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The Effectiveness of using interactive reading strategies for
developing the first year secondary stage students' ability to
construct meaning in English

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using interactive reading strategies for improving first year secondary stage students' ability to construct meaning. It was conducted on a sample of 25 girls at Nasser secondary school in Cairo. The research methods used were: a pilot test, informal oral interviews, a pre/ post test, a questionnaire for students and another questionnaire for teachers. Statistically significant results at the level of 0,05 clarified that: a) Teachers need to apply interactive reading strategies to help students to be independent readers. b) Using interactive reading strategies enable readers to construct meaning for the texts they read. Conclusions were attained; recommendations and suggestions for further research were given at the last chapter.

Key Words: Interactive strategies-reading strategies-

Constructivism -constructing meaning

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Chapter I

Background of the Problem

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Introduction

Reading is the core of the curriculum in foreign language learning. Foreign language learners do not have constant and complete exposure to the target language. Contact with the language is mostly in the classroom. In situations where there is a shortage of trained teachers, equipment and facilities such as the language laboratory, second language teaching is closely tied to the textbook (William, 1990).

From a learning perspective, reading is related to many cognitive processes or domains, including attention, concept formation, imagery, language, memory and perception, and at the same time, it has an interactive nature. Understanding reading requires deep analysis and constant search for the insights which let readers infer and analyze as print is processed and meaning is created.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, reading process has also an interactive nature that extends a relationship between

the reader and the text. Such relation starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by the writer and ends with the meaning constructed by the reader. Throughout this process, readers use their schemata or prior knowledge to guess or predict the meaning of the text.

Context of the Problem

Reading is one of the basic language skills. It is necessary for the language teachers to increase students' English reading skills by applying effective interactive reading strategies in class.

Studies on ESL/EFL reading show some common obstacles encountered by students who learn English. Students may read slowly. Their vocabulary is deficient. They do not know how to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. They lack cultural background knowledge in the target culture. Most of them adopt the “word for word” reading strategy for interpreting a text. Even though, they use the dictionary to get the meaning of each word in a text, they are not able to comprehend the whole meaning of the text. Most of the students do not have efficient problem – solving skills to

reading texts. Others may not be able to involve themselves in a dialogue with neither the text nor the author.

These English reading obstacles serve as impetus for the present study on crystallizing the reasons for the problems and the effective interactive reading strategies for solving them.

Based on the results of the pilot study that the researcher conducted on the sample of the study, the researcher's observation of the students' performance while reading, and the informal oral interviews she held with twenty five teachers who teach English at governmental secondary schools, the present study assumes seven reasons for the above obstacles:

1. Many EFL students lack the reading skills needed to decode unfamiliar words. They learn unfamiliar words of a text by rote instead of learning the context clues.
2. Students do not have sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to comprehend texts in English.
3. Arabic grammatical structure is greatly different from English; for example, passive voice and third person singular.