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Iraqi EFL University Students' Level in Reading Comprehension

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to find out the level of Iraqi EFL university students' in reading comprehension through:

1. Finding out Iraqi EFL university students' level in reading comprehension.
2. Finding out whether there are any significant differences between the achievement of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post-test.

The following hypotheses have been posited to achieve the aims of the research.

- 1- The average level of the students' achievement in the post-test within the theoretical mean scores of achievements in reading comprehension.
2. There are no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group's achievements and that of control group in the post-test.

To verify the hypotheses of this study, a sample of sixty male and female students who represent 17% of its original population have been randomly selected from the second year of Basic Education collage in Mosul university .The sample is divided into two equal groups, i.e. the experimental and the control groups, both groups are equalized in their ages, parents' academic attainment, and students' scores in the pretest. An achievement test of twenty questions has been constructed, validated, and applied to the two groups . The collected data have been statistically analyzed and the main results are as follows:

1. Iraqi EFL students` level in Reading Comprehension is within the average level.
2. There are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group's achievements and that of control group in the post-test.

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مستوى مهارة الفهم القرائي لدى طلبة الجامعة العراقية دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية

ابتسام جاسم محمد/ جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية
الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة مستوى طلبة الجامعة العراقية في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الفهم القرائي من خلال:

1. التعرف على مستوى طلبة الجامعة العراقية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الفهم القرائي.

2. معرفة ما إذا كانت هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين تحصيل المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة في الاختبار البعدي.

وقد تم وضع الفرضيات التالية لتحقيق أهداف البحث

1- متوسط مستوى تحصيل الطلاب في الاختبار البعدي ضمن المتوسطات النظرية لدرجات الإنجاز في الفهم القرائي.

2. لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات تحصيل المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة في الاختبار البعدي.

وللتحقق من فرضيات هذه الدراسة تم اختيار عينة عشوائية مكونة من ستين طالباً وطالبة يمثلون ١٧% من سكانها الأصليين من طلاب السنة الثانية بكلية التربية الأساسية في جامعة الموصل. وقد قسمت العينة إلى مجموعتين متساويتين أي: المجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة، وتساوت المجموعتان في الأعمار، والتحصيل الدراسي لأولياء الأمور، ودرجات الطلاب في الاختبار القبلي. وقد تم بناء اختبار تحصيلي مكون من عشرين سؤالاً والتحقق من صحته وتطبيقه على المجموعتين. وقد تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها إحصائياً وكانت النتائج الرئيسية كما يلي:

1. مستوى الطلبة العراقيين في فهم القراءة ضمن المستوى المتوسط.

2. توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات تحصيل المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة في الاختبار البعدي.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مستوى ,مهاراة الفهم القرائي ,الطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية
لغة اجنبية

Section One

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

One of the most widely spoken languages all over the world is English. Students at schools, colleges, and universities study it because it is important communication. The four English skills namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing should all be improved. It is believed that reading comprehension receives little attentions although, it is significant skill since it allows students to obtain knowledge, information, and concepts and vocabulary. (pollared,2008:45).

Reading comprehension is helpful for learning a language. The students should comprehend what they read in order to be proficient readers because reading without understanding makes their efforts useless. (Harmer,1998:68).

Authentic textbooks use in schools and universities today do not always have significant texts that can be used to develop essential reading skills. The books present grammar and vocabulary using a lot of real texts which are isolated and practiced (Sofronova,2021:2).

Most of the students struggle to comprehend the meaning of the passage they have read, and others are unable to fully comprehend the passage's material or the phrases that have intended meanings (vabiola and Fitrawati ,2018:335). Any teaching strategy is helpful for improving students' abilities in reading comprehension.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This Study aims at :

1. Finding out Iraqi EFL university students' level in reading comprehension.
- 2.Finding out whether there are any significant difference between the achievement of the experimental group and that of the control group in the achievement post-test.

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been posited to achieve the aims of the study

- 1- The average level of the students' achievement in the post-test within the theoretical mean scores of achievements in reading comprehension.
- 2.There are no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group's achievements and that of control group in the post-test.

1.4 Value of the Study

The current study is hoped to be beneficial to :

1. Help the students to read, comprehend the texts and develop a general reading comprehension skill.
2. Improve students' comprehension by encouraging students to evaluate the text's structure, identify important concepts, make connections, and draw conclusions. Intensive reading aids in the development of good comprehension skills.

3. Encourage students to learn a wide variety of vocabulary words and phrases.

1.5 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to second year EFL university students at the department of basic English College of Education for Humanities in Mosul during academic year (2022-2023).

1.6 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.6.1 Reading Comprehension

- “Reading comprehension is a cognitive or behavioral process that is enacted under particular contextual conditions, with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension” (Smith ,2004).
- According to Snow (2002) “Reading comprehension is a primary focus of instruction in the post-primary grades, after readers have largely mastered word recognition skills, although comprehension of text should be an integral part of reading instruction with beginning readers as well. Instruction in oral language, vocabulary, and listening comprehension should be a focus starting in preschool and continuing throughout the elementary grades.”.

Section Two

Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Concept of Reading Comprehension

Reading is a method where the students gather knowledge from publications like books, newspapers, manuals, and advertising, among other things (Camille, 2008). Reading is a multifaceted process involving motivation, fluency, word recognition, and comprehension.

The students create or establish a meaning and then read into the context in which the meaning was held. Although the text and students are never free, they do in fact produce meaning when they interact (Lehtonen ,2000).

Reading comprehension is the application of reading techniques by students to find information and create meaning from texts. The students may employ various techniques that are distinct from one another (Johnson, 2008).

2.1.2 Levels of Reading Comprehension

Grabe (2009) states that “Reading is the strategic process in that a number of the skills and processes used in reading call for effort on the part of the reader to anticipate text information, selecting key information, organize and mentally summarize information, monitor comprehension, repair comprehension breakdowns, and match comprehension output to the reader goals.”

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Instruction in oral language, vocabulary, and listening comprehension should be a focus starting in preschool and continuing throughout the elementary grades.”.

Reading comprehension is classifying into levels, where each level is closely related, with an emphasis on how understanding is achieved, and the significance of these levels is equal.

1.Literal Comprehension

At this level, surface meaning is the most obvious type of comprehension. The teacher can ask the students to locate details and concepts that are specifically mentioned in the text in this level, the students must replicate the facts exactly as the teacher has related them. Questions at this level are factual and comprehensive. (Heilman, 1986).

2.Interpretive Level

At this level, students must gain insight than what the teacher has provided. Students must understand the significance of the data, make comparisons, note various relationships, such as cause-and-effect and the relationship between the part and the whole, and draw conclusions and generalizations. (Heilman, 1986).

3.Critical Level

Critical reading involves evaluating the content of a text by contrasting its ideas with accepted norms and making judgments about its timeliness and accuracy.

At this level, students learn to assess and judge the information and the teacher's use of language to influence the students' interpretation. They also learn to look for signs of the teacher bias, expertise, point of view, intent, and factuality (Heilman, 1986).

4.Creative Comprehension

The text requires going beyond the information presented acceptable by the teacher, while reading it, students had to think. At this level, students must actively engage with the information being presented by the teacher to develop or reconsider the students' own ideas.

Questions at this level may be open-ended, requiring the students to add his or her own expertise, perspective, and values (Heilman, 1986).

Section Three

Procedures

3.1 The Experimental Design

The experimental design is a collection of techniques that enables researchers to test hypotheses by reaching reliable findings regarding the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Best and Kahan, 2006:177). The experimental design as a "traditional approach to conducting quantitative analysis or evaluate an idea (or procedure or practice) to determine whether it influences an outcome or dependent variable" Creswell (2012).

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

A population is a collection of people who share certain features (Creswell ,2012). A target population (or sampling frame) is a collection of people (or a collection of organizations) that the researcher can identify and analyze. The population of the present study is all the university students at the college of Basic Education/ Department of English in Mosul University for the academic year (2022-2023) with (350) male and female students. The sample is a group of individuals, items, or events representing the large groups characteristics from which the sample (60) that are chosen randomly as shown in Table (2).

Table (2)

The Population and Sample of the Study

	No.	EG	CG	Pilot
1 st				
2 nd		30	30	15
3 rd				
4 th				
Total	350	60		15

3.3 Instructional Material

The instructional materials of this study includes the book **Developing skills** that analysis according to (passage, number of lesson, content, vocabulary, procedures and discussion) it follow in the Table(3). . The book has been taught during the period of conducting the experimental part of this study which is lasted for nine weeks. The instruction of the two groups started on 19th February 2023 and ended on the 20th April 2023.

Table (3)

Contents Analysis for the Book (Developing skills)

	Passage	No. of lesson	Content	Vocabulary	Procedure	Discussion
Developing skills	A Noble Gangster	2	2 paragraph	20 v.	Explain the passage	8 questions
	Sixpence worth of trouble	3	2 paragraph	10 v.	Analysis the passage	6 questions
	Mary had a little lamb	2	3 paragraph	25 v.	Explain the passage	8 questions
	The greatest bridge in the world	2	4 paragraph	10 v.	Analysis the passage	10 questions
Total	4	9	11	65	Analysis and explain	32

3.4 Construction of the Achievement Post-test A test is any exercise designed to evaluate someone's skill, knowledge, or performance (Richards et al, 1992).

An achievement test has been constructed in terms of the contents and behavioral objectives of the instructional material. It consists of 2 section. The first section is consisting of 10 questions which is related to recognition level , whereas the second section is consisting of 10 question which is related to production level

- The first section is consisting of 10 questions related to the given passage . the specified marks is(4) to each question . The total marks is(40) . It required the testees to choose the correct answer.

The second section is consisting of 10 question . the specified marks is(6) for each question . The total marks is (60). The first question required from the testees to give a suitable title . The second question is required from the testees to write what is learned from given passage. The third question required to write the purpose of the passage. The forth question required from the testees to give the synonymy of the given words. The fifth question is required from the testees to write a summary of the main idea of the given passage. The sixth question is required to write the purpose of the final paragraph. The seventh question required to write what the story about . the eighth question is required to write the most important idea of the given passage. The ninth question is required from the testees to give the synonymy of the words in the passage. The twenty question is required from the testees to write a summary to conclude the given the passage as show in Table (4)

Table (4)

The Specifications of the Contents, Behaviors, Items, and Scores of the Achievement Posttest

Level	Behavior objectives	Bloom Taxonomy	No. of Questions	Score	Total of score
Recognition	To choose the suitable topic of a text	Knowledge	1, 6,	4	8
	To choose the Contrast, synonymy words	Analysis	4, 5, 9, 10	4	16

	To choose the information that message from the text	Remembering	2, 3, 7, 8	4	16
Production	To give the best title	Understanding	11, 16	6	12
	To explain the purpose of the passage	Understanding	13, 17	6	12
	To Give synonymy	Analysis	15, 19	6	12
	Learn from the passage	Understanding	12, 18	6	12
	To write Summary	Create	14, 20	6	12
Total			20		100

3.5 Scoring Scheme of the Post-test

Saleemi(1988) define Scores as the number or mark that a person receives on a test or portion of a test based on the quantity of correct answers. The total score of the construction of the posttest is 100 , which is distributed in two section . the first question is 40 marks and the second section is 60 marks which is assessed according to the three terms namely : vocabulary, ideas and grammar Each criterion is marked as; very good, good, or weak. Four marks are given for “very good”, three marks for “good”, and one mark for “weak”. as show in table (5)

Table (5)

The Scale of the Students' Scores

No. of Question	Criteria	Qualities	Scores
11,12,13, 14,15,16,17 18,19,20	Vocabulary	Very good	2
		Good	1
		Weak	0
	Grammar	Very good	2
		Good	1
		Weak	0
	Ideas	Very good	2
		Good	1
		Weak	0

3.6 Final Administration of the Post-test

After ensuring the validity, reliability, difficulty level, and discrimination power of the posttest, it has been applied on the 17th April 2023 to both experimental and control groups. The test takers have received their exam papers, and they are now required to carefully read the questions, note their answers, and complete the test within the time limit specified. After that, all test papers were collected and scored using the created scoring scheme.

Section Four

Results, Conclusions, Recommendations.

4.1 Presentation of Results

The results of the current study are presented in the light of the aims, and as follows:

4.1.1 Results Related to the First Hypothesis

To verify the first Hypothesis, which is, "**The average level of the students' achievement in the post-test within the theoretical mean scores of achievements in reading comprehension**". For achieving the first aim, an achievement test is applied for (30) students. Then, the calculated t-value and the tabulated t-value is achieved by using the T-Test formula for one independent sample to estimate student's performance.

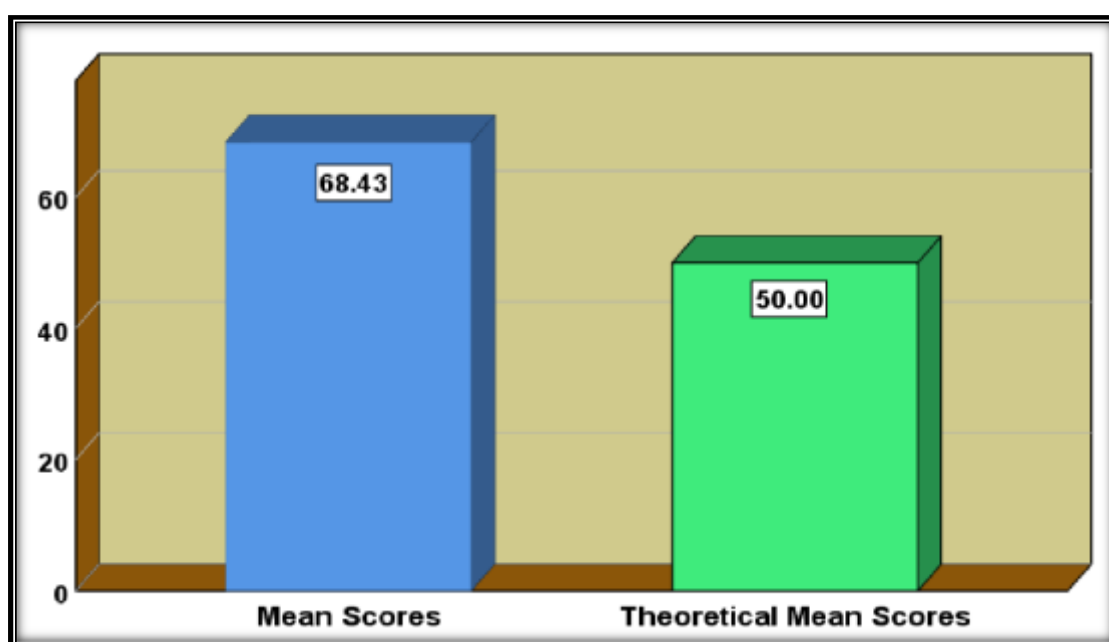
The mean scores of the students' achievements are (68.43) and the theoretical mean is (50) with a standard deviation of (10.666) respectively. The T-test formula for one sample is used. The calculated t-value is (9.466) which is found to be higher than the tabulated t-value, which is (1.70) at the (0.05) level of significance when the degree of freedom is (29), as shown in Table (6) and Graphic (1).

This mean indicates that the achievement of the second stage EFL university students in reading comprehension is above the average level. Thus, according to these results there is statistical significant effect of using (IRS) in teaching reading comprehension for EFL university students, so the first hypothesis is accepted.

Table (6)

The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and One Sample T-Value of the Students' General Achievement

Group	N.	Mean	SD.	Theoretical Mean Score	T-Value		DF	Level of Sig.
E.G.	30	68.43	10.666	50	Calculated	Tabulated	29	0.05
					9.466	1.70		



Graphic (1)

Students' Mean Scores and Theoretical Mean Scores of Experimental Group in Post-test

4.1.2 Results Related to the Second Hypothesis

To verify the second hypotheses which states, "There are no significant difference between the achievement of the experimental group and that of the control group, in the post-test". For achieving the first aim, an achievement test is applied for (60) students. Then, the calculated t-value and the tabulated t-value is achieved by using the T-Test formula for two independent sample to estimate student's achievement.

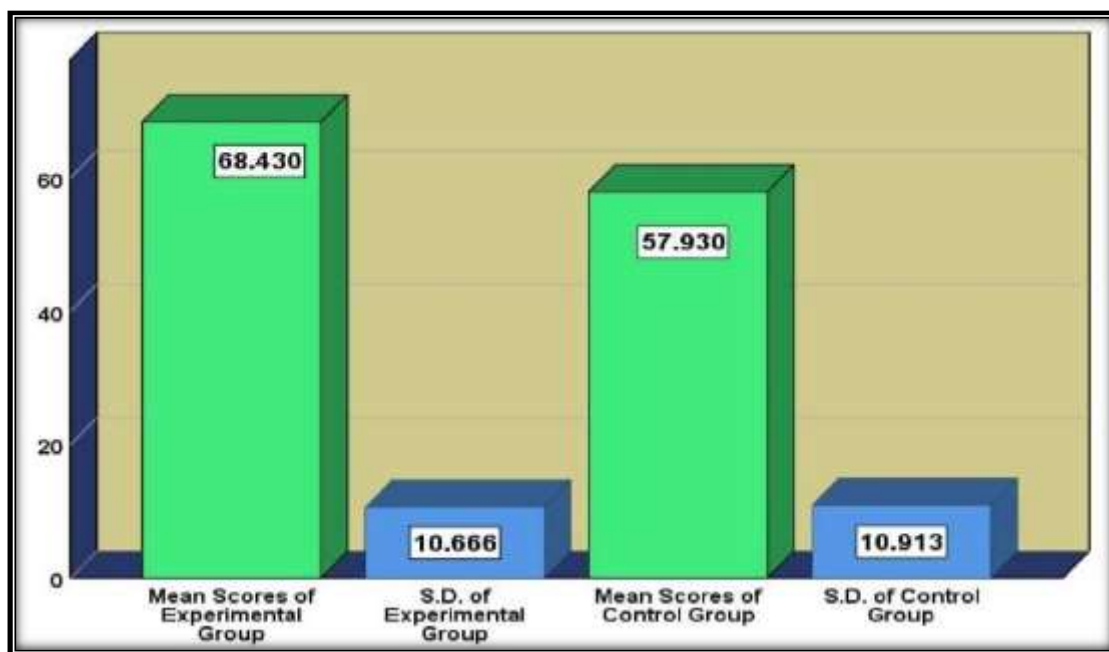
Both mean scores are obtained and compared. Results show that the mean scores of the experimental group is (68.43) and that of the control group is (57.93). The Calculated t-value is found to be (3.769), while the tabulated t-value is found to be 2.00 at the degree of freedom 58 and level of significance (0.05), as show in Table (7) and graphic (2).

This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in posttest, and for the benefit of the experimental group. This means that the achievement of the experimental group which has been taught by using (IRS) is better than the achievement of the control group which has been taught by the conventional method. Thus, the second hypothesis is rejected.

Table (7)

The Means Scores, Standard Deviations and T-Values of the Two Groups in the Achievement post-test

Group	N. of Students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
E.G.	30	68.43	10.666	Calculated	Tabulated	58	0.05
CG.	30	57.93	10.913	3.769	2.00		



Graphic (2)

Students' Mean Scores of the Experimental and control Group Achievement

4.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Iraqi EFL University students have good level in reading comprehension.
2. Iraqi EFL University students` level in reading comprehension can be more improved through using different strategies and classroom activities.

The following recommendations are made :

- 1.The instructors should develop various ideas to teach reading comprehension.
 1. EFL syllabus creators, prepare teachers well, and provides them with instructional resources.
2. The students should be given the required assistant when they read.

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