An Assessment of Reading Comprehension Practice in Jordan

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Abstract: This study aimed at assessing the level of reading comprehension proficiency of EFL Jordanian readers with regard to the relationship between identifying the main idea in a paragraph and language proficiency in expository texts. Additionally, this study investigated comprehension instruction process by EFL teachers. This research, in other words, demonstrated an intensified focus on the significance of the main idea while reading comprehension instruction takes place. The focus of the current mixed-methods study was on the descriptive data from a reading comprehension test, as well as, the classroom observation data. The sample of the study consisted of (649) 10th graders distributed randomly on Irbid directorate of education schools in the scholastic year (2011/2012) who undertook a reading comprehension test as developed for the purposes of this study. Also, the sample of the study included (15) teachers who were observed three lessons for each single teacher. The results of the study revealed a moderate reading comprehension proficiency level among 10th graders along with negligible instruction of comprehension skill by EFL teachers. The study strongly recommends textbooks writers to consider text structure when selecting reading comprehension texts, as well as, the study recommends EFL teachers to instruct comprehension strategies rather than assess and evaluate comprehension. (**Keywords**: English language, Jordanian 10th graders, *instructing comprehension strategies, reading skill).*

تقييم ممارسة القراءة الاستيعابية في الأردن

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ملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم مستوى الكفاءة القرائية الاستيعابية للطلبة الأردنيين عند القراءة باللغة الانجليزية بوصفها لغة اجنبية. حيث بحثت العلاقة بين تحديد الفكرة الرئيسة في النصوص الايضاحية وكفاءتهم اللغوية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك فقد بحثت هذه الدراسة أيضا اجراءات تدريس معلمي اللغة الانجليزية لمهارة القراءة الاستيعابية. أي أنه ,بعبارة أخرى، وضحت هذه الدراسة أهمية التركيز الحاد على الفكرة الرئيسة خلال عملية تدريس القراءة الاستيعابية. هذا وقد كان محور الدراسة معتمدا على أساليب متعددة للبيانات الوصفية كاختبار استيعاب قرائي بالإضافة إلى الملاحظة الصفية. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من (649) طالبا وطالبة في الصف العاشر الأساسي اختيرت عشوائيا من مدارس مديرية تربية إربد الأولى للعام الدراسي (2011/2012) والذين قاموا بأداء اختبار الاستيعاب القرائي الذي صمم لأغراض هذه الدراسة.كما اشتملت عينة الدراسة على (15) معلما ومعلمة تم رصد وملاحظة ثلاثة دروس لكل واحد منهم على حدة. وقد كشفت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن مستوى كفاءة القراءة الاستيعابية كان متوسطا لدى طلبة الصف العاشر الى جانب اهمال معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لتدريس مهارة الاستيعاب تحديدا. هذا و توصي الدراسة ضرورة أخذ بنية النصوص بعين الاعتبار عندما يختارها مصممو المقررات المدرسية، وكذلك توصي الدراسة المعلمين بتدريس مهارات الاستيعاب بدلا من تقييم وتقدير فهم الطلبة فقط. (**الكلمات المفتاحية**: اللغة الانجليزية, طلبة الصف العاشر الأردنيين، تدريس استراتيجيات القراءة، مهارة القراءة).

Introduction

English is a global and an international language that usually preserves heritage through manuscripts. Yet, when it comes to teaching such manuscripts as foreign setting similar to the Jordanian setting, many difficulties relevant to comprehension will continuously come up. Comprehension is a developmental skill in ascribing idea beginning at the word level and proceeding to attaching meaning to an entire reading selection (Kintsch, Rawson, Snowling, and Hulme, 2005). For grasping the main idea of a written text or the "core idea" is a complex reading task. Being able to draw suppositions, assess, and analytically understand text is significant for general comprehension in reading. It involves 'building bridges between the new and the known' (Pearson, Hansen and Gordon, 1979).

Teaching of English language in Arab countries in general and Jordan in particular catches the attention of many academics especially when the issue is particularly related to comprehending texts in school settings. The process of reading was elucidated by various perspectives and angles, once as a prior knowledge prediction process (Johnston; 1981; Davey and Miller, 1990; Pulido and Hambrick, 2008).

The view of the readers' knowledge promoting comprehension steered the exploitation and use of background knowledge or schema theory to reading activities. This track of investigation headed to the advance of three outlooks discussed to as (i) bottom-up treatment where focus was on textual decoding, (ii) top-down treatment where emphasis was placed on reader understanding and prior knowledge, and (c) interactive treatment where both textual code and background knowledge are employed interactively (Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Chou, 2011; Pulido and Hambrick, 2008). This is precisely where the blast of ideas managing with the theoretical approaches to interactive process of reading has begun.

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Insofar as the Jordanian EFL school syllabus is concerned, reading comprehension is exemplified in all units of the curriculum. At the basic stage (10th) grade, numerous reading comprehension texts are accessed by students in order to enhance their reading skills. In *Jordan Opportunities* curriculum of the 10th grade, for example, textbooks embody various reading comprehension themes which are likely to afford learners with knowledge and skills (General guidelines and specific outcomes for the English language curriculum for the basic and secondary stages, 2005).

The researchers' belief in the current study corresponds with academic findings regarding the benefits of reading comprehension strategies, for it enhances students' understandings of the texts they read. Effective teachers, accordingly, are advised to use comprehension strategies to facilitate the construction of meaning. These strategies include prediction, making connections, rereading, finding the main idea, summarizing, and word identification. Researchers believe that using such strategies help students become metacognitive readers (Durkin, 1978/1979; Laflamme 1997; Duke and Pearson 2002; Vacca 2002; Irvin et al., 1996).

To solve EFL Jordanian learners' reading problems, recent instructional approaches emphasize learning by promoting reading comprehension that highlights topic sentence teaching in order to improve understanding of the paragraph (Farhady and Sajadi, 1999). The conditions of meaningful learning require an appropriate identification of the topic sentence. All reading comprehension spins around the student's ability to answer twofold essential questions: 1) Who or what was the focus of this reading? and 2) What is the main point or points the author is articulating about the topic? Thus, to find out the main idea is the most important comprehension skill in a reading text (Wang, 2009; Alkhawaldeh, 2011).

Since reading comprehension instruction was greatly neglected in the accounts of deciding the comprehension proficiency level of Jordanian students so far, an in depth investigation of teachers' comprehension was needed in order to uncover the reasons behind students' proficiency. Rhetoric questions such as: can 10th graders comprehend texts and locate meaning? Are they instructed on how to comprehend? Are they presented and accessed in the current research? What does literature debate state regarding the relationships and associations between comprehension and the main idea on the one hand, and between comprehension and reading instruction, on the other hand?

Comprehension and the main idea: Heading straight to the main idea of every paragraph considerably improves and develops comprehension. The main idea describes the subject of the paragraph. The effective comprehension of any text is only as good

as successful the reader locates and defines the topic sentence of a given text (Alkhawaldeh, 2011; Al-Qatawneh, 2005; Broek,; Lynch; Beishuizen, Asscher, Prinsen, and Elshout-Mohr, 2003; Farhady and Sajadi, 1999; Naslund; Ievers-Landis; Verduin, 2003; Wang, 2009).

In this regard, Farhady and Sajadi (1999) investigated the relationship between the location of the topic sentence in a paragraph and the degree of reading comprehension at different levels of language proficiency. The study examined 148 undergraduate English majors who were randomly designated and allocated into two groups of high and low proficiency through the Michigan language proficiency test. Then, many language processing tasks were introduced. Two reading comprehension tests corresponding to each level of language proficiency were developed. Each test consisted of 9 passages of which three passages had the topic sentence at the beginning, three passages in the middle, and three passages at the end. The findings showed an interaction between the level of proficiency, the location of the topic sentence, and the degree of reading comprehension. That is, at the high level of proficiency, the location of the topic sentence did not significantly influence the performance of the students, whereas at the low proficiency level, the comprehension of the text was enhanced when the topic sentence was at the beginning of the paragraph.

Wang (2009) scrutinized aspects that would affect a reader's understanding of the main idea at the global level and the main ideas at the local level. Fifty-seven junior university students taking a university reading course took a reading comprehension exam. Statistical analyses showed that text structure had a moderate effect on the reader's understanding of the global main idea; only a weak correlation existed between comprehension of the global main idea and local main ideas. Exploration of the local main idea's textual features proposed that identification of the main idea was measured in light of sentence structure, location in the paragraph, and the number of points in the sentence.

Recognizing text structure tends to help readers to locate the main idea. Broek et al. (2003) explored readers' ability to pinpoint the main idea in narrative texts and the growth of this skill. Specifically, the authors examined students' sensitivity to the aim structure of narratives. Third-, 6th-, 9th-, and 11th-grade students read narratives in which aim formula were systematically diverse on two structural dimensions: position in the text's hierarchical structure and number of links to other statements. As a mark of the main idea comprehension, students designated headings for the narratives from amid the goals or related outcomes. Hierarchical position, but not number of connections, influenced heading choices. Even the freshest students were able to detect the main ideas, but they did so not as much of reliably than did older students. These results

have associations for principles of text comprehension advance and for educational practice.

Comprehension is based on main ideas, provided that, Beishuizen, Asscher, Prinsen, and Elshout-Mohr's (2003) study which presented how crucial are instances and main ideas in study texts. In their research into comprehension of expository texts, Beishuizen et al. sightsaw in what way text comprehension is affected by the main idea. Thus, they conducted two experiments, in Experiment 1, concrete texts with numerous examples were paralleled with abstract texts with many main ideas. In Experiment 2, idea-oriented texts, in which main ideas headed examples, were paralleled with example-oriented texts, in which examples came first before main ideas. In both experiments, the sample consisted of undergraduate social sciences students studied several forms of an opening text on educational psychology.

The methods of Beishuizen et al.'s (2003) experiments entailed that the text contained sections with a different number of related and unrelated examples and with or without a main idea (Experiment 1), and sections with a main idea followed by examples, sections with a main idea without examples, or sections with examples followed by a main idea (Experiment 2). After studying the texts, students finalized a word-perfect recognition test and an explanation test. Highest results were gained when reading sections with a main idea and two or five examples. Unrelated examples were harmful to understanding. Readers employed examples to produce knowledge or to stimulate prior knowledge. Readers with a strong habit of real elaboration used main ideas to remember incidents of personal experience. This possibly will interfere with understanding underlying concepts and principles by relating main ideas to examples in the text. Readers with a low score on the concrete elaboration measure were sensitive to the presence of examples in the study text.

Reading can take place for vocabulary demonstration rather than for comprehending text itself. In this regard, Alkhawaldeh (2011) explored the reading comprehension interests of 500 second secondary class students in English at Amman 2nd Directorate of Education. The results of his study showed that students were mostly concerned in assembling vocabulary items, while reading comprehension process takes place, in order to use them in speaking and writing. There were statistically significant differences in reading comprehension interests in favor of students, whose achievement level in English in the general secondary exam out of 70, were 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70 compared with the lowest achievement group whose grades were below 30. Alkhawaldeh's study emphasized the attention for the interests of excellent students while teaching reading comprehension to under-achieving students.

Jordanian EFL learners run into a demanding and challenging context. Al-Qatawneh (2005) established that Jordanian EFL learners encounter severe difficulties in understanding facts and details expressed or implied in an English setting; they are incapable of apprehending the main ideas of given texts; and they could not replicate upon the author's purpose of writing.

It seems that the reading challenge for readers is to find out precisely what the exact meaning of the text. The degree of succeeding the task is very much influenced by the task structure. Identifying the main idea could help readers accomplish comprehension tasks sufficiently. The current research, accordingly, is driven by reader's location of the main idea as an index of their comprehension.

Comprehension and instruction: Much comprehension is known that would enable teaching reading to be done with confidence. That is, comprehension is tipped with effective instruction (Al-Makhzoumi, 1986; Al-Sobh, and Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2012; Rababah, 2005). Negligible comprehension instruction, unfortunately, is documented as occurring in English language lessons over literature accounts (Durkin, 1978/1979; Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Pressley, 2002; Vaughn, Moody, and Schumm, 1998).

Comprehension instruction does not take place in a lot of classrooms (Durkin, 1978/1979). Durkin steered an observational study of reading comprehension teaching. She established that usual comprehension instruction tailed a mentioning, performing, and assessing process. Specifically, teachers would mention to students the skill that they sought them to practice. Then they would offer learners chances to practice that skill over and done with exercise book, and at that point the teacher would assess whether or not learners employed the skill effectively. Markedly absent from this procedure of comprehension instruction is instruction. Consequently, in more than 4,000 minutes of reading instruction observed in fourth-grade classrooms, Durkin only recorded 20 minutes of real comprehension instruction. Here, Durkin stated that: 'comprehension instruction anything that is done to help children acquire reading ability. Within this very broad framework, instruction concerned with such things as whole word identification, word meanings, and phonic and structural analyses belongs under the umbrella called "comprehension instruction " (p.9).

An example on the effectiveness of instructing comprehension was presented by Palincsar and Brown (1984). They conducted two instructional studies directed at the comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities of seventh grade poor reader. They investigated four activities of: summarizing (self-review), questioning, clarifying, and predicting. The teaching technique was that of reciprocal teaching, where the teacher and learners exchanged turns leading a dialogue centered on relevant

characteristics of the text. The study reported substantial development in the excellence of the summaries, prediction and questions.

Likewise, Vaughn et al. (1998) observed reading instruction in elementary-level learners in south Florida. Observing 14 teachers three times each over the sequence of one year, the authors disclosed that teachers hardly delivered overt instruction intended to stimulate their students' reading comprehension skills. Eleven teachers taught reading comprehension by either reading the story loudly or probing answers. Of Vaughn et al.'s 41 observations, only one case was reported as employing a comprehension strategy instruction in classroom.

Instructing comprehension can be very beneficial. Pressley (2002) conducted a yearlong observational study of 10 fourth- and fifth-grade 'good' teachers as perceived by their districts. Pressley decided that, "In general, students were provided with opportunities to practice comprehension strategies, but they were not actually taught the strategies themselves nor the utility value of applying them" (p. 241). Pressley concluded that teachers who model and clarify successful comprehension strategies aid students to develop strategic readers.

In sum, research suggests students can be taught reading comprehension strategies and that such instruction is effective at improving their understandings of the texts they read. This makes comprehension instruction significant more than ever. In turn, strategies need to become a central part of reading instruction EFL classroom lessons.

Statement of the problem

In Jordan, English is taught as a foreign language in schools. All other school subjects are taught in Arabic, the native language. Starting from Grade 1, students study English in four 45- minute classroom times a week. Even though the goals of the Jordanian English language curriculum aim at developing language skills, nevertheless abundant published studies show that Jordanian EFL learners come across problems and difficulties in all language skills (Al-Makhzoumi, 1986; Al-Qatawneh 2005; Al-Sobh, and Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2012; Rababah, 2005). However, reading is viewed as the utmost energetic one for students in the classroom context and extracurricular environment (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

Accordingly, the purpose of the current study was to support the important role of overall language proficiency in processing language tasks, for research indicates that Jordanian school students are incapable of understanding their textbooks (Alkhawaldeh, 2011; Al-Qatawneh 2005; Mahmud, 2000).

Although educators now know a great deal about the significance of providing explicit instruction in reading comprehension and how to teach various comprehension strategies, little is known about how English language teachers currently teach reading comprehension at Jordanian 10th grade lessons, in particular. The purpose of this study, hence, was to determine the extent to which and in what ways reading comprehension is promoted and delivered in class. This was achieved through assessing students' general level, as well as, monitoring the process of teaching comprehension, in general, and the main idea in particular. Explicitly, two research questions guided this study:

➢ To what extent, if any, can Jordanian EFL tenth graders locate the main idea in a paragraph as an index of their reading comprehension ability?

➢ How do EFL teachers instruct reading comprehension? How can this be correlated to their students' results?

Significance of the study

Since educational aspects are of substantial rank in the midst of various issues influencing language teaching and language learning, the current research offers EFL material developers and textbook writers' insight for developing materials and textbooks for EFL students. For example, materials dedicated for basic level students, the paragraphs for reading comprehension had better be designated such that the topic sentences are placed at the commencement of the paragraphs. In addition, test designers would exploit the conclusions of this study in picking passages for reading comprehension tests. Actually, identifying the main idea in a paragraph may be employed as an index of reading comprehension proficiency level of students.

The present study tends to be significant for it sheds light on the process of reading comprehension in relation to teachers' instruction. Varying demonstrations of reading strategies may result in various degrees of comprehension, especially for moderately low intermediate EFL learners.

Definition of operational terms

The following terms have meaning whenever they are used in the current study.

Reading comprehension: Most definitions of reading comprehension (Davey and Miller, 1990; Pulido and Hambrick, 2008) embody an assumption that reading comprehension is a product of a reader's interaction with a text. This product is stored in the reader's memory and may be examined by convincing the reader to express relevant segments of the stored material. The process (es) involved in getting there is given less emphasis than the final product (i.e., the contents of memory). This product position implies that long-term memory plays a large part in comprehension, determining how "successful" the reader was at comprehending.

Topic sentence: In the current study's reading comprehension, the main idea is the dominant emphasis of a paragraph and consistently, the main idea appears in one sentence - a general sentence called the topic sentence. The main idea in a paragraph is a broad idea. (Farhady and Sajadi, 1999; Meyer, 2005; Pressley and McCormick, 1995).

Methods and procedures

In the study, the researchers evaluated students' reading comprehension using a comprehension test and assessed individual Jordanian tenth grader students' reading comprehension proficiency level. Additionally, the current study inspected the strategies among English language teachers' reading instruction levels (through observation).

Sample

The population of the study consisted of all tenth grade students in Irbid directorate of education schools. The sample accounted up to 10% of the population; specifically: (649) students (males: 315 and female: 334) randomly selected tenth grade male and female EFL students in Irbid governorate in the scholastic year of 2011-2012. The overwhelming majority of the students were drawn from traditional public schools in Irbid city and other towns around Irbid.

When teachers expressed interest in participating in the study during conducting the reading comprehension test, the researchers determined whether they were entirely qualified to teach English language. The majority of teachers (15) were of bachelor's degree holders. Over half (n =8) of the teachers were males; while the number of female teachers accounted up to (n=7). All teachers taught tenth grade students.

Instruments

Corresponding to the research questions of this study, questions about the passage were made up of one component tested the student's ability to identify the main idea. The reading material used in this study was expository. Nine passages of reading comprehension test were used in this study which was developed exclusively for the purposes of this study. The procedures of test development are briefly explained below. Out of the 9 passages, three passages had the topic sentence at the beginning, three in the middle, and three at the end. Each passage was followed by four multiple-choice items. Thus, altogether, 9 passages with 36 items were constructed. These tests were piloted, revised, and prepared for final administration. These tests were administered concurrently with the criterion measure. In all cases, each item was given one point and no penalty was considered for wrong responses.

The present study mandated increased attention to reading skills instruction, including locating main idea in the text. As part of this research, 10th EFL students'

comprehension level was measured against 10th grade teachers' instruction. All designed to improve teachers' reading instruction. Accordingly, this study attempted qualitative data as triangulated with students' test results. Observing how EFL teachers teach reading comprehension lessons was intended to explain and validate the results obtained by the test scores. Hence, the observation process stressed strategies carried by the EFL teachers to achieve comprehension. Predicting, making connections, rereading, summarizing, finding the main idea, and figuring out the meaning of words strategies are always associated with identifying the nucleus, essence, and meaning of a reading text.

The study employed relative gradient in order to categorize the mean scores of the test items according to the formula of: the highest value (3/3) - the lowest value (1/3) which equals (0.67). Thus, the mean scores starting from (1+0.67=1.67) are indicators of 'low' level degree, i.e. degree (1). The mean scores starting from (1.68+0.67= 2.35) are indicators of 'intermediate' level, i.e. degree (2). However, the mean scores starting from (2.36 -3) are indicators of 'high' level, i.e. degree (3).

A classroom observation tool was developed for the reasons of the current study. The researchers completed the observation checklist when observing teachers. The instrument consisted of six items that address the following comprehension strategies.

- Predicting
- Making connections
- Rereading
- Summarizing
- Finding the main idea
- Figuring out the meaning of words

The researchers developed the instrument by reviewing, drawing from, and adjusting other observation instruments and measures, comprising the English Language Learner Classroom Observation Instrument (e.g., Haager, Gersten, Baker, and Graves 2003).

Before using the instruments (the reading proficiency test for 10th graders and their teachers' classroom observation checklist) in this study, a pilot study of the instruments was undertaken. The instruments were further polished and refined as based on pilot study results. The coefficient alpha reliability was 96 for the test while 90 for the observation checklist. In the checklist, items are rated on their frequency as reflecting high/low quality comprehension based teaching.

Teacher observations: The researchers observed (15) teachers three times respectively, for a total of (45) observations. The researchers informed contributing teachers of the purpose of the observations ("to know how EFL teachers teach reading"). For each

observation, each researcher scheduled observations with a group of teachers and then observed the whole reading lesson. The researchers took thorough field records in actual time, which they used to identify behaviors that corresponded to model practices appeared on the observation checklist.

Findings and discussion related to EFL students' comprehension (Question #1)

The major question dealt with was whether Jordanian EFL tenth graders can locate the main idea in a paragraph as an index of their reading comprehension ability. In order to answer the question, a set of analyses was conducted to find out whether participants performed differently on different reading passages. All participants took the same test. Therefore, difference in performance of the participants on the test should be attributed to their language ability.

In the present study's reading comprehension test, the main idea is the prevailing focus of a paragraph and consistently, the main idea appears in one sentence - a general sentence called the topic sentence. The main idea in a paragraph is a broad idea. In contrast, the secondary information in a paragraph consists of specific ideas and particulars. In a word, the main idea of the paragraph is "whatever the reader knows about the topic of the paragraph."

Table 1: Jordanian EFL 10th graders' comprehension.

Test item	Mean score	Standard deviation	Frequency	Percent	level
1.	2.46	1.182	193	29.7	high
2.	2.44	1.032	159	24.2	high
3.	2.69	1.032	125	19.3	high
4.	2.34	1.023	159	24.5	intermediate
5.	1.96	1.103	83	12.8	intermediate
6.	2.21	0.701	140	21.6	intermediate
7.	2.34	0.968	228	35.1	intermediate
8.	2.19	0.968	199	30.1	intermediate
9.	2.20	0.873	75	11.6	intermediate
Total	2.32				intermediate

A review of Table (1) may answer the first research question concerning a request of identifying the level of Jordanian EFL 10th graders through locating the main idea. Data in Table 1 singles out their general level (i.e. the mean score calculated as 2.32) as 'intermediate' readers pertaining to comprehension. When data from the nine paragraphs are compared, differences rather than similarities emerge because, as Table(1) points out, students' responses to questions 1-3 categorize students as 'high'.

The main idea, in the present study, occurred at the beginning in nearly all paragraphs (questions: 1, 2, 3), that is, the first sentence. Once this happens, the first sentence will be a wide-ranging speech that may familiarize a topic and will at that point be trailed by sentences that will back that speech in some significant manner. A topic sentence can be found in the middle of a paragraph when the paragraph begins with a question (question items: 4, 5, 6). A question will certainly not be a topic sentence. The answer to the question will be the topic sentence or main idea of the paragraph. Obviously, if the reaction to a question is "Affirmative: Yes," or "Negative: No," this will not be our topic sentence. However, a topic sentence can act at the end- the last sentence (question items: 7, 8, 9). In this case, the assistances will be specified first, and the topic sentence will conclude the paragraph whichever such as a summary or a conclusion.

Earlier, Pressley and McCormick (1995) explained that text structure may be employed to generate the main idea and assist the reader's separation of "the wheat from the chaff". Later, Meyer (2005) described the knowledge of text structure as encompassing the ability to recognize the overall logical structure of the text.

This means that Jordanian EFL 10th graders tend to be not fully aware of paragraph text structure. Not only would the variance between the locations of the main ideas allow extra clear-cut assessment of the reader's competence to infer, but it would also reveal 10th grader's linguistic complexity. In their effort to build the implicit main idea, 10th graders participating in the current study want to tap their language skills to find the main idea that was not clearly stated in the text. In fact in the current study, finding out the main idea could measure exactly 10th grader's comprehension skills.

This finding can be best interpreted with that of Farhady and Sajadi (1999). who examined the relationship between the location of the topic sentence in a paragraph and the degree of reading comprehension at diverse levels of language proficiency. They found out that high level proficiency students can locate the topic sentence effectively; whereas low proficiency level students cannot locate it unless the topic sentence was at the beginning of the paragraph. Extra advocacy of the significance of identifying the main idea was gained by Wang (2009). who studied features that would touch a reader's understanding of the main idea at the global level and main ideas at the local level. That is, text structure was perceived as paramount. Thus,

Jordanian students' failure to identify the topic sentence unless was at the beginning of the paragraph is an index of comprehension failure.

Concerning topic sentence significance, Beishuizen, et al. (2003) indicated that the process of reading was explained by research findings on the location of the topic sentence in a paragraph. They concluded that main ideas are beneficial and useful, and, so as to prevent interference effects, the more so when they are put at the end of sections. Beishuizen, et al. explored the influence of the location of the topic sentence on the reading comprehension. They found out that comprehension was significantly improved when the topic sentence was presented before the materials.

Findings and discussions related to EFL teachers' instruction (Question #2)

In order to make effective reading teaching become a reality, the researchers observed quite a few comprehension strategies, including: predicting, making connections, rereading to find answers to questions, summarizing, finding the main idea and figuring out the meaning of words. However, the following Table (2) draws conclusions on EFL teachers' instruction:

Table 2: frequencies of EFL teachers' strategy instruction.

Strategy	Frequency of instruction	percentage
1. Prediction	20	22.47%
2. Making connections	3	3.37%
3. Rereading	14	15.73%
4. Summarizing	5	5.62%
5. finding the main idea	3	3.37%
6. figuring out the meaning of words	44	49.44%

Undoubtedly the most common strategy the observerd teachers used, or prompted students to use, was figuring out the meaning of words (44) times as high as 49.44%. In most lessons, teachers stressed the meaning of words, and when they failed to give the meaning teachers insisted that "You will have to read all that again and figure it out". Studies conducted on the significance of vocabulary instruction proved that it plays a main role in refining comprehension (Laflamme, 1997). That is, there is a link between vocabulary and reading instruction. Good readers can decode the meaning of words as they read.

Insisting on vocabulary rather than on comprehension in the Jordanian context was stated by Alkhawaldeh as recent as (2011). Alkhawaldeh asserted that reading takes place for vocabulary demonstration rather than for comprehending text itself. Asserting vocabulary on the expense of comprehension also takes place in contexts other than the Jordanian context (Durkin, 1978/1979).

Looking through the Table, one may see a fair percentage of EFL teachers as employing prediction strategy. The researchers saw (20) examples of teachers teaching strategies for predicting. Teachers requested students to both guess what would occur afterward in a narrative text or to predict what they believed they would study as part of screening expository text; for example:

• "What do you believe he's going to do?"

• "What will happen then?"

• "What are we going to study?

• "from reading the title, what do you think this is going to be about?"

In the 45 observed lessons, students were asked to predict based on pictures. Yet, teachers infrequently monitored the correctness of students' predictions. Duke and Pearson (2002) suggested that "As they read, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come." This previewing strategy helps readers set a goal for reading and focus their thinking.

The third most frequently practiced strategy (14 times) was rereading to discover answers to comprehension questions. Repeatedly this entailed prompting students to use the strategy. For example:

• "Go back in the reading comprehension text and reread again".

• "look back in the book if you don't know the answer to the question."

Yet, in ten of the observed lessons, when students asked, "Can we look back?" The teacher responded, "No." that is, there was at least ten missed opportunities for using this strategy. In these instances, the teacher asked questions and students did not answer. As an alternative, the teacher looked for the answers and told them to students. In contrast, a limited number of teachers asked students to summarize (5 times as restricted as to 5.62 %). They hardly supported students. Seemingly, some observed teachers might not have been certain themselves what a summary requires.

Duke and Pearson (2002) maintained that instruction in summarizing not only develops students' ability to summarize text, but also their overall comprehension of text content. Students must examine text, pinpoint irrelevant and main ideas, and create the important ideas to create a new text .

Moreover, assisting students with background knowledge is an essential feature of reading

comprehension (Snow, 2002). Construction of meaning through making connections is called schemata and reveals the proficiencies, attitudes, beliefs, and skills a reader brings to a text situation (Vacca, 2002). Irvin et al. (1996) maintained that "Proficient learners build on and activate their background knowledge (i.e. make connections) before reading, writing, speaking, or listening; poor learners begin without thinking."

Nonetheless, the researchers saw few tenth grade teachers do this. However, this was quiet the strategy perceived the second most frequent (3 times). Teachers asked students to think about what they previously knew correlated to a theme, a topic, and idea, or a vocabulary word, jogged their memory with a similar lesson. For example:

• The teacher says, "OK, Amal, how much do you weigh? So the elephants could eat more than what Amal weighs."

• The teacher asks, "Have you ever been to Petra with your parents? Do you go inside and see the person who talks with tourists? If you talk to the person … that person is called a guide."

Among the relevant research accounts that took place in Jordan was one by Mahmud (2000) who suggested that teachers should stress employing student's prior knowledge in the effort to teach them both reading comprehension and oral retelling. He also recommended that more focus on background knowledge in the English language curriculum should be given by syllabus designers. Later on, a parallel study was conducted by Fraihat (2003) who proposed that teachers should activate student's prior knowledge associated with the reading passage and that they should also support students with required knowledge.

Similarly, very few teachers asked students to find the main idea (3 times %). They did not give overt teaching in the lessons, as a substitute steering students to "find the main idea." In one lesson only, the teacher requested students to give two details that supported the main idea. This finding is strongly consistent with Al-Qatawneh (2005) where he proved that Jordanian EFL learners encounter severe difficulties in understanding English language texts whether a fact or a detail.

If teachers instruct comprehension, their students will be capable of accounting for text structure. This was illustrated by Palincsar and Brown (1984) as well as Pressley (2002). They reported that instructing comprehension can be very beneficial.

The present study surveyed classroom observation whether tenth grade students provide comprehension instruction. Main findings included the fact that almost 'no' comprehension instruction was found. The attention that did go to comprehension focused on assessment, which was carried on through teacher questions. However, instruction other than that for comprehension was similarly occasional. The observer

researchers in the present study could not decide, hence, that teachers abandon comprehension as they are busy teaching word meanings. The observed EFL teachers prompted students to figure out the meaning of new words as well as to predict but did not provide instruction in how to do so. In conclusion, the participant teachers did not instruct students on how to comprehend a reading text, to identify and locate main idea(s), and make sense of what is being read. As a consequence, the reading lesson is spent on giving, finishing, and checking tasks consumed an outsized part of the observed periods. Ample amounts of time also went to activities categorized as "Transition" and "Non-instruction."

This finding is an alert articulated by Durkin (1978-1979) and Klingner, Urbach, Brownell, and Menon (2010) who, individually, conducted observational studies of reading comprehension instruction. They established that typical comprehension instruction tailed a mentioning, practicing, and assessing procedure. Unfortunately, in the present study, the participant EFL teachers did not mention to students the skill that they wanted them to use. Openly, they give students ample opportunities to practice that skill through workbooks or skill sheets, and then they assessed whether or not students used the skill successfully. Noticeably missing from this form of comprehension instruction is instruction.

Reading instruction in 45 tenth grade classrooms in Irbid governorate was observed in a study designed to determine whether basic stage lessons deliver comprehension instruction. Among the findings were that no comprehension instruction was seen but that comprehension assessment, frequently carried on through figuring out the meaning of words, was common. That, in addition to being vocabulary questioners, teachers did not appear to enhance finding the main idea. The 15 observer teachers consumed a bulky part of the observed periods on giving and checking vocabulary items, prediction, and rereading.

Conclusions and recommendations

The current research highlighted the significance of text structure to the comprehension process yet, more investigation is necessary to confirm, prove, and verify the findings of this research. Explicitly, textbooks designers are strongly recommended to vary text structures presented to students. Teachers, also, are deeply directed to instruct comprehension strategies rather than to assess comprehension through steering their students to locate the main idea and identify its relation to reading comprehension.

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