Using A Proposed Program Based on the Semantic Field Theory to Enhance EFL Reading Comprehension Level.

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Abstract

This study developed EFL critical reading comprehension level of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation students via a proposed program based on the semantic field theory of twenty-six participants. The critical reading level questionnaire was designed and juried and critical reading skills test was juried and administered to the participants of the experimental group. The program was designed and administered in the first term of 2022 the academic year and lasted for the entire term with one session per week for the experimental group. Results of the study revealed that the experimental group's post results exceeded its pre ones in the post-administration of the instruments. Furthermore, it could be determined that the proposed program was substantial in enhancing the stated variable.

Key words: EFL critical reading comprehension level, the proposed program based on of semantic field theory, Zagazig, Egypt.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed at enhancing EFL reading comprehension level through a program based on the semantic field theory.

Significance of the study

Hopefully the study was significant for:

1. Implementing the program of the study may advantage university student-reader in enhancing its field areas.

2. Providing procedural information that will be beneficial for teaching EFL reading comprehension.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was be delimited to:

1. EFL critical reading comprehension level.

2. A semantic field-based program as an independent variable for developing the dependent variable.

3. A group of EFL Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation Student-readers.

Design

In this study, the experimental design was administered for one group who were taught through a proposed program based on the semantic field and theory to develop EFL critical reading comprehension level.

Figure (1) The Experimental Design of the Study

Group	Key Procedures		Independent Variables
	Pre-test Administration	Post-test Administration	
Experimental	✓	✓	

Instruments

In the light of the study variables, the following instruments were designed by the researcher and comprehended:

A. The critical reading comprehension level questionnaire.

B. The critical reading comprehension level test.

Methodology

The Test

The test of critical reading comprehension level was designed to:

-State the participants' pre/post-reading comprehension level.

-Measure the impact of the proposed program.

Content of the Test

The test entailed ten questions and was modified as proposed. Based on the list of the reading comprehension sub-skills stated through the questionnaire results, then the test was designed.

Sources of the Test

For formulating the test of critical reading comprehension level, the following procedures were stated:

-Each test entailed ten questions implemented to the participants regarding their prescribed novel.

-The content (questions) of the test was accomplished consistent with the critical reading comprehension level of the stated chapters of the second term, "Oliver Twist" (2021-2022), and portrayed the skills to be gauged by the test via the results of the EFL critical reading comprehension.

Validity of the Test

The test was delivered to EFL jury members of professors in Faculties of Education, professors of psychology and EFL supervisors. The jurors assessed the questions and gave their views about some points such as; transparency, layout agreement and suitability of the tests to the participants' levels. Jurors were requested to identify the needed suggestions, modifications and deletions.

Reliability of the Test

The reliability of the test was calculated by diverse methods.

The test reliability was gauged by administering the test on a pilot-study sample comprehended by fifteen student-reader *(other than the experimental)*. The researcher used Cronbach Alpha to gauge the test reliability.

Table (1): Test reliability using Cronbach Alpha

Test	No. Items	Cronbach Alpha
Critical reading	10	.79

Table 1 showed the total test reliability was (0.79). This value was significant at 0.05 level. It was approved that the test was reliable and could be administered and used in this study.

Piloting the Test

Piloting the test targeted at timing and stating its simplicity /difficulty. Fifteen participants were chosen for piloting it. They were chosen from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation Student-readers. They did not join the study group. Results showed that most of them didn't master critical reading comprehension. The majority of them were weak and needed more assistance.

A. Timing the Test

The time of the test was stated by measuring the mean, the fifteen student-reader's consumed time was calculated by the following formula:

The time spent by all participants

Participants' number

1200/ 20 = 60

Thus, the stated time for answering each test was sixty minutes.

Theoretical Background

The critical reading Comprehension

Pirozzi (2008) mentioned that it is a very high-level comprehension. It requires interpretations and evaluation skills that qualify the reader to separate unimportant from important information, differentiate between facts and opinions, and determine the writer's purpose and tone. It also involves utilizing inference to go beyond what is mentioned obviously, filling information gaps, and deriving a logical conclusion.

Maltepe (2016) mentioned that critical reading is the process of student-readers' thinking, using and assessing what they have read. During that process, the reader should be aware of how, why and what is written; the student-reader should also be

considerate of the attitudes of the writer, what vocabulary the writer uses and whether the information is practical or not. It can be observed as offering judgments via reading and questioning what has been read and coping with pre-prepared standards.

Critical reading, a pointer to critical reading thinking, has become operative in living a more viable life. In an academic context, many student-readers are not yet well-informed to read critically, but critical reading comprehension skills may impact their whole academic advancement (Wilson, 2016).

Afterward, a critical reader needs the capacity to abridge arguments precisely of the text, categorize claims, determine definite or indirect assumptions, analyze and evaluate the accurateness of the reasoning that assists a specific thesis statement, and explain, analyze and evaluate the goal or consequence of using a specific fact or a source of information. Equally important, s/he collects the evidence and uses it to test incorrect assumptions and evaluate them through criteria to judge its quality (Barnet & Bedau, 2011).

In the same sense, student-reader who participates in critical reading become strategic, active, open-minded. A reader can grasp the existing information in a subject, magazines, newspapers and song lyrics that have been exploited in a specific viewpoint for a fixed purpose. Also, he can determine which meanings are bounded to the social, historical, political and cultural settings of the reading process (Serafini, 2010).

Having an emphasis on the necessity of ameliorating critical reading skills in the EFL classes, many authors has exemplified extra in-depth discussions of the research about them. These skills can be summarized in the following classification:

Stating persuasive statements and propaganda methods, deriving judgments of reality or fantasy, judging adequacy, suitability and accuracy of the materials and determining connections between cause and effect are among critical reading skills (Afflerbach, Cho, Kim and Doyle, 2013). Also, critical reading entails discriminating between facts, opinions and interpretations, assessing writers' points of view, distinguishing author's purpose and compounding the author's style and tone. Among the skills are addressing misleading reasoning, labeling means of propaganda, listing statistical phases, mapping out inferences, inspecting subjects, deriving main ideas, characterizing logical and illogical conclusions and differentiating between assumptions and facts (Sadri, Fithriani, Salmiah & Hamidah, 2019).

Separating between suitable from unsuitable arguments, highlighting assumptions, discriminating insensible from sensible viewpoints and authoring unconscious from conscious expectations are critical skills as well. Guessing upcoming events, eliciting relevancy of title of the topic, contextualizing contrasts and comparisons, illustrating meanings of unfamiliar words, stating suggestions and drawing pre-informed conclusions, summarizing the topic in his/her own words and proposing judgments according to special evidence and experiences (Teama, 2016).

At the end of this list, stating the appropriateness and validity of the theme, discerning between appropriate and inappropriate contents, affirming the accuracy of the given information, agreeing/disagreeing with itemized information and adjusting the importance of the topic are among them (El-Embaby, 2012).

Semantic Field Theory

Lehrer, Kittay and Lehrer (2012) conceptualized the semantic field as words applicable to a common conceptual domain are organized within a semantic field by relations of affinity and contrast (e.g., synonymy, hyponymy, incompatibility, antonymy, etc) (p. 3). Despite the fact that some field theorists limit the field of lexemes (words) to the same syntactic classes, others see that it is important to look at the semantic field as it can include different parts of speech.

Barsalou (1992) added that the concepts in a conceptual field become lexicalized to structure a semantic field. For instance, the semantic field for "mare" denotes "horse-female adult". Some conceptual areas are heavily lexicalized though others are not so, for example, no lexical items be for horse-female-adult unneutered. In this example, there is a lexical gap that leads people to express these areas with complex linguistic constructions. As a result, lexicalized concepts in a semantic field only seize a small fragment of the concepts in that conceptual field (AlShaikhi, 2011).

The intuitive approach to analyze semantic fields, showed contrast sets in his concept of semantic fields. Contrast sets are sets of contrasting idioms prepared under one covering idiom that show contrast relations. For illustration, the cover idiom "Day" acts as a covering idiom for contrasting sets theorized over "Monday", "Saturday", etc. The membership for these contrasting idioms is founded on the language speaker's knowledge of contrasts and field relations (Lehrer, Kittay & Lehrer, 2012).

Most speakers' understanding of the distinctions symbolizes boundaries of a concept, or individuations which occurs between a concept and another attached one. It is assumed that the distinction among related idioms designates the knowledge of the idiom. In consequence, semantic fields are groups of lexicalized items. They can state the distinctions that individuate concepts and idioms as well as identify together semantically related idioms (Barner, Chow & Yang, 2009).

Synonymy

Synonyms are related words of similar meanings and can be categorized into loose and strict synonyms. Loose synonyms are more common and refer to words that are close in meaning though they are still nuances in what they express and how they are employed (e.g., "lie" and "mislead"/ "eat" and "consume") (Jackson, 2014). Strict synonyms denote to words that are perfect alternatives for one another. It is virtually impossible to state strict synonyms in a language as these words have to be closely the same in meaning. they can be used interchangeably across all settings and also share identical semantic potentials such as grammatical structure and style (Jackson, 2014).

Collocation

It is one type of formulaic language, in contrast to the term vocabulary, formulaic language refers to a series, continuous or discontinuous, of words or extra elements, that appear to be produced, stored and recalled from memory at the time of use, rather than being a subject to an analysis by the language grammar. Although more than fifty terms have been coined to describe the phenomenon of formulaic language (formulas, chunks, multiword units, collocations, prefabricated routines), no broadly accepted differentiation occurs among these terms. Collocation can be loosely seen as the co-occurrence of two words that statistically appear together than other pairs of words. Collocations are conventional (e.g., recurrent in a psychologically salient method), semantically analyzable (e.g., the meaning of the fragments donates to the meaning of the whole), arbitrary, unpredictable (in case of combination rules) multiword words or two-word (Webb & Kagimoto, 2011).

Hyponymy

It refers to two lexical items considered to be homonymous if the cohesive tie between them is based on a general/specific semantic relationship. According to Cruse (2000), it represents one of the most significant structuring connections in the vocabulary of a language. In hyponymy, the vocabulary of a language is located in a hierarchical structure in which more general items appears as the headings and more specific items appear as the subdivisions (Aitchison, 2003).

Antonymy

Antonymy, antonyms, are words that are opposite in meaning. It is valuable, however, to classify different kinds of relationship under a general label of opposition. In order to help student-readers better grasp more words quickly, teachers use "contrast" (compare). With this method, student-readers can easily recall pairs of antonyms with suitable usage. Though, not all the words have a fixed antonym (Nygaard, Cook & Namy, 2009).

Question of the study

1.How far can a proposed program based on semantic field theory enhance university student readers' critical reading comprehension level?

Results and Discussion

The hypothesis: It was hypothesized that *there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the critical reading comprehension level test, favoring the intervention.*

To authenticate this hypothesis, the t-test for the experimental group was employed and the results were shown in table 2.

Table (2): The pre-post results of the experimental group of the critical reading comprehension level.

Test	Exp.	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	η^2	Effect size
Critical reading	Pre	26	3.88	1.84	-16.398	25	0.01	.914	high
	Post	26	9.15	1.12					

In table 2, t-value is (-16.398); it is significant at 0.05 level in favoring of the post administration, this means that post standard deviation of the experimental group was (1.12) while the pre was (1.84). Concerning mean scores of the post administration, it was, high, (9.15), and the pre was (3.88). Then, there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level between the mean scores of pre/post administrations of the critical reading comprehension level of the experimental group, favoring the post-administration. This means that the proposed program based on the integration of semantic field and schema theories was substantial in enhancing the participants' critical reading comprehension level.

Figure (2): Comparison of the mean scores of the pre post administration of the experimental group of their critical reading comprehension test.
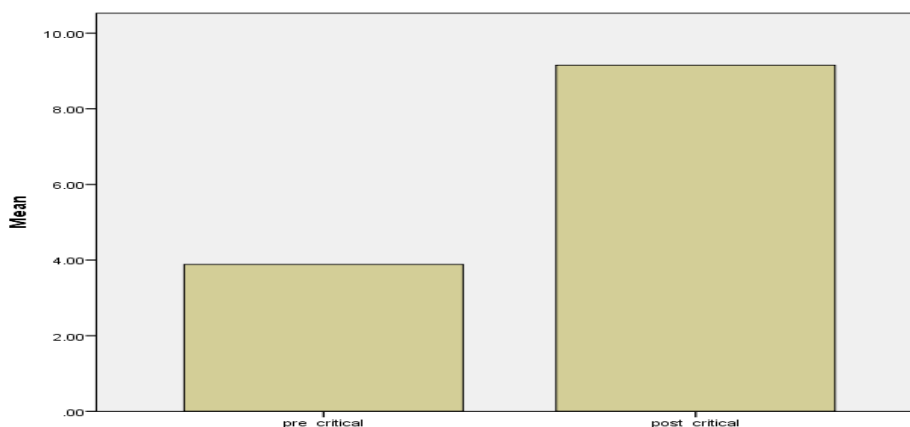
Results shown in the previous figure mirror that the effect size of the proposed program on participants' performance is high. 91.4% of the total variance in their achievement can be rendered to the proposed program.

Conclusion

The following items were outlined;

1. This study registered evidence that critical reading comprehension level can be developed of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation Student-reader through the proposed program.

2. Teaching EFL critical reading comprehension level enhanced through the proposed program brought valuable learning outcomes.

3. Rising the level of university student-reader through a specific instructional program resulted in valuable learning outcomes.

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