



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF R.A.F.T STRATEGY ONE IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF IRAQI EFL 2ND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract. The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of R.A.F.T strategy on improving the performance of Iraqi EFL 2nd intermediate Students in Reading Comprehension.

The study sample includes EFL 2nd intermediate, students through the academic year 2019-2020 for 8 weeks, four lessons per week for each group using Google Classroom Platform and Telegram application. The Sample comprised of 63 students selected randomly.

The study used the Google Classroom (GC) and Telegram application as an educational platform to help students during their learning process.

The participants were split in two groups; The experimental group comprised of (32) learners who instructed reading comprehension passages using the R.A.F.T Strategy, the abbreviation for Role Audience Format and Topic, the control group was composed of (31) students who presented reading skills using recommended methods.

The researcher implemented the reading comprehension achievement test for students. To ensure their reliability and validity, the tests were given to a group of jury members after the tests were given to a pilot study sample consisting of (70) participants.

The test of achievement was administered of the subjects for the experiment. The researcher made the equality among the control and experiment group; through the following variables: (the ages, students' scores in English, as well as gender variable).

The data obtained were analyzed by Using T-test formula for the two independent samples. The findings showed that the R.A.F.T Strategy was effective in improving the achievement of reading skills for learning English. Hence, the researcher sets out a range of recommendations and suggestions.

Keywords: R.A.F.T Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Google Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

Schools believe that online learning platforms can be useful for teaching and learning both in the classrooms and outside. The literature recognized, in the opinion of Jiménez and Jiménez, that virtual study groups can increase university performance, enhance collective learning through peer-to-peer interaction and make instructors responsible to contribute to the learning of their students. (Jiménez & Jiménez, 2015:33)

In addition to these advantages, Wallace added that social networking and media platforms or channels, together with the productive classroom models, can also work side by side to increase levels of education, make teachers more professional and inspire students. (Wallace, 2014:293)

However, there is still an important positive contribution to learning and teaching the foreign language of those web-based tools: autonomous learners formation capable of solving tasks themselves without having to travel to obtain instruction directly. (Zúñiga, 2015:458)

All of these ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) and e-learning tools tend to be the ultimate solution in the field of learning because they allow students to rapidly and flexibly communicate, edit, annotate and construct texts. Despite all of the feedback, it remains unclear whether the degree to which the tools genuinely meet the expectations of students regarding the accessibility and incorporation of a foreign language in developing reading skills. (Hussam, 2016) Therefore, this makes important to carry out the study that will provide researchers with more insight into regarding the students' perception by using the Role Audience Format Topic, and the strong action (R. A.F. Ts) Strategy to improve reading skills through Telegram application and Google Classroom(GC).



Google Classroom (G C) is an online e-learning platform that was launched in 2014 that many ELT professionals around the world are already using. Although we have found nothing concerning studies that assess the efficacy of this method in helping EFL students improve their reading skills, Kasula invited us to discuss whether ELL is ready or not for this instrument relay on his experiences with it, the action research that he has carried out and several interviews on a small scale with his fellow Members. He said that GC could help teachers better “[...] displaying class activities, objectives, and tasks in an organized, productive, concentrated, and clear manner for students, administrators, and teachers”. (Kasula, 2016:11)

Besides, Google Classroom (G C.) is linked to Google Drive that enables students to generate and paper individually and collaborative activities through online word processors, tablets, and presentation programs. Although its benefits, he recommends that teachers obtain self-training and give students a chance to become familiar with the tool to deal with the challenges arising more effectively.

Telegram is a smartphone application for communication with users via mobile devices and computers. For the following purposes, Telegrams may be used for teaching and learning:

1. Multi-platforms: smartphones (All systems, Android, IOS, etc), PC, Tablets, and Web.
2. file format Compatible: All format of Pictures, audios, movies, pdf, and support Microsoft office suit excel, word, PowerPoint.
3. Transfer all large files.
4. Grouping facilities: more than 1000 members, enabling access to old/past messages, the feature of adding members.
5. Effective storage and control capabilities
6. Better protection with encryption.

All incoming and outgoing posts or messages being posted may be viewed simultaneously on multiple platforms. (Selamat, 2015)

Telegram enables messages and images to be sent with a self-destructive timer, just like another common app. These images or texts can still be screenshot until they vanish within the hidden chat. All documents, photos, sites, and searched pictures, from two seconds to one week, can be exchanged in the secret chat. The app is proud of its increased safety and its time-tested algorithm combining security with high speed delivery and reliability. (Williams, 2014)

Modern technology currently includes the applications of innovative methods strategies, instruments materials, and teaching devices. Experiments around the world are being conducted to study their application to ELT. Teachers play an important role in the management of technological instruments and devices for teaching ESL. Telegram application is one such new tool. It can be reached from anywhere by 100,000 users at a time. If attendance in a classroom is hampered for certain reasons, teachers are increasingly compelled to rely on these kinds of applications. Teaching cannot be stopped when classes stop; the education has to continue. For instance, at a quarantine time because of the worldwide COVID 19 pandemic, the research study already planned could use this application to gather experimental data instead of indefinitely delay the project. (Rahoomi, 2019:328)

Language Teaching is a process through which learning is predicted to take place and the learning of language is significant, as the language is a means of communication. (Spratt, 2005)

The aim of learning EFL is to communicate with others and maintain English proficiency. Harmer sees that FL learning happens when students have placed in the target language in communicative situations. Educators and researchers are therefore trying to come up with new ways to motivate learners to accomplish this aim. (Harmer, 1998)

Essentially, the destination of the process of reading is to acquire bits of knowledge, information, insight, and so on, to enjoy the interest that is derived from reading materials. Reading is difficult, because the reader not only read a phrases, paragraphs, words, as well as the texts but should also to grasp the contents of the process of reading. (Zahraa, 2019:74)



In this research, the researcher is focusing on reading text. In Johnson's view, the regular practice of reading is to use the piece of text to produce meaning. As a result, readers can obtain information and knowledge through reading activities. Besides, readers, especially students can also improve their ability to understand reading texts effectively and efficiently. (Johnson, 2008) Serravallo also supports it, reading means understanding, thinking, and gets the meaning behind a text. (Serravallo, 2010:141)

It is clear from the above statements, that RC is very important skill that learner need to master, it. This means if learner are unable to grasp aspects required by the curriculum, in reading, comprehension skills, learning RC does not run completely and effectively. (Kareem, 2019:90)

To fulfill the need of the students in RC, rely on the recommended curriculum (English for Iraq), RC should be provided as one of four mastering English skills that students should be taught and learned.

The strategy that can be used to improvement students' RC is R.A.F. Ts Strategy. R.A.F. Ts is a useful strategy for ELLs because it is a language learning strategy that is easy and fun discussion.

R.A.F. Ts Strategy is a tool that help students to grasp the four main elements: the reader role, the audience, the written product format, and the topic. R.A.F. Ts strategy is the abbreviation refers to reader role: Imagine yourself as a reader! Who are you? Sir Ali? Audience: Who reads the passage? Is your family an audience? The written product format (F): What forms would your products take? is it a poem? a letter? The written topic (T): What is topic of the reading passage? Is it about how to use the internet? or a story about two heroes? From a different perspective the students are encouraged to solve most of the R.A.F. Ts written assignments, as well as to read for other audience. In addition, the creative thinking and inventive response are supported to help the learners to be in touch with what they have learned as the new knowledge or the information with their imaginations. (Santa, 1988:40)

The Problem of the study

The reading skill is the fundamental communication skill. It helps the learners to follow them researches and concerns within all areas of knowledges. "It is very important for E.F.L students to contact them in a living communicative language and help them reflect and interact in writing and speaking" (Sikiotis, 1981:300)

Reading comprehension is perceived as "intended thinking in where the context is built through the interact of text and the reader". This is a basic aim of the reading, the understanding obtained from the reading texts (Blachowicz and et al, 2006:524)

Through these four skills, reading is considered as the most important and suitable for learners in the context of the classroom and the extracurricular environment. (Chiap, 2020)

It is the constructive of interactive processes where readers understand, engage by what they already know, and respond to a text. (A1-Rifa'i, 2013)

The problem with this study is that intermediate students in Iraqi EF1 face several difficulties when they give readings. This is because of the lack of suitable teaching methods used by teachers to teach RC.

Nevertheless, it sounds that considerable Iraqi EF1 teachers, supervisors, and instructors still misunderstand the core of the reading process. Some of them using traditional approaches focused on drilling and memorization. (A1i, 2020)

Most of the learners are hesitant to read a piece (a paragraph, letter, or story) and have less self-confidence. Most students lack expertise in English reading sentences, but they consider forming phrases and translating them from the mother tongue, to English. This is caused by the lack of appropriate teaching techniques used by teachers to teach reading; this study, therefore, attempts to use a new strategy (R.A.F. Ts) to improve teaching reading skills.



Referring to the context of the above problems, there are some signs that the learners still have shortcomings in (RC) that should be enhanced to meet the curriculum-based learning goals. Therefore, for solving the problems that faced by the learners, the researcher would like to use a strategy to assist the learners learn English. The researcher is interested in carrying out research entitled: **“The effectiveness of R.A.F.Ts Strategy on Improving The Performance of Iraqi EF1 2nd Intermediate School Students in Reading skills”**.

The aim :

The present study aim to investigate The impact of R.A.F.Ts strategy on Developing Iraqi EF1 2nd intermediate School Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension.

HYPOTHESIS

It is assumed the following:

There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students of the experimental group that are taught reading performance through R.A.F.T strategy and that of the control group that are taught reading through the Teacher's Guide according to the traditional teaching method .

The limits

This study is limited to the Iraqi EF1 second-class intermediate students through the academic year 2019-2020. The material has been extracted from the textbook.

The Value

The study significance derives from the importance of learning to read as an vital components of the EF1 teaching processes. Reading skills are significance to be mastered by F1 learners. The current study may also be valued by the teachers, educators, and EF1 learners and designers of the textbook.

PROCEDURES

To fulfill the study aim, the following steps must be followed:

- Randomly choosing a sample of intermediate school EF1 students from 2nd year.
- Dividing the sample in two separate groups (experiment and the control group).
- Administering the test to a pilot study to ensure validity and reliability by determining the test item discrimination and item facility.
- Pre-testing designed to assess the success of learners in real-life use of the English language.
- Teaching the students of experimental group according to R.A.F.Ts strategy, while teaching the control group students according to the recommended method by the education ministry. Both groups are taught by the E-learning Platform (Google Classroom).
- Post-testing designed to assess the success of learners in real-life use of the English language.
- Using the Google Classroom platform to teach the two study samples.
- The collected data is analyzed and appropriate statistical tests are used to analyses the results.
- Findings, results, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions.
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PREVIOUS RE1ATED STUDIES

Sumaya Z. Kha1af(2020)

The aim of the study is to investigate the effect of R.A.F.Ts strategy on improving Iraqi EF1 preparatory pupils' Textua1 Competence .

The study sample consists of (60) pupils divided into two sections of Preparatory School for Girls" in Tikrit. The 4th scientific-grade consists of two sections, randomly chosen to be the experimental and control group. Each section comprises (30) students.

The data collected, various statistical means were used namely: T-test, Weighted, and percentage mean to measure the pupils' post-test achievement .

Results were obtained when analyzing the data as results are drawn:

1. Using R.A.F.Ts strategy in teaching, provided opportunities for Iraqi preparatory pupils to fulfill a good level in learning the textual competence. Accordingly, the learning of textual competence through R.A.F.Ts has an impact on the experimental group.
2. Pre-test results clearly show that Iraqi preparatory students face problems in their writing skills. This study also revealed that Iraqi students are not familiar with the textual competence because teachers don't concentrate on teaching and explaining "cohesion and coherence" in their language. The R.A.F.Ts strategy, therefore, encourages teachers to teach textual competence and allows students to express their ideas.

E1 Sourani (2017)

The study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using R.A.F.Ts strategy in developing English writing skills 10th grades in Gaza.

To fulfill this aim , the researcher has implemented the experimental approach and selected sample of (68) female 10th grade studying at H. Sa1ama secondary School in Palestine . As the basic tool for this research, the researcher conducts ix questions achievement test. The questions have been designed and validated, to be used as, pre-test and posttest.

The researcher also adopt a content analysis card and the rubric to measure students' writing. Two classes of the school's four-tenth grade were selected by the researcher. The experimental group was randomly assigned one class, consisting of 34 female students and the control group consisted of 34 female students.

A standard method has been used to teach the control group the writing, and the R.A.F.Ts strategy was used with experimental one, in the 2nd term of the school year (2016-2017).

The findings of the study indicate that the experimental group had substantial differences statistically in the learning of English writing between experimental and control groups, and the R.A.F.Ts strategy was used.

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

Comprises a description of the procedures used to accomplish the study objectives, starting from choosing and equalizing the population and samples, neutralization of two sample variables, controlling of external factors, designing of study instruments and tools, applying the experiment, and statistically analyzing the data.

EXPERIMENTA1 RESEARCH DESIGN :

Defined as "a set of procedures used to test the hypothesis by the researcher by achieving valid results which reveal the relation between the dependent and independent variables and the selection of research design depend on the purpose of the study. (Best, 2006: 176)



The experimental design is a "blueprint of the process enabling the researcher for testing the hypothesis through arriving at reasonable conclusions about the relation between dependent and independent variables" (ibid: 177). A true experimental design is very difficult to arrange, especially in school classroom experimental study.

The current study adopted one of "the pretest-posttest equivalent "quasi-experimental designs. Discussing the design in question, Kahn states that "this design is also used in classroom tests, where experimental and control groups were as naturally equipped groups as classes intact, that can be identical". (ibid:183)

To conduct the current study experiment, Two classes were selected from an intermediate school by throwing a coin. The first group was experimentally taught by using the R.A.F.Ts strategy, while the other group was taught using the recommended method of teaching to be the control group. Before the R.A.F.Ts strategy was adopted, both groups were presented for a pre-test. And once again, At the end of the experiment, a post-test was carried out to determine whether there are significant differences between the two groups or not.

THE STUDY SAMPLE AND POPULATION:

The study sample was 2nd grade at the intermediate school for boys in Thi-Qar province especially in A1 - Shatrah district, the academic year (2019-2020). Qutaiba intermediate School for boys was selected to be the sample of this research.

There were (99) students divided into 3 sections A, B, and C. Two sections were selected randomly to be the experimental (A) and the control group (B). There were (33) students in the group A, and (32) students in the group B. After omitted a repeater student in both groups, the number became (32) in group A and (31) in group B.

Groups	Sections	Students' Number
E.G	A	32
C.G	B	31
Total		63

The Subjects Equivalence

The two groups have been equalized by controlling certain variables which can influence the outcomes of the experiment. These variables are the age of the students (measured in months), the educational level of parents, and the English scores of students during the 1st month examination.

Controlling the extraneous variables

The researcher is attempting to control certain variables' effects. Extraneous variables are non-controlled independent variables. The role of the researcher, therefore, is to eradicate its impact. (Tavakoli, 2012)

1. Instrumentation
2. Experimental-Morality
3. bias for Selection
4. Maturity
5. The history

The Instructional Material

The instructional material used for the experiment was used with the curriculum "English for Iraq" and the content was taught through the first course of the school year (2019-



2020) were presented from (Unit 2 – Unit 3). In which the researcher sets a range of behavioral goals from the test sample to be predicted, as for the daily lesson plans, the researcher prepared a complete lesson plan for each study sample set according to 2nd intermediate stage of the student's book (English for Iraq)

The Control Group

The researcher used the method and technique recommended by the ministry of education and was following the daily lesson plans, guidelines, and steps stated in the teacher's book "English for Iraq" for 2nd intermediate school students.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Achievement Test :

Every educational research requires a reliable and precise instrument collection instrument. Harmer, argued that by means of achievement tests one can measure the language of the learners and the progress of their skills related to syllabuses that they followed. (Harmer, 2007b)

The purpose of the progress test is to measure what study participants have learned and how much individual performance has been developed. Most schools use this type of test to assess the effect of study courses, teachers, methods of teaching, environments, and other additional factors that can be regarded as factors of significance in any educational process.

Two written tests of achievement were conducted by the researcher. One pre-test and the other posttest. Both the control and experimental groups tested with the same achievement test and analyzed the results using the same formula. Both tests were designed to assess the impact of R.A.F.Ts Strategy on the development of second intermediate School Performance of Iraqi EF1 Students in Reading Comprehension. The subjects of the tests are regarded to be close to pedagogical materials.

PILOT TEST

The pilot test was carried out on (70) students from A1-Shatrah intermediate school. The place of the chosen school was nearing to the place of the experiment school Qutaiba intermediate school (about 2.4km) for similar economic and social backgrounds. The results obtained from pilot tests confirm that two tests are practical.

Statistically, the test items were analyzed, and the difficulty ranged from [0.76 to 0.31] to the test the items that are considered to be valid in difficulty. The range of discrimination from [0.82 to 0.33], that is also accepted.

CONDUCTING THE TEST

Pre-test Administration

Students of the control and experimental groups have been pre-tested on the 12th of April 2020 by the Online Educational Platform (Google Classroom) through making use of the homework feature on the e-learning platform. The pre-test aimed to compare the student's achievement scores in the pre-test, with those in post-test. Consequently, the researcher tested the study sample and scored it.

POST-TEST

The students from both groups (the control and experimental one) were post-tested. So the difference in conducting the test, as the post-test during the opening of schools was in the midterm supplementary examinations that were closed due to the Corona pandemic. In carrying out the post-test, the same procedures were followed, namely scoring scheme, pilot study, validity, item discrimination, item difficulty, and reliability. It is worth noting that a jury of linguistics and TEF1 methodology experts even saw the post-test.

THE TESTS VALIDITY

One of the most critical considerations to take into account when choosing or designing the test is its validity. Validity is the degree to which the conclusions drawn the results of the particular assessment are appropriate, expressive, and relevant to the intention of the evaluator (Gronland, 1977)

Validity relates to the extent to which an exam evaluates what is to be evaluated. That means testing what you're teaching and how you are teaching. (Coombe, 2010)

Brown classifies validities a criterion-related, consequential, construct, face, and finally content validity, in terms of classification. (Brown, 2010)

CRITERION-RELATED VALIDITY

Consists of concurrent and predictive validity. Mousaoy state that, face validity referring to the extent to what the test is appropriate and seems to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims measurements, with this basis of the judgment of the examiners who has take it, an administrative person who decided using it and the other psychometrically observers. (Mousaoy, 2009) (Hammad, 2018)

To guarantee its face validity, a jury of experts in linguistics and T.E. F.1 methodology were seen the test. These experts were asked to assess the test's face validity and to state their suggestions on the adequacy of the items of the test for the level of the students.

The jury decided that the test is valid in its items are appropriate for the level of the students, with the exception of certain modifications which have been taken into consideration.

THE RESULTS

The T-test method has been used to assign score for students in pre-test and post-test, and whether or not there is any difference between pre-test and post-test scores. To achieve the research aims, a null hypothesis is formulated.

The results revealed that the rejection of the null hypothesis because at the level of (0.05) there is a statistically significant difference as stated in the tables following table:

Table (1) The Students' Scores in Pre-test and Post-test for Control Group.

Groups	NO	Means score	SD	DF	T-value		Significant level
					Computed	Tabulated	
Pre-test	31	18.29	5.617	30	1.522	2.04	0.05
Post-test	31	20.48	6.066				

The mean pre-test scores of the control group were (18.29), while the post-test scores were (20.48). The findings showed that the t-value calculated was (1,522), while the t-value tabulated was (2,04). This means that they differ somewhat between them.

Table (2) The Students' Scores in Pre -test and Post-test for Experimental Group.

Groups..	NO	Means score	SD	D F.	T-value		Significant level
					Computed	Tabulated	
Pre-test	32	20.21	5.386	31	5.073	2.04	05.0
Post-test	32	25.03	4.638				

The mean scores of a pre-test, in the experimental group were (20.21), whereas the post-test were (25.03). The results revealed that the calculated t-value has been (5.073) while the t-value has been (2.04). This indicated that the pre- and post-test are substantially different at (0.05) significant level and at 30 degrees of freedom. Notably, the experimental group's post-test better than pre-test.

Table (3) Students' Scores of the Post-test to both Groups

Groups..	NO	Means score	SD	D F.	T-value		Significant level
					Computed	Tabulated	
E. G.	32	25.03	4.638	61	3.349	2.00	05.0
C. G.	31	20.48	6.066				

Through applying the T-test method for comparing the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the pre-posttests. The experimental group's mean score was (25.03), while the control group's mean score was (20.48). The calculated t-value shows (3.349) at (61) degree of freedom and the level of significance was (0.05). That, in addition, show that the researcher selects and uses the strategy more efficiently and fruitfully than conventional reading comprehension and retention strategies.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the light of statistical methods of data, the researcher reached the conclusion that R.A.F.T strategy is useful to improve understanding of English language and simplifying reading comprehension, also data revealed that R.A.F.T strategy can support comprehend new vocabulary to the certain degree and use of R.A.F.T strategy can enhance students' interest. The progress of students throughout teaching perception of reading comprehension through the use of R.A.F.T strategy is better. Students may boost their comprehension of English reading; this is confirmed by the pre-test results which are lower than post-test score. The findings also showed that the technique suggested and implemented by the researcher in his experiment was successful in improving the comprehension of reading by the students.

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