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**The Impact of Task Based Learning Strategy on Enhancing
Some EFL Creative Reading Skills of Secondary Stage Students**

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Abstract

The Impact of Task Based Learning Strategy On Enhancing some EFL Creative Reading Skills and Linguistic Cultural Awareness of Secondary Stage Students

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This study aimed at investigating the effect of the task based learning strategy on enhancing EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness of secondary stage students. The researcher adopted quasi-experimental design of two groups: control (n=20) and experimental (n=20). The participants were (40) students from Rabee Fallah secondary school in, Diarb Negm, Sharkia, who were equally divided in to an experimental and control groups . The experimental group was taught by the task based learning strategy while the control group received regular instructions in the second term of the academic year (2022-2023). The experiment lasted for 8 weeks. The researcher carried out 10 sessions; each session took about 60 minutes. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher designed a questionnaire for determining some creative reading skills and a scale for determining the most important linguistic cultural awareness dimensions approved by a penal of jury. Based on these creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness dimension, a pre-post creative reading test and linguistic cultural awareness scale were designed. The data obtained were statistically treated through the SPSS program. Results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group as a result of adopting this strategy.

Key words: EFL task based learning strategy, creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness.

Background and the problem

Reading is a lifelong skill that is done every day by everyone consciously or unconsciously. Readers can spend hours a day in reading, while others just need some minutes. Whatever they do, no matter how long they read, and whatever the purpose, they should enjoy their reading activities. Enjoying the reading time can affect student's understanding toward reading texts, and take readers to the level of creative reading by revealing some ideas and using their own words that can give contribution to their own lives and others as well. When people read, they make words real, put themselves in the places and situations that are described in the text, play with meanings and act out scenes in their heads

Reading is a creative process. While reading creatively, no two people read the same text in the same way. Every one brings his/her own set of expectations experiences and viewpoints. What occurs is a dialogue between a reader and a writer. A reader takes what a writer gives him/her and makes it his/her own. Readers do not only gain knowledge from reading. they acquire emotional depth and subtlety of response. When people read creatively; they put themselves in the places and situations that are described in a text, they play with meanings and act out scenes in their heads. Creative reading is an ignored area of the reading skills. Most textbooks devote little or no space to it and when they do so, it is usually incorporated with critical reading. Yet, it is an area that deserves special emphasis, special treatment and special techniques. (Guniran, 2013)

Creative reading skills—fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration / expansion (e.g., Barrett, 2001; Flynn, 1997; Plakans, 2009), “coupled with an ability to navigate information sources and to synthesize experience into

learning”—are rudimentary for young readers to get the most out of their lives (Holden, 2004, p. 19). A creative learner can delve into the reading text to grasp relations, generate ideas, make realistic inferences, and solve potential problems through connecting recalled information with his or her imaginative abilities (Kabilan, 2000; Rababah et al., 2013; Schnur & Marmor, 2009). Alternative strategies have long been sought to teach reading for better comprehension.

In fact, up till now creative reading is neglected in EFL teaching. Frequently, EFL teachers are unaware of the need for developing it and the methods with which it can be accomplished. Generally, EFL reading is taught through methods which stress lower levels of reading while a creative reader should be capable of more than this. S/he possesses the ability to examine the relationship among facts and interpretations. (Miller & Spellmeyer 2011)

Wang (2012) asserted that the characteristics that facilitate creativity can be developed through reading or writing activities and practices such as thinking, remembering, reasoning, feeling curious, exploring and freedom of expression. This is because reading and writing often require critical, analytical and self expressive abilities, as well as a sense of self discovery.

Rababah et al. (2013) explored the level of creativity in EFL writing among Jordanian secondary school students. Participants were 100 students of secondary school students in Irbid and Amman cities in Jordan. Adapted Torrance Test of EFL Creative Thinking was used to measure their creativity in EFL writing. The test assesses fluency, flexibility, and assess originality. Results showed that the respondents fall in the moderate level of creativity.

Albaker (2014) aimed at evaluating EFL creative reading level of the first preparatory class in Riyadh. A list of first preparatory class EFL creative reading

skills and an EFL achievement test were constructed and administered to measure assess parts performance level in creative reading. They consisted of 123. Results of the study revealed that the participants' performance was low and not satisfying.

Ebrahim (2017) clarified that EFL creative reading is the ability to personalize natural phenomena by using as many personal qualities as possible, mentioning all the characteristics of someone to express opinions, suggest different titles for a story, producing various questions about information that is not directly mentioned in the text, thinking reflectively to generate more ideas for interest or clarity.

Isiksalan (2018) clarified that the processes of creative reading consist of four stages: creational memory, analogy, unsubstantial analogy and analysis by arranging. Creational memory includes perceptual and cognitive and mental skills.

Yurdakal (2019) indicated that creative reading can be characterized as reading to make inferences, imply, give appropriate reactions and make critical judgment.

Nunan is one of the few authors, who integrated task-based learning to communicative teaching. The following features characterize Nunan's approach to language teaching:

- 1- An assurance of learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- 2- The introduction of authentic texts in learning situations.
- 3- The provision of chances for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning tactic itself.
- 4- An increase of the learner's own experiences as vital contributing elements to classroom learning.

5- An attempt to link the classroom language learning process with language activities outside the classroom (Nunan, 1991).

These characteristics reflect Nunan's adoption of task-based learning and how it leads to better communication inside and outside the classroom. He gives examples of tasks which help in achieving communication: problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, jigsaw, role- plays, simulations, oral discussions, and project work.

Tasks include some forms of input that may be verbal or nonverbal, followed by an activity which is obtained from the input. These activities demand learners to engage in activities concerning the input. Tasks have goals and roles for both educators and students.

Nunan (2004: 41) pointed out that, course designers should consider the following elements when designing a task: goals, input, and setting.

Goals refer to the common intentions behind any learning task. Nunan provides a link between tasks and curriculum. Goals relate to general outcomes or may directly describe the teachers' or learners' behavior. Nunan (2004:42) outlined that communicative goals in a curriculum suggest that language is utilized for establishing and preserving interpersonal relationships and for the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, and feelings to get things done. This includes listening, reading and responding to the imaginative use of target languages such as stories, poems, songs, dramas or learners' creations.

Input refers to the spoken, written and visual data that learners work within the course of completing a task. Data can be provided by a teacher, a textbook or another source. Alternatively, it can be generated by the learners themselves. Input can come from a wide domain of sources, including letters, menus, postcards, bus timetables, picture stories or hotel entertainment courses. Setting refers to the classroom order specified or implied in the task. It requires consideration of

whether a task is to be implemented wholly or partly outside the classroom. It is useful to differentiate between mode and environment when setting tasks. Mode refers to whether the learner is operating on an individual, pair or group basis. Environment refers to where the learning happens. It may be in a conventional classroom in a school, a language center, a community class, a workplace setting, a self-access center or a multi-media language center.

According to Willis (2012), task-based language teaching comprises three steps in its structural framework. The first step is to raise the students' consciousness and also introduce students with the subject and task; this is called the pre-task cycle. The teacher explores the topic with the students, highlights useful words, phrases and helps them understand task instruction. Here, the teacher may use a picture, make use of a recording or even a text as a lead into a task. The second step is named task cycle, which includes three parts; those are tasks, planning, and report. In the planning, students do the task; it can be pairs or small groups. The students are free to experiment without the teacher's intervention, since the teacher monitors from a distance, encourages all attempts at communication, and does not correct. Mistakes don't matter; the students prepare to report to the whole class; it can be orally or in writing, what they decide or discover. Students can request teacher's help for language advice, as they will report in front of the class. The last step is named language focus which has two parts; analysis and practice. When the analysis is undergoing, the students examine and then discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording, students can enter new words, phrases, and patterns in vocabulary books. Afterward, the teacher will conduct the practice of new words, phrases, and patterns occurring in the data, either during or after the analysis.

To Nunan (2013:25), the concept of task-based is still widely misunderstood and is only slowly beginning to gain attraction in classrooms. The concept itself has evolved over the years and is only now beginning to challenge pedagogical orthodoxy. He looked at the key issues of authenticity (both text and task), content-based instruction, learning beyond the classroom, and a performance-based approach to language assessment. The task-based approach entails in common a more flexible approach in which content and tasks are developed in tandem. Task-based instruction focuses on describing the design for oral communication skills, in an academic setting. Therefore, in the task-based design of the oral communication skills the richer complexity of the tasks, the better classroom situation is, and the more institutional contexts need to be incorporated (Nunan, 1998: 16).

Noura (2015) investigated the effect of task-based approach on business students' EFL writing skills. Results showed that the task-based approach improved the EFL writing skills of the experimental in comparison to the control group which was taught using the regular teaching methodology.

Ahmed and Bidin (2016) investigated the effect of task based language teaching on writing skills of EFL learners in Malaysia. Results showed the effect of the program on developing students writing skills.

Context of the problem and the pilot study:

There is a problem in EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness despite their importance; the researcher reviewed the previous studies related to the EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness. Which revealed the actual problem in them. In addition, through classroom observation, while teaching, the researcher noticed that the problem. Attention has been focused on the form rather than meaning. The students focused only on the literal reading

comprehension. Teachers do not give their students opportunities to express their opinions and views in EFL reading text creatively. They focused only on answering the direct reading questions where the answers are stated explicitly. Students are expected to interact with one another or with their teacher.

A pilot study was conducted to check the performance of the 2nd year, secondary school students in EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness. The pilot study consisted of an EFL creative reading skills test and an EFL linguistic cultural awareness scale. The results of the pilot study revealed that they had difficulties in EFL creative reading skills and problems in EFL linguistic cultural awareness.

Table (1) Results of EFL creative reading pilot study (see appendix F)

Creative reading skills	Ss. Number	Error frequency%
1.Suggesting as many suitable titles as possible to the text.	36	90%
2.Summarizing the ideas of the reading text	25	62%
3.Predicting what will happen next.	33	82%
4.Writing a paragraph using a required list of words	31	77%
5.Producing various questions that indirectly mentioned in the text.	29	72%
6. Suggesting as many endings as	25	62%

possible to the text.		
7. Asking questions about the text.	20	50%
8. Explaining a certain paragraph from the passage.	30	75%
9. Predicting the results of specific situation.	28	70%

Reviewing the pilot study results, skills of error frequency are more than (50%) concerning creative reading. So, the problem needed to be treated. Utilizing task based learning might be an appropriate treatment for such a problem.

Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness at secondary stage, students had some problems in these areas performances as the results of the pilot study indicated. This could be attributed to the prevailing regular methods of teaching EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness. In addition, EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness were not given enough time or attention in teaching EFL to 2nd year secondary students.

Questions of the study

The current study attempted to enhance the EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness, which were necessary for the second secondary stage students through task based learning strategy. The problem of the present study could be treated by the following main question:

What is the impact of a task-based learning strategy on enhancing EFL Creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness of Secondary Stage Students?

This main question was sub-divided into the following questions:

- 1- What are the EFL creative reading skills needed for the secondary stage students?
- 2- What is the current level of the secondary stage students in EFL creative reading skills?
- 3- What are the linguistic cultural awareness dimensions?
- 4- What is the current level of the secondary stage students` EFL linguistic cultural awareness?
- 5- How can a task based learning strategy be used to enhance creative reading of secondary stage students?
- 6- How can the task based learning strategy be used to enhance linguistic cultural awareness of secondary stage students?

1.4. Purpose of the study:

The present study attempted to achieve the following aims:

- 1-Developing some second year secondary school students` EFL creative reading skills.
- 2-Developing second year secondary school students` EFL linguistic cultural awareness.
- 3- Determining the effect of task-based learning strategy on enhancing students` EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness.

1.5. Significance of the study:

This study was hopefully significant to these groups:

1-EFL Secondary School Students:

It might give those students a chance develop their EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness and overcome problems they face.

2-EFL teachers:

This study might help those teachers understand how to use the task based learning strategy for improving some EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness.

3-Curriculum developers and designers:

It might help them to utilize activities concerning promoting EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness of the secondary school students in the curriculum.

4-EFL researchers:

This study could pave the way for other researchers to conduct further studies on task based learning.

Instruments of the study

The following instruments were designed in order to achieve the purpose of the study:

1. The Creative Reading skills questionnaire.
2. The Creative Reading skills test.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to the following:

- 1) A group of students from the second year secondary students in one of the public schools in Dyarab Negm
- 2) Some EFL creative reading skills required for the second year secondary students as approved by jury members.
- 3) Some EFL cultural awareness dimensions required for the second year secondary students as approved by jury members (cultural variation-benefits of cultural awareness)
- 4) A task based learning strategy.
- 5) Rabee Fallah secondary school, Diarb Negm Educational Directorate, Sharkia Governorate.

Procedures of the study

The following procedures were traced for carrying out the study:

1. Reviewing the literature and the previous studies related to the task based learning strategy, creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness.
2. Designing the creative reading skills questionnaire and linguistic cultural awareness scale, then presenting them to jurors to verify their validity.
3. Identifying the most targeted EFL creative reading skills and linguistic cultural awareness dimensions according to the jury's panel opinions.
4. Designing the final version of the EFL creative reading skills test and EFL linguistic cultural awareness scale for implementation.
5. Validating the test and the scale.

6. Submitting the test and the scale to the jurors to verify their validity and suitability then modifying the test and the scale according to the juror's opinions in their final form.
7. Pre-administering the test and the scale to the study groups.
8. Designing the study material.
9. Implementing the task based learning strategy material to the experimental group, at the same time, teaching the control group via the regular method of teaching.
10. post-administering the test and the scale to the two groups.
11. Comparing the results of both administrations.
12. Analyzing the results statistically.
13. Interpreting the results in light of the research hypotheses.
14. Presenting conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.8. Definition of terms:

After reviewing the related literature and previous studies, the researcher adopted the following definitions as they have been comprehensive, clear and to the point

Task Based learning:

TBLT is an approach to language teaching that provides opportunities for students to engage in the authentic use of the target language through tasks. The principal component in TBLT, provides the main context and focus on learning, and it encourages language use similar to the way a language is used outside the classroom. Students learn language and develop skills as they work toward

completing the task, which motivates them to stretch their available language resources (Ellis, 2003a)

Richards and Rodgers (2014) referred to TBL as an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. AL Juheishy (2010) defines TBA as " an approach of language learning that involves doing a familiar task by using the target language.

TBLT is operationally defined as an approach in which the second year secondary school students are learning English concentrating on meaning rather than form in carrying out communicative tasks.

Creative Reading

Several authors have offered their descriptions of what exemplifies creative reading:

- Creative reading according to Moorman & Ram (1994) is “the task of reading applied to texts containing concepts which are new to the reader.”

- Creative reading goes beyond receiving meaning literally. It involves bringing one’s experience and critical thinking powers to understand, assimilate, criticize, and even suppose and predict other views to what the writer has encoded. So, it is a process and a product. (Badrawi,1998).

-Creative reading according to Abdul Latif (2006) defined it as being the readers’ ability to think of what he reads go beyond the text regarding the missed parts gaps in information, synthesize information, add thoughts to a reading selection and suggest a certain conclusion.

- Creative reading according to Holden (2009), Phyliss (2012) is the reading skills as the abilities to read for implied and inferred meanings, appreciative reactions and critical evaluation. The reader becomes an active participant and adds to what the author has written.

Creative reading is operationally defined as the abilities that the second year secondary students use to go beyond the text, to be involved inside and outside it, to pose different questions and bring new ideas to what is read.

Creative reading skills are fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. EFL creative reading skills help students brainstorm ideas, find connections among their ideas, and then organize their creative thoughts.

Linguistic Cultural awareness:

Cultural awareness is the term that describes responsiveness to the impact cultural-induced behavior both language and communication usage (Tomalin, & Stempleski, 2013).

Cultural awareness can also provide the optimal circumstances for language acquisition and exposure for language usage (Tomlinson & Musuhara, 2004).

Cultural awareness can improve the ability to appreciate affectively cultural differences and to understand the value of each culture (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013).

Linguistic cultural awareness is operationally defined as the abilities that the second year secondary students use to become aware of members of another cultural group including their behavior and value.

5. 2. Recommendations

Grounded on the previous results, the current study recommended the following points:

- For EFL creative reading:

1-Teachers should emphasize the development of the students' EFL creative reading skills in early educational stages in order to be developed throughout the following stages to prevent any possible difficulties they may face.

2-It is necessary to devote more time in TEFL to teaching EFL creative reading skills.

3-EFLcreative reading skills should receive appropriate interest in secondary schools.

4-Applying TBL is an alternative to traditional and supportive ways in teaching creative reading.

5-Training sessions for EFL teachers on how to build up and use TBL in teaching should be provided.

6-EFL teachers should be trained to utilize different strategies in teaching and testing reading.

7-EFL teachers should take into consideration some major characteristics when selecting issues for EFL creative reading skills, such as stimulating students' thinking, and encouraging them to express their opinions, thoughts and ideas.

8- Supportive feedback should be offered through TBL, not only to help students identify their weakness in EFL creative reading and ways of enhancing EFL linguistic cultural awareness during reading.

- For EFL linguistic cultural awareness:

1- In EFL classroom setting, students should be grouped in different ways based on individuals, pairs and small groups or whole class mode.

2-EFL teachers should be encouraged to implement activities that require this kind of group work to enhance linguistic cultural awareness.

3- EFL students should become the center of the learning process and should share more responsibilities in their learning.

4-EFL students should be offered opportunities to read in the class without any fear.

5-EFL students` feelings, ideas and viewpoints should be respected and stimulated to give equivalent opportunities for them to openly express what goes into their minds.

6-Teaching culture is importantly involved in EFL classroom. It is important for any institution to make a policy to imply teaching of culture in the curriculum.

7-Teaching culture is important for a teacher to help more students in the class in understanding cultural awareness. Teachers can also involve their experiences in teaching in different cultures.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

The present study proposed the following areas of research:

1. The relation between TBL and learners` linguistic attitudes.
2. The relation between TBL and other EFL skills; (speaking, writing)
3. The relation between TBL and EFL students` motivation and literacy.
4. The TBL in relation to morphological awareness.
5. The relation of TBL and developing grammatical competence in EFL context.
6. The relation between online tasks and EFL creative reading skills for students of various stages.
7. The TBL in relation to oral communication.
8. The relation of TBLT and developing EFL discourse competencies.

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