

A Creative Dramatics Based Strategy to Enhance Al-Azhar Primary Institute Pupils' EFL Reading Comprehension and Attitudes.

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Abstract

The current study aimed at enhancing Al-Azhar primary institute pupils' EFL reading comprehension and attitudes through a creative dramatics based strategy. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pre-post test and scale, experimental/control groups. Participants were sixth year Al-Azhar primary institute pupils. Two groups (20 each) were selected in the academic year 2019-2020. The experimental group was taught through a creative dramatics based strategy for enhancing their reading comprehension and attitudes. On the other hand, the control group received regular instruction. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher designed a questionnaire for determining some reading comprehension skill and a scale for determining some aspects of reading attitudes approved by a panel of jury. Based on these reading comprehension skills and aspects of reading attitudes, a pre-post reading comprehension test and a scale were designed. The results of the study indicated that EFL reading comprehension skills and attitudes of the experimental group enhanced. The results of the study were positive; the hypotheses were accepted.

Key words: reading comprehension, Attitudes and Creative Dramatics.

I. Introduction:

Arıcan and Yılmaz (2010) defined the habit of reading as practicing the act of reading throughout life, constantly and critically as a result of perceiving reading as a need and a source of pleasure. Pupil-readers can enhance the skills of reading and gain the habit of reading mostly in primary school and it becomes difficult to gain this habit in adulthood.

Comprehension is the essence of reading and the active process of constructing meaning from a text. Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the pupil-reader to create a mental representation of the text. Comprehension depends not only on the characteristics of the pupil-readers, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language procedures, such as basic

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reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inferencing, and motivation (Van den Broek & Espin, 2012).

According to Meniado (2016), reading comprehension is an interactive process of finding meanings from a text. Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) expressed that reading comprehension is a cooperative mental practice between a pupil-reader's linguistic knowledge (knowledge of the world) and knowledge about a given subject.

There are some factors that affect reading comprehension. The complexity of the text is influenced by the pupil-readers' strength and fluency in language and their comprehending of its applications and different meanings. A lot of vocabulary help pupil-readers in clarifying the unknown words via applying the opinions of context (Dennis, 2008).

Reading attitude is the feeling about reading that results in the adoption or avoidance of positive reading habits. To Russ (1989), attitudes have long been held as an important psychological construct as they play an important role in moderating one's level of motivation and intention to read, as well as mediating the relationship between an individual's beliefs and reading activities. Among classroom instructors, it is widely believed that the pupil-readers' attitudes towards reading significantly influence their reading comprehension.

Pupil-readers must see reading as a valuable and enjoyable process if they are to participate in both recreational and academic reading (McKenna, 1995). While Deford (2004) stated that reading cannot effectively occur without emotion and as such instructors need to comprehend pupil-readers read something, they do not simply read.

The emotional connection pupil-readers have when reading is the primary reason most pupil-readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read (McKenna and Kear, 1990). Without an emotional connection to texts, pupil-readers will not positively engage in reading and consequently their academic achievement levels will suffer. Instructors need to make reading irresistibly attractive to pupil-readers to enhance their positive reading attitudes (Deford, 2004). When pupil-readers engage in reading, they are practising holding an objective, seeking to comprehend, believing in one's own capability, and taking responsibility for learning (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000).

According to Krivkova (2011), learning by doing means that pupils-readers are engaged in Creative Dramatics to learn language in a natural way, utilizing body language and facial expressions, making pauses and explanations, and showing emotions in their explanations of the play. Creative Dramatics is doing. This explanation leads to the essence of Creative Dramatics, understood as make-believe play, in which the participant pretends that he or she is someone else, or something else, through role-play in an imaginary environment.

Munther (2013) posits that Creative Dramatics is a powerful instrument in promoting qualitative primary education. As an educational instrument, he emphasizes that it is a procedure of enhancing and acquiring artistic skills, and stresses that it is those skills that enhance effective Creative Dramatics; and further asserts that Creative Dramatics is a learning process. The question is not how Creative Dramatics helps English, but how Creative

Dramatics helps the pupil-reader .Creative Dramatics is an appealing teaching strategy which encourages cooperation, collaboration, self-control, goal-oriented learning as well as emotional intelligence skills.

Smith and Herring (1993) claimed that Creative Dramatics provides pupil-readers with prior knowledge and general reading skills and most importantly, with more positive attitudes toward learning and motivation for reading. Rose et al. (2000), outlined that utilizing Creative Dramatics activities in the classroom enables pupil-readers to understand the text and to increase their reading abilities. Kelner and Flynn (2006) stated that the relationship between Creative Dramatics and reading comprehension is strong.

Reading comprehension is a process that helps pupil-readers predict and decode the meaning embedded in the text through the Creative Dramatics activities. Creative Dramatics techniques include activities by which the pupil-readers can learn the language and have fun at the same time, as well as, freely combine their opinions and experience for expressing their ideas (Helderbrand, 2003). Elias (2007) proposed play based on Creative Dramatics as an adaptive, organized means by which pupil-readers learn to make sense of their physical and social environment. Each pupil-reader has his own feelings, and an educational environment should be constructed regarding these feelings – effective and long-lasting learning can occur when emotions are activated during the process.

Utilizing the role-play in a classroom presents more opportunities to interact with the other pupil-readers of a group and helps them enhance different language skills such as listening, speaking and understanding the text (Huang, 2008). Role-play is used to supply an opportunity to practice the language for particular conditions, practice particular areas of grammar, sets of vocabulary, functional language and even features of pronunciation (Elagriogoras, 2010). These activities, to Holt and Kysilka (2006), can be fun and lead to better understanding of the task.

According to Russell and Shepherd (2010) role-play and simulation are forms of experiential learning. Simulation is a good activity because it helps pupil-readers overcome the feeling of nervousness. Coghlan (2012), clears that there is a difference between simulation and role-play. The former lets the pupil-readers act out real-life situations, while in the later they take on different characters, should be able to get into the role, as role-play requires more imagination.

Harmer (2012), perceives simulation as a chance to rehearse real-life encounters. In which pupil-readers are usually invited to participate in an exercise which resembles a real-life event. Unlike role-plays, in which role cards tell the pupil-readers what to say and what view to adopt, in simulations they have the freedom to respond as they think.

Brozik and Zapalska (2002) believe that simulation provides both pupil-readers and instructors a change from the traditional classroom lecture into active situations. Simulation as a reactive learning activity can be designed to be as brief as a single class period, or long enough to span various class periods.

Need of the study

The need for this study appeared from these major reasons: The researcher, who has been working as an EFL teacher in institute, has noticed the pupils' sever weakness in reading comprehension skills and attitudes towards

reading. As a result, the researcher desires to improve his pupils' reading comprehension and attitudes. Secondly, after the researcher has reviewed some previous studies about creative dramatics, he found that utilizing a creative dramatics based strategy motivated pupils to learn and created an entertaining environment for them. Thirdly, after the exploration of several studies related to the topic of this research, it is clearly observed that not only reading comprehension and attitudes towards reading have been disregarded in institutes, but also they have been unattended as an area of research. There are few researches on reading comprehension skills and attitudes here in Zagazig. Accordingly, the researcher realized the great need of working on enhancing reading comprehension and attitudes through conducting this research, which aims at investigating the effect of a creative dramatics based strategy on enhancing the sixth graders' reading comprehension and attitude.

Problem of the study

The main problem of this study is that the researcher throughout his career in teaching English to sixth graders felt that pupils are not good at reading comprehension and attitudes because they have been less emphasized in teaching in favor of other language skills such as writing and speaking.

Purpose of the study:

The purposes of the study were to:

1. realize the effect of a strategy based- on Creative Dramatics on enhancing EFL pupils' reading comprehension, and
2. realize the effect of a strategy based- on Creative Dramatics on enhancing EFL pupils' reading attitude

Significance of the study

Results drawn from the current study would hopefully be beneficial to the following categories:

1. Primary Instructors of English

The study might provide them with systematic and practical procedures through a strategy based on creative dramatics to be applied within the classroom to enhance EFL reading comprehension skills and reading attitudes.

2. Al-Azhar primary institute pupils

This study might enhance the EFL pupils' reading comprehension, besides their positive interaction and participation with the teacher within the classroom and reading attitudes.

3. Supervisors

This study may attract supervisors' attention to hold training courses for teachers in the importance of utilizing a Creative Dramatics based strategy on enhancing reading comprehension skills and attitudes.

Participants of the Study

The Participants included 40 AL-Azhar primary institute pupils. They were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental (20) pupils and control (20) ones.

Results of the Study

The results of the current study revealed that the study participants (taught by the Creative Dramatics based strategy) showed a significant improvement on the post administrate of the reading comprehension skills test and the attitudinal scale.

The significant difference found in the post administrate of the reading comprehension skills test was due to utilizing the creative dramatics based strategy which enhanced the participants' skills of reading comprehension. This supported the first hypothesis.

The significant difference found in the post administrate of the attitudinal scale was due to utilizing the Creative Dramatics based strategy which enhanced the participants' reading attitudes. This supported the third hypothesis.

The previous results showed that there is a significant difference at 0.05 between the mean scores of the study participants in their performance in the pre / post reading comprehension test administrates, in favor of the post administrate.

The previous results showed that there is a significant difference at 0.05 between the mean scores of the study participants in their performance in the pre / postreading attitude scale, in favor of the post administrate.

According to The previous results, it has been clear that the participants were positive towards utilizing the creative dramatics based strategy. This ascertained that the Creative Dramatics based strategy was utilized in enhancing the participants' reading comprehension skills and attitudes.

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