



Faculty of Education  
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Instruction

# **The Effectiveness of Semantic Mapping Strategy And DR-TA Strategy In Developing Secondary School Students EFL Reading Comprehension Skills**

**A Dissertation**

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## **Abstract**

**Research little:** "The effectiveness of Semantic Mapping Strategy and DRTA Strategy in Developing Secondary School Students EFL Reading Comprehension Skills".

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The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of Semantic Mapping and Directed Reading Thinking Activity Strategies in developing secondary school students EFL reading comprehension skills. The participants of the present study comprised two experimental groups each (N= 35) and a control group (N = 35). All participants were from EL Kanater Secondary School. The instruments comprised: a reading comprehension skills checklist and a pre-post reading comprehension test. The study results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control and the two experimental groups on the post test in overall reading comprehension in favour of the two experimental groups. There were also statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental groups and the control group on the post –test in (literal, inferential, critical and creative) reading comprehension skills in favour of the two experimental groups. The results proved semantic mapping and directed reading thinking activity (DRTA) strategies were effective in developing the EFL reading comprehension skills of the participants.

**Key words:** Reading Comprehension Skills, Semantic Mapping and Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA).

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# **Chapter One**

## **Background and Problem**

# **Chapter one**

## **Background and Problem**

### **1.1. Introduction**

English is the language of globalization, international communication, modern sciences, technology, world trade, diplomacy and the internet. It is the most important language all over the world. This requires giving more care for learning English which is considered the first international language of communication among people. Therefore, it is important to develop and master English language skills in order to be able to keep pace with the modern developments in all fields of knowledge.

Reading is the most essential skill needed to acquire knowledge. It develops critical thinking and increases students' ability to concentrate (Swihart, 2009). It has long been considered to be one of the basic building blocks of a cultural advancement, effecting commercial exchange and personal independence and pleasure. We are exposed to more information that requires reading and understanding (Htolden, 2004). It is the basis for and a dominator of most classroom learning in a school setting and for continued learning in life (Atteya, 2007, Karami, 2008 and Lynch-Micaela, 2001). Thus, reading is the cornerstone of academic and non-academic success. Hence, the teaching of reading in foreign language context is gaining more and more attention.

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct meaning. It is a means of language acquisition, communication, and sharing information and ideas. It is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is affected by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community. The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and

refinement. Readers use a variety of reading strategies to assist with decoding and comprehension. Readers may use morpheme, semantics, syntax and context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words. Hence, reading develops the reader's creativity and critical thinking (Samir ,2012, P.1).

Coyne, Kame'ennui and Carnine (2007) stated that reading comprehension is the ultimate and primary goal of any reading activity. It refers to grasping meaning from a text with one's intellect. Coiro (2009) and Reid (2003) indicated that the essence of reading comprehension is creating meaning which requires moving from focusing on "learning to read" to "reading to learn" and using a range of cognitive and learning skills and strategies.

Reading is no longer viewed as an end in itself or a process of decoding or a receptive skill only, but an active way to improve students' knowledge of a foreign language and an integration of top-down and bottom-up processes using background cognitive and metacognitive knowledge, skills and schema. This, in turn, contributes heavily to developing reading comprehension (Hayati & Shariatifar, 2009 and Yasin, 2002). Kim, Vaughn, Klingner and Woodruff (2006, P. 235) indicated that "learning from text is at the heart of reading. As students progress through the grades, they are increasingly required to draw on their reading comprehension skills to learn from text".

Comprehension is understanding what is read. This understanding involves abilities to explain, interpret, apply, have perspective, empathize, and have self-knowledge. Thus, reading comprehension is a unitary process and a set of discrete processes (Roe, Smith and Burns, 2005). Thus, successful reading comprehension depends not only on reader's ability to access appropriate content and formal schemata. It also depends on their ability to monitor what they understand and take appropriate

strategic action. Taking strategic action when reading requires using a set of reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading to solve comprehension problems students encounter in the text. This in turn enables students to connect what they read now with what they have learnt in the past (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008 and Moreillon, 2007).

According to the Ministry of Education directives (2009/2010,2). "Since the secondary stage is the time of consolidation, expansion and preparation, more emphasis should be laid on developing students' ability to use different language learning strategies when learning English as a foreign language, especially reading strategies".

Janzen (2002) indicated that using reading strategies improves reading comprehension and efficiency in reading and enable students to read as expert readers do, process the text actively, monitor their comprehension and connect what they are reading to their own knowledge and to other parts of the text. Because of the importance of reading comprehension to the learners of English, many educators continued to search for methods and strategies, by which reading comprehension skills could be developed.

One of these strategies is Semantic Mapping, which can be used in teaching vocabulary and improving the skills and levels of reading comprehension in the ordinary and remedial classes and the classes of learning disabilities students in both languages, e.g. the native language and the foreign one (Zaid, 1995). Semantic mapping is a practical, visual way to apply schema theory in the classroom while teaching students about text structure. When teachers construct a map or a network on the board or overhead prior to reading, students see how the ideas they will read connect with their previous knowledge about a topic (Abdel Ghany, 2006).

Another strategy used for developing reading comprehension is the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DR-TA). It has significant effects on reading comprehension (Abdel Ghany, 2006; Cohen and Edwin, 2008; Oanskse & Fisher, 2010). DR-TA has been used successfully in improving English reading comprehension of learners, it has helped students to comprehend texts and to learn how to predict reading a given text and how to make notes about what is actually learned (Cohen and John, 2008).

DR- TA is a powerful reading strategy as it provides a vehicle for figuring out content. As reading occurs, it emphasizes reading as a constructive process rather than a measurement of comprehension (Richardson, 2011). The typical instructional pattern involves the teacher leading a discussion that elicits predictions from students, which they are asked to justify before reading a part of a text to confirm or disconfirm (Oanske and Fisher, 2010 ).

## **1.2. Context of the problem**

In spite of the importance of reading comprehension skills in English language, there is a lack in these skills among first year secondary school students. This is indicated by the studies of Hafez (2001), Mohamed (2001), Ibrahim (2004), Atteya (2007), El-Said (2012) and Samir (2012). There is a poor mastery of necessary EFL reading comprehension skills in Egyptian first year secondary school students (Helmy, 2007).

Helmy (2007) indicated that most first year secondary school students first reading a mystery. Unfortunately, many students tend to avoid reading at all costs. Samir (2012) indicated that one of the reading problems of secondary school students that impede students' achievements in reading is lack of reading strategies. One of the most urgent problems facing secondary school teachers today is that many

students come into their classrooms without the requisite knowledge, skills and disposition to read and comprehend the materials placed before them (Kim, Klinger and Woodruff, 2006). Thus, students who enter college with these reading problems exhibit lack of success (Caverly, Nicholson and Radcliffe, 2004). In addition, they feel anxious when taking reading comprehension tests because they do not have the tools to achieve high scores in reading comprehension tests. They do not also have effective reading strategies to guide them on their reading comprehension tests and lack skills to read effectively (Deutsch, 2005).

This problem of first year secondary school students' lack of EFL reading comprehension skills revealed itself also through the pilot study conducted by the researcher. This pilot study was composed of a reading comprehension test. The test aimed at measuring overall reading comprehension and (literal, inferential, critical and creative) reading comprehension levels of the students. The study consisted of 50 first year secondary school students from Shebeen El Kanater Secondary School for Girls. The test results proved that students' level with regards to overall comprehension was very poor. In the same way, the students' level regarding to the determined reading comprehension sub-skills was below average.

Considering the problems of first year secondary school students' lack of reading comprehension skills in English language, a need for strategies that encourages the students to relate their prior knowledge to the text content and motivates them for reading appeared. Thus, the present study aims at investigating the effectiveness of the Semantic mapping and DR-TA in developing first year secondary school students' EFL reading comprehension skills.

### **1.3. Statement of the problem**

In spite of the importance of EFL reading comprehension skills, there is a lack in reading comprehension skills in English language among first year secondary school students. Thus, the study attempted to answer the following main question:

"What is the effectiveness of the DR-TA strategy and semantic mapping strategies in developing first year secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?"

To answer the above main question, the following sub-questions were answered :

- 1.What are the required reading comprehension skills for the first year secondary school students in English ?
- 2.What are the features of DR-TA and Semantic Mapping strategies based program for developing first year secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?
- 3.To what extent is effectiveness of DR-TA strategy in developing first year secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?
- 4.How far would effectiveness of semantic mapping strategy in developing the first year secondary school students' reading comprehension skills?

### **1.4. Research Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis 1:** There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental groups and the control group on the post –test in overall reading comprehension in favour of the two experimental groups.

**Hypothesis 2:** There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental groups and the control group on the post-test in (literal, inferential, critical and creative)