



**Using Story Pyramid Strategy for Developing Reading
Comprehension Skills and Reducing Reading Anxiety
among Preparatory Stage EFL Pupils**

By

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of using story pyramid strategy on developing reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among preparatory stage EFL pupils. The study used the pre-posttest quasi-experimental one group design. The participants of the study were thirty six first year preparatory stage EFL pupils. The instruments of the present study included a reading comprehension skills test prepared by the researcher and a reading anxiety scale. The test and the scale were administered to the participants before and after the treatment. The participants of the study were trained to use and follow the story pyramid strategy procedures and techniques to develop reading comprehension skills and reduce their reading anxiety. Data were treated statistically using SPSS. Results of the study revealed that the story pyramid strategy was found to be effective in developing reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among preparatory stage EFL pupils.

Key words: *Story pyramid strategy, reading comprehension skills, reading anxiety, preparatory stage EFL pupils.*

1.1 Introduction

The reading skill is increasingly seen as one of the most important skills. Reading can be considered one of the basic ways of acquiring information in our society and for academic purpose in particular. It plays a vital role because it is one of the most frequently used language skills in everyday life. It is assumed that the person who is not able to read well will face serious trouble, especially in the educational setting.

Students have to read extensively and reading is probably the most important skill for foreign language learners in academic contexts, so their reading may be affected by various emotions and EFL reading anxiety is one of them. In MacIntyre's (1999) view, when learners feel anxious during reading, cognitive performance is diminished and reading performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self-deprecating cognition which further impairs performance. According to Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999), reading anxiety is also anticipated when a reader can decipher the words of the foreign language text, but not its sense, because of incomplete knowledge of the cultural materials underlying the text. Thus reading anxiety is a hindrance in developing students' reading skills in an EFL/ESL classroom.

To overcome reading complexities and problems e.g. reading anxiety and develop their reading comprehension skills, language learners must focus on what they read because reading is not only reading but also comprehending the text systematically. Also, applying new and effective learning strategies and techniques creates a good atmosphere through language learning process. One of the new strategies in teaching reading comprehension is the Story Pyramid strategy (SPS).

Epler (2015) elaborates story pyramid as a tool that expresses the facility of apprehending the components of the text. The goal of SPS is to supply students with the necessary skills to focus upon, understand, and organize a text structure explicitly. It helps students to identify major story elements such as the title, setting, characters, major events, problems, resolution, and overall theme in a coherent organized pyramid. As a result, SPS motivates students' interests and reading comprehension level.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

Reading comprehension is probably one of the aspects which are most required by EFL students. However, in reality, many EFL students are still struggling to overcome their reading comprehension problems. In addition, foreign language learners' reading comprehension may be affected by various emotions and EFL reading anxiety is one of them. Reading anxiety acts as a mediating variable that intervenes at some point between the decoding of a text and the actual processing of the textual meaning.

The current study addresses the question of whether or not the story pyramid strategy develops reading comprehension skills and reduces reading anxiety among preparatory stage EFL pupils. Based on interviews with EFL teachers, and as a supervisor of teaching practice program, the researcher noticed a number of reading problems among first year preparatory stage EFL pupils. First, they are probably not keen on reading foreign language literature because they have to work hard to comprehend it. Second, they have several common problems regarding reading comprehension such as insufficient vocabulary, problems understanding linguistic complexity including lexical and syntactic knowledge, and language inaccessibility.

Also, the researcher conducted a pilot study in which 35 first year preparatory stage EFL pupils were tested on their reading comprehension skills at the literal, and inferential levels. The results indicated the low level of the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils in EFL reading comprehension skills. 67%, and 71% of pupils could not answer literal, and inferential comprehension questions respectively. Also, the pupils showed a high level of reading anxiety and they were worry about difficult vocabulary items in the reading passage, their own poor performance, comparing themselves with their classmates who are doing fairly well, and also about the time that they will get to finish their reading task.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the current study is to investigate the effect of using story pyramid strategy on developing reading comprehension skills (literal and inferential skills) and reducing reading anxiety among first year preparatory stage EFL pupils.

1.4 Questions of the Study

The main question of the study is:

How far would the story pyramid strategy be effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among first year preparatory stage EFL pupils?

This question is divided into the following sub questions:

1. To what extent is story pyramid strategy effective in enhancing first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' literal reading comprehension skills?
2. To what extent is story pyramid strategy effective in enhancing first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' inferential reading comprehension skills?
4. To what extent is story pyramid strategy effective in reducing first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' reading anxiety?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

Hypotheses of the present study can be stated as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post.
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the literal comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post.
4. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale in favor of the pre-administration.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The present study was delimited to the following:

1. First year preparatory stage EFL pupils (n=36).
2. The EFL reading comprehension skills which are included in the English language syllabus presented to first year preparatory stage EFL pupils, the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022.
3. The Story Pyramid Strategy.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The results of this study can be helpful for first year preparatory stage EFL pupils, EFL teachers and course designers. It might help first year preparatory stage EFL pupils develop their reading comprehension skills and reduce reading anxiety through the application of story pyramid strategy. Moreover, using story pyramid strategy in developing reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among first year preparatory stage EFL pupils, the current study suggests a modification of the teaching methods currently adopted to develop reading comprehension skills in Egyptian preparatory stage schools.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Story Pyramid Strategy

According to Jonson (2006, p. 184), a story pyramid is “a structured format students use to summarize the most important parts of story. This strategy forces students to review and summarize the main points of a story”

In the present study, story pyramid strategy can be operationally defined as a structured format through which first year preparatory stage EFL pupils verify predictions, summarize, classify, organize, and process the information in a reading passage at deeper levels of understanding.

1.8.2 Reading Comprehension

Yukselir (2014, p. 66) defined reading comprehension as the result of complex interactions between text, setting, the reader, the reader’s background, reading strategies, decision making, and L1 and the L2.”

Kasim (2017) stated that reading comprehension is “a process of extracting information from the text and constructing comprehension through the interaction between the text and the reader’s background knowledge”.

In the present study, reading comprehension is operationally defined as the ability of the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils to comprehend a text at the literal, and inferential levels.

1.8.3 Reading Anxiety

Muhlis (2014) stated that foreign language reading anxiety refers to feeling of worry and apprehension when students try to read and comprehend foreign language text.

Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999) confirmed that reading anxiety is a factor which arises between interpreting of the text and the concrete processing of reading text.

In the present study, the researcher adopts Muhlis (2014) definition of foreign language reading anxiety as an operational one.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Reading Comprehension Skills

Reading is one of the fundamental language abilities which add to the students' scholastic achievement. Reading ability serves a base for all learning, social and economic development and it can enhance overall language proficiency. Comprehension is the ability to comprehend the words beyond their surface meaning and to identify the relationship between various concepts presented within the text.

Reading comprehension is the process of acquiring and constructing meaning from written text. Effective readers need to implement practices such as relating their background knowledge to the text, summarizing details, drawing conclusions, and raising questions to comprehend the text (Kintsch, 2012; Kirmizi, 2010). Reading comprehension is a dynamic process between the recognition of written symbols and the understanding of the context behind the symbols, and the discovery of the link between words and concepts. It is regarded as a significant and challenging skill in the language learning process in international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL (Pellegriano & Hilton, 2012; Hung, 2015).

Scholars have made attempts to classify reading comprehension skills incorporating various parameters for their classification. An analysis of the various taxonomies tackling reading comprehension skills (Koda, 2005; Hudson, 2007) reveals three underlying categories: Literal comprehension, inferential/interpretive comprehension and critical comprehension.

According to these taxonomies, while literal comprehension focus on decoding explicit information from the text through recognition or recall of its details, interpretive/inferential skills include the use of these details for the analysis, synthesis and classification of the text-based information, enabling the reader to access additional information by mapping the text. At the higher levels of cognitive processes (critical comprehension), anticipations and hypotheses are inferred by the reader

beyond the explicit meaning, opinions are formed about the quality and accuracy of the text (Ismail, Yusof, Abdul Rashid & Lin, 2015).

Various studies focused on developing EFL learners' reading comprehension skills in different contexts and with different age groups. Mostafa, Dadour & Qoura (2019) investigated the effect of using a computer-based scaffolding strategy to enhance EFL preparatory stage students' reading skills and self-regulation. A pre-posttest of reading comprehension and Pintrich et al. (1991 & 1993) Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) were used as instruments of the study. The results of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the reading comprehension skills in addition to self-regulation in favor of the experimental group. The effect size of using a computer-based scaffolding strategy was found to be high. The study recommends using a computer-based scaffolding strategy as a technique in teaching EFL skills and as a training approach in professional development programs of EFL teachers.

Ahmed (2007) examined the effectiveness of a proposed program based on Reciprocal Teaching in developing some EFL literal, inferential, critical and creative reading comprehension skills of Egyptian first year secondary school students in Sharkeya governorate. The study results indicated that the experimental group students outperformed the control group students in overall reading comprehension as well as in every reading comprehension sub-skill. Therefore, it was recommended to train Egyptian EFL learners in the effective use of the cognitive strategies (prediction, questioning, clarifying and summarizing) to foster their reading comprehension skills.

Zahran et al. (2019) investigated the effectiveness of using electronic guided reading instruction (EGRI) program to develop EFL evaluative and creative reading comprehension skills among the preparatory stage pupils. A pre-post reading comprehension test was conducted to collect data. Results of the study revealed that EGRI program was effective in developing EFL evaluative and creative reading comprehension skills among the preparatory stage pupils.

Ghoneim (2017) investigated the effectiveness of Flipperentiated instruction in enhancing preparatory stage pupils' EFL reading comprehension skills. Participants (n=150) were divided into two

groups: control and experimental. Pre-post tests were administered to assess the participants' reading comprehension skills before and after intervention. A Flipperentiated instruction- based program was used with the experimental group whereas the control one received regular instruction. The results showed that Flipperentiated instruction proved to be effective in enhancing preparatory stage pupils' EFL reading comprehension skills.

2.2 Reading Anxiety

Foreign language reading anxiety is a specific anxiety type distinguishable from the more general types of foreign language anxiety (Subasi, 2014). Reading anxiety acts as a mediating variable that intervenes at some point between the decoding of a text and the actual processing of the textual meaning (Chow, Chiu and Wong, 2018). Learners tended to experience lower levels of reading anxiety than general classroom anxiety. Studies show that learners have differential levels of reading anxiety based on their particular target language (Horwitz, 2001).

Students may encounter foreign language reading anxiety when they read foreign language texts in order to comprehend meaning. It may bring a feeling of apprehension and worry when they see unfamiliar words or unfamiliar cultural content in a reading class (Muhlis, 2017). Reading anxiety, as a separate area of research, was rarely investigated until Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999) termed it distinct from the general classroom anxiety and said that it was a distinct research area. They further stated that during speaking interaction, students feel nervous and their nervousness is noticeable. However, during reading, the students may have anxiety but observers can hardly notice it. The presence of an unnoticeable anxiety among the students is one of the factors that impede their reading comprehension of a non-native language text (Saito, Garza and Horwitz 1999).

The EFL reading anxiety is divided into three levels: top-down, bottom-up and classroom reading anxiety (Zoghi and Alivandivafa, 2014; Zoghi, 2012). Guimba and Alico (2015) stated that top-down reading anxiety is caused when students are not able to recognize specific details and the main idea of the text. The students are unfamiliar about the cultural content reflected in the text so they may have anxiety about it. At the bottom-up reading anxiety level, students may have

anxiety when the vocabulary in the text is uncommon and incomprehensible, and grammatical structures are complex. Finally, students may encounter classroom reading anxiety when the teacher corrects them in a critical way when they read the text aloud. The students may see it negatively if teacher corrects the mistakes committed by the students.

There has been plenty of research conducted on the reading anxiety, its factors, and effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Ghaith (2020) investigated the direct and indirect roles of foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) and metacognitive reading strategies in the reading comprehension of college EFL learners enrolled in the American university of Beirut, Lebanon. Data were collected using a reading comprehension test, the Survey of Reading Strategies Scale (SORS), and the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). Results revealed that global and problem-solving strategies were positively related to EFL reading comprehension, but not mediated by FLRA. Conversely, FLRA negatively impacted comprehension and mediated support strategies. Pedagogical implications underscore the need for integrating instruction in the global and problem-solving strategies as well as using humanistic approaches in teaching EFL reading in order to enhance comprehension and decrease FLRA.

Ghonsoolym and Loghmani (2012) investigated the relationship between university EFL learners' foreign language reading anxiety levels and their use of reading strategies. Participants were asked to answer the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) and the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS). The results indicated no significant relationship between their FLRAS scores and SORS scores. However further analysis of descriptive data revealed that actually there are some differences in their reading strategy use. Accordingly, low anxiety students used global and problem-solving reading strategies more frequently while high anxiety students applied support strategies more often.

Um et al. (2014) explored the sources of English reading anxiety among third year EFL learners at the Institute of Foreign Languages Cambodia. Qualitative analysis found linguistic features of texts, environment, personal traits of readers, and physical look of texts, time constraints and teachers to be the major causal factors of the participants' English reading anxiety. Linguistic features of the text that cause reading

anxiety include difficult vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, uninteresting topics, lengthy and detailed topics and complicated grammatical structures.

Abbasnezhad and Zoghi (2016) investigated the effectiveness of reading instructional approach called Modified Collaborative Strategic Reading (MCSR) on reducing intermediate EFL learner's reading anxiety. Based on a pretest-posttest design, MCSR was implemented with 64 EFL learners at intermediate level. They received EFL reading instruction according to MCSR over two and a half months. A questionnaire called English as a Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory was administered at the pretest and the posttest. Quantitative results indicated that the participants demonstrated significant gains in reducing reading anxiety. This study highlighted the effectiveness of MCSR program and elaborated the effects of using strategies like MCSR in reducing reading anxiety among EFL learners as non-native students.

2.3 Story Pyramid Strategy (SPS)

There are numerous strategies that help instructors to be more interested of teaching English language. One of the foremost pursuits of instructors is creating a project with students to strengthen their better thinking. SPS is one of these strategies. SPS encourages students' critical questioning through analyzing the story from the handy level to the challenging, depending on the significant events of the pyramid SPS is a structured layout that allows students to summarize the crucial points of the story. It obliges students to evaluate and summarize the fundamental factors of the story as a pyramid after whole their reading (Jonson, 2005).

According to Macon, et al. (1991) SPS helps students pinpoint highlight of a story and describe the important parts of using a limited number of words. The requirement of brief responses could stretch students' thinking and it is fun. It means that, the description of important information from a story, such as the main character, the setting, and the major events in the plot can be comprehended by using story pyramid. The purpose of this strategy is to provide opportunities for students to practice reading skill with the teacher. The strategy helps students to comprehend the text. This strategy is used after reading activity. Tankersley (2003) stated that, after reading a text, students focus on clarifying their understandings and connecting the new knowledge to prior knowledge. Teachers can help students verify

predictions, organize information, and summarize, classify, or otherwise process the information at deeper levels of understanding.

SPS is a multiple usage strategy; it can be applied as a pre, mid, or after reading activity. It promotes integral evaluation of a story and the particular use of language to describe definite components of text grammar. SPS is a high-quality reading skill that assists students to draw on their information of each story shape and story language. Students write a précis of the story, using a set of range of words for several factors of the story. Their writing is equipped in the form of a triangle a requisite sample. Story pyramid strategy enables students to select intelligently, thus will refine their oral language and vocabulary (Kimbell-Lopez and Cummins, 2010).

Furthermore, a story pyramid is a structured format students use to summarize the most important parts of a story. This strategy forces students to review and summarize the main points of a story. The procedure in this strategy is after reading, students summarize the main aspects of the story in a pyramid form with eight lines. The teacher may write instruction on the board, provide a handout with instruction on it, or read instruction line by line, leaving time for students to write before heading instruction (Jonson, 2006).

According to Trezek et al. (2009), SPS is one of the graphic organizers which is considered as a successful pedagogical instrument. It is used to facilitate students' comprehension of new acquired knowledge and to organize thoughts and content. The idea of story pyramid strategy based on how students can understand the text and summarize it as points or ideas then build these ideas in a fun way as a pyramid. Students expected to find the essential idea from the text or problem through SPS. SPS is an excellent format to persuade students to develop their comprehension monitoring, generate questions and answers, summarize and recognize story structure, and stretch thinking about what they are reading.

Jonson (2005, p. 184) presented the story pyramid procedures as follows:

1. The instructor read the story or any narrative text then, asks the class to make a summary implying all the important keys of the story in a pyramid shape with eight lines. (The numbers of the rows could be increased depending on the length of the text).

2. All instructions should be written on the board. It is helpful to read these instructions by the instructor himself.
3. Directing students to epitomize the events of story or any narrative text in the form of a pyramid of eight lines.
4. Ask students to generate a story pyramid as a class.
5. Have students regenerate pyramids in pairs or small groups for a story they have read.
6. Use the accomplished pyramids as the basis for discussion.

A few studies have recently focused on story pyramid strategy as an instructional intervention, the literature is rather scarce, and the findings are yet inconclusive. Agustiningasih (2014) investigated the effect of using story pyramid strategy on summary writing achievement of narrative text of the eighth grade students at SMPN 4 Jember, Indonesia. The research data were collected from the students' English scores in middle semester. The findings of the study showed that there was significant effect of using story pyramid strategy on the participants' summary writing achievement of narrative text.

Moreover, Mawadda (2016) investigated the effect of using story pyramid strategy on reading comprehension achievement among Eighth Grade Students of SMP Negeri 12 Palembang. The research used quasi-experimental design. Findings revealed that there was a significant difference between participants' mean scores on the reading comprehension pre-posttests favoring posttest after using story pyramid strategy.

Ali (2021) investigated the effect of story pyramid strategy on the performance of EFL university students in reading comprehension. The sample of the study included forty male college students. Results showed that there was statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups in favor of the experimental group. This means that the experimental group students have shown to be better in their reading comprehension because they have been educated by the Story Pyramid Strategy.

3. Method and Procedures

3.1. Design of the study

In the present study, the researcher adopted the pre-posttest quasi-experimental one group design. This group was tested before and after implementing the experiment. Also, the analytical descriptive method was used with regard to reviewing the literature related to the variables of the study.

3.2. Participants of the study

The participants of the present study were 36 first year preparatory stage EFL pupils in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022.

3.3. Instruments and Materials

The researcher prepared and used the following instruments in order to fulfill the aims of the present study:-

3.3.1 The Reading Comprehension Skills Checklist

The current study concerned with the EFL reading comprehension skills which are included in the English language syllabus presented to first year preparatory stage EFL pupils, the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022.

To ensure the validity of the EFL reading skills checklist, in its initial version, it was submitted to a jury of experts in EFL methodology .They were requested to judge the checklist validity in terms of clarity and suitability for the pupils' level. All the jury members indicated that the checklist items were clear and appropriate. For the final version of the reading comprehension skills list, see (Appendix 1).

3.3.2 The Reading Comprehension Skills Test

3.3.2.1 Test Description

The reading comprehension skills test (Appendix 2), aimed to test the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' reading comprehension skills the present study is concerned with. The test consists of three short reading passages. They were adapted from the internet and suit the level of first year preparatory EFL pupils. The first and second passages had ten multiple-choice items; five items for each reading passage. The third passage had five true or false questions. The test total score was 15 marks (1 mark for each item). The reading comprehension skills test was

piloted by administering it to 30 first year preparatory stage EFL pupils (they were not included in the study group), in order to determine the suitability of the test for the participants, the simplicity/difficulty of the test items, the clarity of the test instructions, and the time allotted for the test. The average time needed for the students to answer the test was calculated. The total time was divided by students' number. It was twenty-two minutes.

3.3.2.2 Test Validity and Reliability

The test was given to EFL jurors to judge its validity. The EFL jurors agreed that the test is valid and measures the intended reading comprehension skills. In addition, the validity coefficient of the reading comprehension skills test was calculated using the square root of the reliability coefficient. Based on that, the test validity coefficient was (.74) which is considered acceptable. Thus, the test is valid and can measure pupils' reading comprehension skills before and after intervention. Moreover, the test-retest method was used to estimate the test reliability. The students were first tested on the 3rd of October 2021. Two weeks later, they were retested. The correlation coefficient was (0.75).

3.3.3 The Reading Anxiety Scale

In the present study, the researcher prepared a reading anxiety scale in light of the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) developed by Saito, Garza, & Horwitz (1999). The reading anxiety scale elicits students' self-reports of anxiety over various aspects of reading, their perceptions of reading difficulties in their target language. The reading anxiety scale, used in the present study, contains 14 Likert-scale items scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from (1 to 5). The participants were asked to indicate whether they (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree with the statements of the scale.

The reading anxiety scale was used before the implementation of the story pyramid strategy based program to measure the level of pupils' reading anxiety. Moreover, the scale was used after the implementation of the story pyramid strategy based program in order to investigate the effect of using the story pyramid strategy in decreasing the pupils' reading anxiety.

3.3.3.1 Validity

To achieve the content validity of the reading anxiety scale, it was submitted to a panel of EFL jurors and experts. The jurors were asked to judge the scale face validity in terms of clarity of items and suitability for the participants' level. All jury members indicated that the reading anxiety scale is clear and suitable for the participants of the present study and valid for measuring their foreign language reading anxiety.

3.3.3.2 Reliability

The test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the reading anxiety scale. It was administered to a group of first year preparatory stage EFL pupils (N=30), then it was administered to the same group again after two weeks. The Pearson correlation between the two administrations was (.79). This means that the reading anxiety scale is a reliable tool to measure the participants' foreign language reading anxiety.

3.3.3.3 Scoring the Reading Anxiety Scale

Under the guidance and help of the researcher, the participants were asked to complete the reading anxiety scale and choose one of the options ((5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree). The student who chooses 'strongly agree' with all statements will receive a score of five for each of the fourteen statements. Such a student will receive a total score of seventy marks, the maximum score possible. A student, who chooses 'agree' to all statements, will receive a score of four for each statement or a total score of fifty-six marks and so on. The high the student's score is, the high is his reading anxiety.

3.3.4 The Story Pyramid Strategy-based Program

The aim of the story pyramid strategy-based program was to help first year preparatory stage EFL pupils develop their reading comprehension skills and reduce their reading anxiety. The story pyramid strategy-based program was implemented in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. The program lasted for 6 weeks and consisted of seven sessions; each of which took 2 hours. The first session was devoted to the introduction and procedures of the story pyramid strategy for the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils. The remaining

sessions were instructional sessions through which the pupils were trained to use multiple techniques and participate in different activities designed specifically to encourage them use the story pyramid strategy to develop their reading comprehension skills and reduce reading anxiety. For the final form of the story pyramid strategy-based program used in the present study, see appendix (4).

4. Results of the Study

The results of the current study are presented in light of the hypotheses of the study using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. The results are stated as follows:

4.1. Hypotheses (1)

The first hypothesis states that “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post”.

The following table presents students’ mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttests.

Table (1): The t-value, mean scores, standard deviations, and level of significance on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttests.

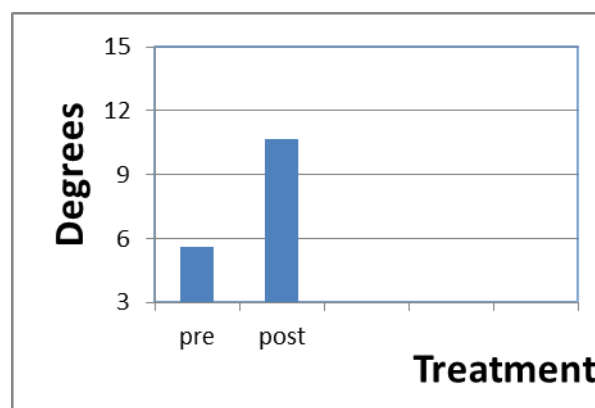
Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	S.D	T- Value	D.F	Sig.
Overall reading comprehension skills	Pre	36	5.63	.86	26.04	35	0.05
	Post	36	10.66	.98			

As table (1) indicates, the mean score of the study participants on the overall reading comprehension skills posttest is higher than their mean score on the pre-test, where “t-value” is (26.04) which is significant at the (0.05) level of significance. Consequently, the first hypothesis was confirmed.

The results of the first hypothesis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study participants on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttest in favor of the post. As indicated in table (1), the study participants showed more development in their overall reading comprehension skills in the post assessment than in the pre assessment. This proved and confirmed

the first hypothesis statistically. This development as indicated in Figure (1) can be related to the administration of the story pyramid strategy-based program.

Figure (1): The mean scores of the study participants on the overall reading comprehension skills pre-posttests



The effect size of the story pyramid strategy-based program is indicated in the following table:

Table (2): The effect size of the story pyramid strategy -based program on the overall reading comprehension skills

Skill	t-value	d-value	Effect size
Overall reading comprehension skills	26.04	4.34	Large

As indicated in table (2), the development of the study participants' overall reading comprehension skills can be related to the use of the story pyramid strategy -based program which is found to be effective in developing pupils' overall reading comprehension skills.

4.2. Hypotheses (2)

The second hypothesis states that “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the literal comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post”.

The following table presents students' mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance on the literal reading comprehension skills pre-posttests.

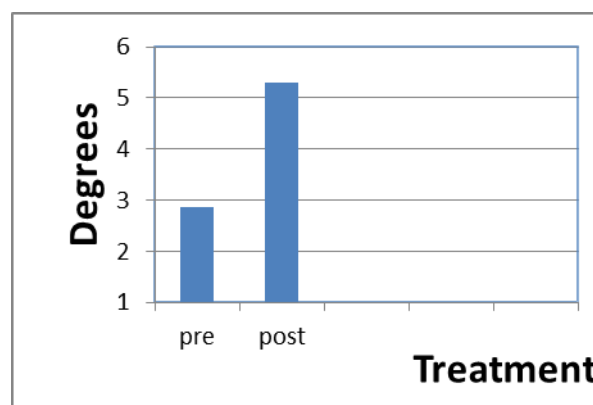
Table (3): The t-value, mean scores, standard deviations, and level of significance on the literal comprehension skills pre-posttests.

Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	S.D	T- Value	D.F	Sig.
Literal comprehension skills	Pre	36	2.86	.72	15.13	35	0.05
	Post	36	5.30	.70			

As table (3) indicates, the mean score of the study participants on the literal comprehension skills posttest is higher than their mean score on the pre-test, where “t-value” is (15.13) which is significant at the (0.05) level of significance. Consequently, the second hypothesis was confirmed.

The results of the second hypothesis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study participants on the literal reading comprehension skills pre-posttest in favor of the post. As indicated in table (3), the study participants showed more development in their literal reading comprehension skills in the post assessment than in the pre assessment. This proved and confirmed the second hypothesis statistically. This development as indicated in Figure (2) can be related to the administration of the story pyramid strategy-based program.

Figure (2): The mean scores of the study participants on the literal comprehension skills pre-posttests



The effect size of the story pyramid strategy-based program is indicated in the following table:

Table (4): The effect size of the story pyramid strategy -based program on the literal comprehension skills

Skill	t-value	d-value	Effect size
Literal comprehension skills	15.13	2.52	Large

As indicated in table (4), the development of the study participants' literal comprehension skills can be related to the use of the story pyramid strategy -based program which is found to be effective in developing pupils' literal comprehension skills.

4.3. Hypotheses (3)

The third hypothesis states that "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttests in favor of the post".

The following table presents students' mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttests.

Table (5): The t-value, mean scores, standard deviations, and level of significance on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttests.

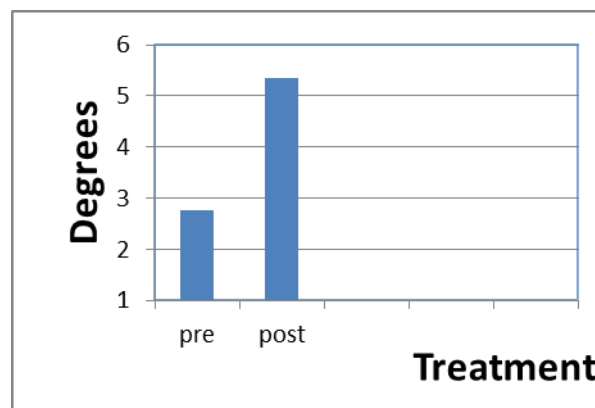
Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	S.D	T- Value	D.F	Sig.
Inferential comprehension skills	Pre	36	2.77	.68	19.22	35	0.05
	Post	36	5.36	.63			

As table (5) indicates, the mean score of the study participants on the inferential comprehension skills posttest is higher than their mean score on the pre-test, where "t-value" is (19.22) which is significant at the (0.05) level of significance. Consequently, the third hypothesis was confirmed.

The results of the third hypothesis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study

participants on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttest in favor of the post. As indicated in table (5), the study participants showed more development in their inferential comprehension skills in the post assessment than in the pre assessment. This proved and confirmed the third hypothesis statistically. This development as indicated in Figure (3) can be related to the administration of the story pyramid strategy-based program.

Figure (3): The mean scores of the study participants on the inferential comprehension skills pre-posttests



The effect size of the story pyramid strategy-based program is indicated in the following table:

Table (6): The effect size of the story pyramid strategy -based program on the inferential comprehension skills

Skill	t-value	d-value	Effect size
Inferential comprehension skills	19.22	3.20	Large

As indicated in table (6), the development of the study participants' inferential comprehension skills can be related to the use of the story pyramid strategy -based program which is found to be effective in developing pupils' inferential comprehension skills.

4.4. Hypotheses (4)

The fourth hypothesis states that "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre

and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale in favor of the pre-administration”.

The following table presents students’ mean scores, standard deviations, t-value and level of significance in the pre and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale.

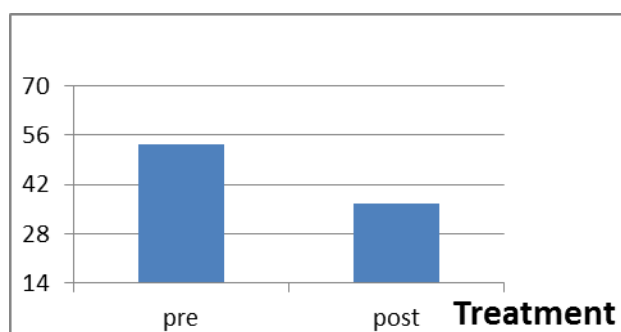
Table (7): The t-value, mean scores, standard deviations, and level of significance in the pre and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale

Scale	Measurement	N	Mean	S.D	T- Value	D.F	Sig.
Reading anxiety scale	Pre	36	53.47	2.04	33.02	35	0.05
	Post	36	36.44	2.99			

As table (7) indicates, the mean score of the study participants in the pre-administration of the reading anxiety scale is higher than their mean score in the post-administration, where “t-value” is (33.02) which is significant at the (0.05) level of significance. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed.

The results of the fourth hypothesis indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale in favor of the pre-administration. Table (7) indicated that t-value was significant at 0.05 level. This proved and supported the fourth hypothesis statistically. Figure (4) illuminates these results:

Figure (4): The mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post administrations of the reading anxiety scale



The present study focused on reducing the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils’ reading anxiety through the offered activities, tasks, and exercises in the story pyramid strategy-based program. These

activities provided opportunities for pupils to practice reading skills and comprehend the text. Also, using story pyramid strategy-based program, pupils focused on clarifying their understandings and connecting the new knowledge to prior knowledge, verifying predictions, organizing information, and processing the information at deeper levels of understanding. As a result, the post assessment has indicated that the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' reading anxiety was reduced due to the influence of the story pyramid strategy-based program. The following table presents the effect size of the story pyramid strategy-based program on the study participants' reading anxiety:

Table (8): The effect size of the story pyramid strategy -based program on the study participants' reading anxiety

Scale	t-value	d-value	Effect size
Reading anxiety	33.02	5.50	Large

5. Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to develop reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among first year preparatory stage EFL pupils through using the story pyramid strategy-based program. The program offered a more dynamic and learner-centered framework for language acquisition among the study participants through various purposeful and well-designed reading activities and tasks. The results of the present study showed that the story pyramid strategy-based program has improved the study participants' reading comprehension skills and reduced reading anxiety. These improvements can be due to the effectiveness of using the story pyramid strategy-based program, and the activities and tasks offered through the sessions, to the study participants.

Using story pyramid strategy facilitated first year preparatory stage EFL pupils' comprehension of new acquired knowledge and organization of thoughts and content. Moreover, the story pyramid strategy helped the pupils understand the reading text and summarize it as points or ideas then build these ideas in a fun way as a pyramid. The story pyramid strategy-based program persuaded the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils to develop their comprehension

monitoring, generating questions and answering, recognizing story structure, summarizing, and stretching thinking about what they are reading.

In addition, the story pyramid strategy-based program helped the first year preparatory stage EFL pupils promote integral evaluation of a story and the particular use of language to describe definite components of text grammar and draw on their information of each story shape and story language. First year preparatory stage EFL pupils wrote a précis of the given stories, using a set of range of words for several factors of the story. Their writing is equipped in the form of a triangle a requisite sample. The SPS enabled students to select intelligently, thus will refine their oral language and vocabulary.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the results of some recent studies (e.g., Mawadda, 2016; Ali, 2021) which have documented that story pyramid strategy lead to developing students' reading comprehensions skills. These studies have provided evidence that the story pyramid strategy was effective in developing reading comprehensions skills. Moreover, the present study confirms the effectiveness of the story pyramid strategy in reducing first year preparatory stage pupils' reading anxiety.

6. Conclusion

The current study investigated the effect of using story pyramid strategy on developing reading comprehension skills and reducing reading anxiety among preparatory stage EFL pupils. Results indicated that the pupils' reading comprehension skills was developed, and their reading anxiety was reduced as a result of using the story pyramid strategy-based program. The results of the current study show that the story pyramid strategy may be regarded as a means to help pupils acquire and develop reading comprehension skills. Through story pyramid strategy, teachers can help students to develop their comprehension monitoring, generate questions and answers, summarize and recognize story structure, and stretch thinking about what they are reading.

7. Recommendations of the Study

In light of the results of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Reading comprehension skills and reading anxiety should be given more attention when designing English language programs.
2. Training English language teachers on the use of the story pyramid strategy in teaching reading skills to their students.
3. Training EFL students on the use of the story pyramid strategy to develop their reading comprehension skills.
4. Training EFL students on the use of the story pyramid strategy to reduce their reading anxiety.
5. EFL teachers should clarify the importance of EFL reading comprehension skills to their students. In addition, they should illustrate the importance of the story pyramid strategy as it helps the students to develop their comprehension monitoring, generate questions and answers, summarize and recognize story structure, and stretch thinking about what they are reading.

8. Suggestions for Further Research

Within the delimitations and results of the present study, the following points are suggested for further research:

- Investigating the effect of a story pyramid strategy-based program on developing reading comprehension skills among primary stage pupils.
- Investigating the effect of a story pyramid strategy-based program on developing reading comprehension skills among secondary stage students.
- Investigating the effect of a story pyramid strategy-based program on developing other language skills e.g. writing and speaking.
- Finding out the effect of a story pyramid strategy-based program on developing students' attitudes towards language learning.

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