers to read the text. When they are motivated they are prepared for the reading activity, are able to complete it better and with less effort, and are eager to participate in the activity since they have gained confidence. Activating readers' prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read may help students' comprehension (Grabe, 1991; Ur, 1996). The following section focuses on predicting what is to come in a text as an example of a pre-reading strategy.
Predicting
Swaffar, Arens and Byrones et al. (1991) point out the benefits of predicting techniques that allow students to formulate hypotheses about the text. By taking advantage of contextual clues, titles, headings and pictures, students are encouraged to draw inferences prior to reading. In addition, Swaffar et al. (1991) view identification of text genre, such as articles, poetry, non-fiction and plays, as a very important pre-reading exercise. They suggest that engaging in this type of analysis enables students to identify the probable rhetorical grammar, stylistic markers and possible constraints on the development of ideas. According to Chia (2001), the aim of predicting activities is to help readers predict or make some educated guesses about what IS in the text and thus activate effective top-down processing for reading comprehension. Several stimuli in a text, such as the title, photographs, illustrations, or subtitles are usually closely connected to the author's ideas and content. So, based on any of them, students can make predictions about the content of the text. Predicting before reading can activate learners' prior knowledge and experiences about a topic. Robb (1995) states that recall and comprehension can improve when readers think about what they know about a topic before they even open the front cover of the book. He further states that as good readers move further into a story, they continue to predict and support, confirm or adjust their hunches as the narrative unfolds.
During Reading
According to Brown (2001), Nunan (1997) and Hyland (1990), skimming and scanning are important during-reading strategies. Through skimming, a reader is able to predict the purpose of

the passage and perceive the writer's message (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). In this way readers are asked to predict the whole text, though they do not read all of it. According to Alderson (2000), skimming is a meta-cognitive skill that is used by good readers. Bachman and Cohen (1998) and Flower dew and Peacock (2001) also state that skimming allows readers to read for general understanding. Brown (2001) points out that readers scan to get specific information in a text, such as names, dates, etc. During- reading activities help learners to self-monitor reading and also focus on details or concepts that are relevant to the purpose of reading. The following section focuses on how readers make inferences about the text based on their experience and observations on the text.

 Inferences Making inferences requires the reader to make connections between what the author wants his readers to understand. Inferences are always based on something, as in the author's descriptions, facts, opinions, experience and observations (Robb, 1995). Using the information, the author has presented, readers must also comprehend more information than what is directly stated. Milan (1995) points out that to infer means to draw a conclusion from what has been implied. In other words, when you make inferences you "read between the lines." For example, one can infer that a man wearing a ring on the fourth finger of his left hand is married. Based on our "commonly accepted expressions"this inference is probably accurate but is not necessarily true. The man wearing a ring may be a widower. The implication of the students' awareness about how inferences operate is that students are able to form conclusions from a text and better comprehension is likely to occur. Inferences are critical acts of comprehension, since they allow students to make words and phrases meaningful and join together prepositions and sentences (Johnston, 1984).

Guessing Meaning of Words from the Context
Some ESL readers have a misconception that in order to understand a text, they must know the meaning of all the words that appear in the text (Laviosa, 1994). This task is time consuming as occasionally readers are faced with large volumes of reading material. To address this problem, researchers have recommended that teachers should train the learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context and clues surrounding the words. Grellet (1994:38) points out that the following types of relation between the word and the context may help the reader to take a good guess from the context.

Identifying a Main Idea in a Paragraph Readers need to be able to employ specific strategies to identify and substantiate important information (e.g. the main idea). Students are often asked to read a piece of text and find the main idea or ideas. According to Grellet (1994), the main idea may be implied and require the reader to connect information and make inferences. He further states that sometimes text has no main idea, simply enumeration of detail. In that case, efficient readers need to be able to recognise facts and details that are important to achieve their purpose. Directly stated main ideas are sometimes called topic sentences and they focus the reader's attention on the most important idea in the passage or the central idea which the author wants his/her readers to understand about the subject matter. Main ideas are mostly presented in the first sentence of the paragraph. However, they can also be found either in the middle or at the end of a paragraph (Arnaudet&Barrett,1984). According to Arnaudet and Barrett (1984:135), the

following are some of the advantages of determining the main ideas of texts: As actively seeking main ideas helps readers concentrate on what they read, this lessens distraction since there is a purpose for the reading. Additionally, identifying the main ideas of separate paragraphs enables efficient writing of summaries. Writers present their ideas paragraph by paragraph with one main idea in each paragraph. In a paragraph there is usually one sentence which states the main idea. This makes the reading task easier.

i) Formulating Implied Main Ideas

When the main idea of a paragraph is not actually stated, that is to say when there is no topic sentence, the students may find it more difficult to decide what the general meaning of that paragraph is (Grellet,1994). In such cases, readers will therefore have to formulate their own ideas on the basis of the information given. In order to understand the paragraph more clearly, readers need to formulate the main idea in their own words. When main ideas of paragraphs are implied, it is the responsibility of the reader to formulate these ideas in his/her own words for better understanding to take place. Cortina, Elder and Go mm et (1989:183) presents several ways in which a writer may present main ideas indirectly: Although the writer may have presented most of the main idea in one sentence, the reader must sometimes add a word or phrase from another sentence to create a complete main idea. Another way of expressing main ideas indirectly is to present parts of the main idea in two different sentences. These sentences may follow one another in the paragraph, or they may be separated. A more common way of expressing main ideas indirectly is one in which the author expects the reader to combine and interpret important ideas from several sentences. On their own, main ideas do not make sense (Cortina et al., 1989). To enable readers to follow the writer's argument and see how one idea links with the next, writers use supporting details.

ii) Identifying Supporting Details

It is important for the learners to be able to identify supporting details as this enables them to follow the writer's argument and see how one idea links with the next. If each paragraph is supposed to have only one idea, then learners may wonder what all those other words and sentences are there for in that paragraph. These are used to enhance the main idea and are therefore called supporting ideas (Murray & Johan son, 1989). Supporting details can therefore be said to be obvious and logical extensions of the main idea. The supporting detail question leads readers to details that further explain the main idea (Arnaudet& Barrett, 1984; Cortina et al., 1989; Murray & Johan son, 1989). Mastering the skills of locating the main idea and supporting details are the basis for becoming a successful reader and learner. They are an important step towards critical thinking which any reader needs in order to interact with the text. Mastering the skill of locating main ideas and supporting details also assist the reader with a firm grasp of the important details so that they can easily summarise a text – the focus of the next discussion.

iii) After Reading

According to Chastain (1988), after-reading activities help readers to clarify any unclear meaning where the focus is on the meaning and not on the grammatical or lexical aspects of the text. After- reading strategies help students reflect on and respond to text. They also assist students to select, organise and use relevant information for a specific purpose.

Summarising

After reading a text, whether narrative or expository, students are frequently expected to recall main ideas and concepts from the assigned passage and to provide support for their decisions. To do this, they must process the content and determine which ideas are important. According to Garrigus (1999:121), "A summary is simply a shortened version of an action or communication that still provides the key elements". When readers are studying for an examination or preparing a report, they find themselves needing to put lengthy material into a form they can manage. A good summary can be written by first using the strategies that have been discussed above to understand and organise information. For example, writing a summary force one to review the author's controlling idea, main ideas, and important details. Skidell and Becker (1999) point out that in a summary, a reader restates or paraphrases this important information in his/her own words. If a student can easily write an accurate summary, he/she probably has a very good understanding of the material he/she has read.

Garrigus, (1999) states that summarising is more than a mechanical process of shortening; it requires thinking about and evaluating the material.

Researchers have found that teaching students in regular education classrooms how to summarise expository text after reading has resulted in improved comprehension and memory of information (e.g. Bean &Steenwyk, 1984; Rinehart, Stahl & Erickson, 1986; Taylor & Beach, 1984). The following section focuses on the factors affecting reading strategy use, for example students' learning styles, motivation, culture and gender.

Results and discussions

These results are congruent with previous research confirming the positive effect of explicit strategies instruction on reading comprehension achievement (e.g. Van Keer&Verhaeghe,2005; Pressley et al., 1989). In the current study, explicit reading strategies instruction was made possible by means of modelling strategic reasoning and explicit teacher explanations of why, where and when to use them. The results of this study indicate that learners' ability to use reading strategies is the most critical factor in their reading comprehension performance. Thus, the close relation between strategy use and reading comprehension provides support for the possibility that educators could enhance the learners' reading comprehension through explicit reading strategies instruction. In the above discussion mention has been made that the selection of reading strategies is governed by several factors. Among these factors are the teaching contexts, learners' interests, materials and the teaching styles. Attention has also been paid on the procedure for the teaching of reading strategies. Modelling, coaching and tutoring have been highlighted as ways of teaching reading strategies. The findings in the present study reveal that explicit instruction in the use of reading strategies was essential to bring about more increased use of reading strategies for learners in the experimental group.

Conclusion

A review of the literature has shown that learners' awareness and use of the reading strategies includes, among other factors, what reading strategies to apply, how to apply them effectively, when each strategy should be applied and why. Such knowledge allows the reader in various

reading conditions to identify, select and use appropriate strategies. The findings of this research support previous language learning strategy research that through overt strategy instruction, learners can be helped in four ways: (1) to become aware of the strategies they currently use; (2) to apply task specific strategies that can make learning more efficient and allow them to compensate for nervousness; (3) to monitor for strategy effectiveness, and (4) to create new strategies or weed out ineffective ones.

The most important outcome of the current study is that learners' awareness of their own reading process plays a significant role in improving reading comprehension. In other words, learners who receive strategy training generally learn better than those who do not, and that certain techniques for such training are more beneficial than others. Similar findings were obtained by Arabsolghar and Elkins (2001); Dreyer (1998); Lan and Chan (2003), and Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005).

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