| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Evaluation of the S1 Students' Frequency Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies and Familiarity with them: A Case Study at the Faculty of Languages, Literature and Art, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco

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| **ABSTRACT**

The most challenging skill for S1 university students in the EFL context is Reading comprehension. This may be due to the lack of possessing the necessary reading comprehension strategies that would help them to understand English texts efficiently. In this respect, this study is first intended to determine the relationship between the frequency of use of reading-comprehension strategies and the students' familiarity with them before and after completing the usual curriculum of reading comprehension course. Furthermore, this study also attempts to evaluate the effect of the S1 students' familiarity with and frequency of use of reading comprehension strategies on their performance in reading comprehension tasks. A sample of 85 University students in EFL context was chosen, but only 73 of them filled in the questionnaire and completed their pre-test and post-test. All of these 73 students attended the usual reading curriculum without any special treatment. The findings of the study indicate that the students' awareness and frequency of use do not show any improvement as the S1 students completed their usual reading comprehension courses. Another major finding is that reading strategies frequency use and familiarity with them show no correlation with the students' performance while taking both the pre-test and post-test. Therefore, the fact that S1 students show no development of both their use and awareness of reading comprehension strategies after completing the usual reading comprehension course and also no improvement in their performance can be explained by the ineffective training that they underwent during Semester 1 of their English studies journey. In other words, the students' high or low scores in reading comprehension courses are not determined by their familiarity with reading comprehension strategies or their frequency use. Thus, researchers on education are urged to hold studies that shall investigate the teaching of reading comprehension strategies in the usual curriculum and how they should be taught efficiently.

1. Introduction

This article is about the result of a study held to evaluate the EFL students' frequency use of reading.comprehension strategies, their familiarity with them and the effect of these variables on the students' performance in reading comprehension tasks.

The subjects involved in this survey are the students of S1 English studies who followed their studies at the Faculty of Languages, Literature and Art, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco, and whose main concern is to understand efficiently English comprehension texts.

The final population of this research are 73 students who attended the regular classes of reading comprehension courses. All of them filled in the needed Survey of Reading Strategies after taking the Pre-test and the Post-test. Before they participated in this study, the 73 participants were aware of the objectives of my research, and they agreed to take part in this survey deliberately, as it would be very beneficial for them to practice reading comprehension Toefl test and be familiar with it. In addition, providing both teachers and curriculum designers with the necessary information about the S1 students' needs in terms of reading strategies so as to help them reach the ashore of understanding English texts.

1.1 Research Questions of this Study:
1- Does the usual S1 reading classes help students to be familiar with reading comprehension strategies and use them more frequently than before?
2- Does the usual S1 reading classes help students to score better in the post-test than in the pre-test?
3- Does the degree of familiarity and the frequency use of reading comprehension have an effect on the students' scores in the pre-test and post-test?

1.2 Data Collection
There are two instruments for collecting data in this study, mainly the Survey of Reading Strategies adopted from Mokhtari and Sheorey, 2002, and the Pre- and Post-Tests that are selected from a Toefl Test Book to serve the objectives.

The main aim of collecting this data is to evaluate the students' use of reading-comprehension strategies and their degree of familiarity with them. Besides, this collected data should also serve to check if these variables' development affects EFL students' performance in reading comprehension tasks.

1.3 Data Analysis
The collected data was processed by using the SPSS version 25, mainly the Paired Samples test or –t-test and Correlation techniques.

To find out the relationships between the variables in this study, the Paired Samples test is first used to compare two means that are from the same individual so as to highlight if there is statistical evidence about the mean difference between paired observations on a particular outcome. In this respect, the Paired Samples Test is a parametric test which is used to evaluate the effect of regular reading comprehension courses on the students' scores and the frequency use of reading strategies and familiarity with them, mainly after taking both the Pre- and Post- tests. Furthermore, the statistical method of correlation aims at discovering if there is a relationship among three variables, specifically the scores of reading comprehension Pre-test and Post-test, the frequency use of reading comprehension strategies and the students' familiarity with them.

2. The Review of the Literature
A lot of studies have proved that reading comprehension strategies are effective in achieving and advancing the readers' understanding of articles or texts in English. (Anderson, 1991; Carrell, 1989; Paris, Lipson and Wixon, 1983). Accordingly, reading strategies are considered to be the key tools for good performance and proficiency in EFL and L2 learning contexts as a whole. They are the facilitators for achieving the main objective of reading, which is comprehension. Besides, Mokhatri and Richard (2002) concluded that a low level of awareness of reading strategies means a low ability to understand a text, and thereby, the wide use of reading strategies indicates the high ability of readers to understand a text.

Respectively, Oxford (1994), Anderson (2002), and Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) stated that reading strategies awareness helped readers to understand mostly the text. That is, once the learner becomes strategic, his or her reading comprehension ability improves.

2.1 Reading Strategies
Reading strategies are the actions adopted by readers to develop meaning, and as suggested by Carrell, Devine, and Eskey 1988, they are the use of "rapid decoding, large vocabularies, phonemic awareness, knowledge about text features and a variety of strategies to aid comprehension memory".

According to Barnett (1989), they are the mental operations or actions used by a reader to deal with a text and make sense of what he or she is reading. They are, as Singhal (2001) stated, the indicators of "how readers conceive a task so as to help him and her

to understand and comprehend a text». Later on, Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) defined them as the "deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode a text, understand words, and construct meanings out of a text".

In a nutshell, reading strategies are the specific actions, behaviors or operations used consciously by the readers to understand a text. There are a wide range of tactics, both cognitive and metacognitive processes, which readers use to engage in the process of reading and comprehending a text efficiently.

2.2 Reading Strategies Frequency Use and Awareness
Successful reading comprehension necessitates a repertoire of strategies that helps L2 or EFL readers to understand a text. In other words, successful comprehension is attributed to the high awareness and use of reading strategies.

Respectively, Oxford (1994), Anderson (2002), and Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) stated that reading strategies awareness helped readers to understand mostly the text. Once they become strategic readers, their reading comprehension ability improves. Correspondingly, Mokhatri and Richard (2002) discovered that the readers who were aware of different types of reading strategies and used them at different frequencies were successful readers. Therefore, students who are aware of different reading strategies and use them more frequently are automatically able to understand texts easily and efficiently, while a low level of awareness of reading strategies means a low ability to understand a text, and the wide use of reading strategies also indicate the high abilities of readers in understanding, (Mokhatri and Richard, 2002).

Thus, successful reading comprehension necessitates a large repertoire of strategies that help EFL readers to understand English texts efficiently; thereby, instructors shall expose their students to a wide range of reading comprehension strategies and encourage them to use these strategies more frequently.

3. The Results and Discussion
3.1 The Results
The results of this study were taken from the scores of the pre-test and post-test and the questionnaire administered to a sample population of 85 students, but only 73 of them filled in the questionnaire, including the Mokhtari and Sheorey's Survey of Reading Strategies (2002), and completed both the pre-test and post-test tasks. This sample population of seventy-three participants attended regular classes without any treatment while taking into consideration all these participants were the ones who took both the pre-test and post-test.

3.2 Pre-test and Post-test Scores
Table 01: Paired Samples Statistics for Pre-test and Post test

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test score	4.5685	73	2.96778	.34735
	Post test score	4.2945	73	2.57369	.30123

According to Table 01, the comparison of the mean scores between the pre-test and post-test showed that the mean result of the pre-test was 4,56, while the mean result of the post-test was 4,29. Therefore, there is statistical evidence that the students' scores at the end of their S1 classes did not improve but it declined.

Then, the below table 02 referred to the T-test result, which was (,389), and thereby, there is a statistically non-significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 02: Paired Samples Test for pre-test and post-test

Paired Samples Test

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | Sig. |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	(2-tailed)
Pre-test score / Post test score	.27397	2.69908	.31590	-.35577	.90371	,867	72	,389

Therefore, the results stated in Tables 01 and 02 showed the students' reading proficiency level at the beginning of classes was higher than at the end of S1 classes. These differences can be explained by the students' unawareness or ineffective training on reading comprehension strategies in S1 Reading Classes.

3.3 Reading Strategies Frequency Use:

Table 03 refers to the comparison of the frequency use of reading comprehension strategies while taking the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 03: Paired Samples Statistics for the Frequency Use of the Reading Comprehension Strategies

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
While Pre-test R C S Freq Use	2.438	73	.5770	.0675
While Post-test R C S Freq Use	2.411	73	.5971	.0699

It showed that the mean result of the Frequency use of Reading Comprehension Strategies while taking the pre-test was 2.43, and when taking the post-test slightly decreased to 2.41. This result is evidence that the use of reading comprehension strategies is about the same while starting and ending Reading Classes for S1 students.

Then, Table 04 refers to the comparison of the two means of the Reading comprehension Strategies Frequency use while taking the pre-test and post-test. The T-test result was (673), and thereby there is a statistically non-significant difference between the Reading comprehension Strategies Frequency use while taking both the pre-test and post-test.

Table 04: Paired Samples Test for Reading Strategies Frequency

Paired Samples Test

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | Sig. |
| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | (2- |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	tailed)
While Pre-test R C S Freq Use / While Post-test R C S Freq Use	.0274	.5521	.0646	-.1014	.1562	,424	72	,673

Briefly, Tables 03 and 04 show negative results of the S1 reading classes as the students' frequency use of reading comprehension strategies does not improve, but it has slightly decreased.

3.4 Paired Samples Test for being familiar with reading comprehension strategies after both the pre-test and post-test.
Table 05 below shows the comparison of the means for being familiar with reading comprehension strategies after taking both the pre-test and post-test.

The mean result of being familiar with reading comprehension strategies after taking the pre-test is 1.11, while the mean result after taking the post-test is also 1.13. Therefore, there is non-significant evidence that students acquire more reading comprehension strategies at the end of S1 reading classes.

Table 05: Paired Samples Statistics for being familiar with reading comprehension strategies after taking both the pre-test and post-test

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest familiar with RCS	1.110	73	.3145	.0368
Post-test familiar with RCS	1.137	73	.3462	.0405

Additionally, Table 06 below states the comparison of the two means of being familiar with reading comprehension strategies while taking the pre-test and post-test, and The T-test result shows a statistically non-significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, as it is (,321).

Table 06: Paired Samples Test for being familiar with reading comprehension strategies after taking both the pre-test and post-test

Paired Samples Test

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-Pre-test familiar with RCS -Post-test familiar with RCS	-.0274	.2341	.0274	-.0820	.0272	-1,000	72	,321

Accordingly, both Tables 05 and 06 declare that students' awareness of reading comprehension strategies while taking both the pre-test and post –test was equal. This fact indicates obviously the ineffectiveness of S1 reading classes as students show to acquire no more reading comprehension strategies, but they have kept the same frequency before they started classes, and there is no significant improvement in their awareness of these strategies.

3.5 Correlation between familiarity and frequency use of reading comprehension strategies with test scores:
As stated in Table 07, the correlation between Reading comprehension strategies frequency use and pre-test scores is not significant as the p= 0.692>0.05. Thus, the frequency use of reading comprehension strategies does not significantly correlate with the pre-test scores for S1 students.

Table 07: Correlation between pre-test scores and Frequency use of reading comprehension strategies
Correlations

		Pre-test score	While Pre-test R C S Freq Use
Pre-test score	Pearson Correlation	1	,047
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,692
	N	73	73
While Pre-test R C S Freq Use	Pearson Correlation	,047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,692	
	N	73	73

Furthermore, the p=0.16 >0.05 stated in Table 08 showed that there is no significant correlation between pre-test scores and the S1 students' familiarity with reading comprehension strategies.

Table 08: Correlation between pre-test scores and familiarity with reading comprehension strategies

Correlations

		Pre-test score	pretest familiar with RCS
Pre-test score	Pearson Correlation	1	,282
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,016
	N	73	73
pretest familiar with RCS	Pearson Correlation	,282	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,016	
	N	73	73

On the other hand, in Table 09, the S1 students' correlation between post-test scores and Frequency use of reading comprehension strategies is also non-significant p=0.810 >0.05.

Table 09: Correlation between post-test scores and Frequency use of reading comprehension strategies

Correlations

		Post test score	While Post-test R C S Freq Use
Post test score	Pearson Correlation	1	,029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,810
	N	73	73
While Post-test R C S Freq Use	Pearson Correlation	,029	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,810	
	N	73	73

Additionally, the correlation between the students' post-test scores and their familiarity with reading comprehension strategies is also not significant p=0.039 >0.05, as stated in Table 10.

Table 10: Correlation between post-test scores and familiarity with reading comprehension strategies

Correlations

		Post test score	Post-test familiar with RCS
Post test score	Pearson Correlation	1	,242
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,039
	N	73	73
Post-test familiar with RCS	Pearson Correlation	,242	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,039	
	N	73	73

To sum up, the above results in Tables 07, 08, 09 and 10 show that there is no significant correlation between the scores of the pre-test and post-test with the learners' frequency use or familiarity with reading comprehension strategies. Therefore, the student's high or low scores in reading comprehension are not determined by their awareness or frequency use of reading comprehension strategies but by their metacognitive awareness of the appropriate use of reading comprehension strategies that they should acquire by having explicit training in reading comprehension strategies.

3.6 The Discussion of the Results

UNLIKE Mokhatri and Richard (2002) discovery that readers who are aware of different types of reading strategies and use them with HIGH frequency are successful readers, the first finding of the study is completely the opposite as the students' high or low scores in reading comprehension are not determined by their high familiarity with reading strategies or high frequency use of them; nevertheless, by their appropriate integration of these strategies in reading comprehension curriculum.

The second main result is that the students' reading scores in the pre-test are higher than in the post-test. These differences can be explained by their unawareness or ineffective training on reading comprehension strategies in S1 Reading Classes.

The third main finding is the ineffectiveness of S1 reading classes in raising the students' frequency use of reading strategies or ever making them aware of them. As the statistical results shown above, the students' frequency use of reading comprehension strategies and familiarity does not improve.

Keeping this in mind, it is worth noting that this survey has answered all the research questions and resulted in the main findings:

1- The usual S1 reading classes DO NOT help students to be MORE familiar with reading comprehension strategies OR use them more frequently than before
2- The usual S1 reading classes DO NOT help students to score better in the post-test than in the pre-test
3- The students' degree of familiarity and frequency use of reading comprehension strategies DO NOT have a positive effect on the students' scores in both the pre-test and post-test

Briefly, the students' frequency use of reading strategies and familiarity with them are not strong indicators of creating good readers; thereby, the instruction of reading strategies has become a necessity that shall be integrated into the English studies university curriculum to help students improve their reading comprehension competencies and effectiveness at the beginning of their higher education career.

4. Conclusion and Limitations

In brief, the findings stated above show that the English studies S1 students' non-improvement of either their frequency use of reading strategies or familiarity with them are indicators of the non-integration of reading strategies instruction in the curriculum of university English studies.

Furthermore, by comparing the scores of the pre-test and post-test with the students' familiarity with reading comprehension strategies and their frequency use, it has become clear that raising the students' familiarity with reading strategies or even using more of these strategies shall not result in a good performance in reading comprehension tasks. Therefore, the improvement of the students' performance in reading comprehension shall not focus on making them more aware of these strategies or using more of them, but it should rather give much importance to the appropriate instruction of these strategies and appropriate practice of them.

In this respect, these results mentioned above are not enough as this study needs to be completed by having an experimental group who should benefit from appropriate instruction of reading strategies, and not just making them more familiar with reading strategies or encouraging them to use more reading strategies.

Subsequently, the main coming survey shall also take into consideration the students' English language proficiency, motivation to read, and the analysis of the regular curriculum so as to assess the integration of reading strategies instruction in the reading comprehension courses.

By taking into consideration the above limitations, it could be proved that readers who are familiar with reading strategies and use them more frequently, after benefitting from appropriate instruction of these strategies, shall have high scores in reading comprehension tasks and better understand reading comprehension texts.

4.1 Implications and Recommendations

According to Brookbank, Grover, Kullberg and Strawser (1999), the use of a wide range of reading strategies shall help readers to face their comprehension problems by shifting from one strategy to another to overcome the difficulties they encounter in understanding. Furthermore, Mokhatri and Richard (2002) also stated that the high frequency use and awareness of reading strategies are two indicators of the emergence of successful readers.

Yet, the results of this survey show that both the high frequency use of reading strategies and awareness of them or familiarity with them are not indicators of success in reading comprehension performance. Thus, instructors shall integrate the instruction of reading strategies in the reading comprehension curriculum so as to expose their students to these strategies and encourage them to use them more appropriately. Correspondingly, a lot of studies held by Anderson (1991), Carrell et al. (1989), and Paris, Lipson and Wixon, 1983) have proved that reading strategies are effective in achieving and advancing comprehension. Respectively, in all EFL contexts, students who benefitted from reading strategies training shall be more efficient readers than the ones who did not or the ones who use them more frequently but not appropriately.

Consequently, AD-Heisat, Syakirah, Krishnasamy, and H.Issa (2009) recommend "to organize workshops for teachers to expose them to activities that can be used to teach reading strategies during reading lessons" (P:1). Furthermore, they also call the curriculum planners and textbooks writers to "include activities which utilize reading strategies in the materials used with students" (P:1). Briefly, the instruction of reading comprehension strategies should be the main objective for the teachers, curriculum designers, textbooks writers, academic researchers and decision-makers in the field of education so as to strengthen the students reading abilities to be effective and successful readers. They should develop tasks that gradually help EFL learners to acquire the necessary strategies to become successful and autonomous readers.

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