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أثر التدريس باستخدام استراتيجية التعلم التعاقدى على الفهم القرائي والتفكير الناقد لدى طلبة الفرقة الاولى
بكلية التربية

**The effects of using a contract learning strategy in teaching
faculty of education EFL First Graders upon their reading
comprehension, critical thinking and self-esteem**

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Introduction

The need for reading to identify the current revolution in information emphasizes the importance of improving reading comprehension, critical thinking and self-esteem save reader's interest and effort and increases his concentration. When the student reading comprehension skills improve, he will find time to continue reading things that he was prevented from reading in the past. Thus, it allows the reader more to enjoy with reading. Contract learning is proved to be an effective teaching strategy in teaching strategy in teaching languages as it increases learners' participation, responsibility and commitment in the learning process.

The current research study was concerned with improving first year Faculty of Education reading comprehension, critical thinking and self-esteem through using contract leaning strategy. Thus, the purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of contract learning strategy on developing first year, Faculty of Education, English majors' reading comprehension, critical thinking and self-esteem.

Statement of the problem

In order to document the problem of this research, a questionnaire was prepared and validated by a panel of teaching English as a foreign language experts. The questionnaire was administered to forty two volunteers of English majors enrolled in the first year in the academic at City of Sadat Faculty of Education. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess students' needs for developing their reading comprehension and critical thinking skills and self-esteem.

The results obtained from administering the questionnaire together with the researcher's interviews with first year English majors show that most first year English majors have low level of reading comprehension, critical thinking skills ; hence, they need improvement. This is what the present study will try to do.

Questions of Study:

- 1- what is the effect of using a contract learning strategy developing city of sadat faculty of education English major reading comprehension
- 2- what is the effect of using a contract learning strategy developing city of sadat faculty of education English major critical thinking skills
- 3- what is the effect of using a contract learning strategy developing city of sadat faculty of education English major self-esteem

Objectives of Study :

The present study will attempt to identify the effects of using a learning contract strategy upon:

1. Developing Faculty of Education university of Sadat City English majors 'reading comprehension skills
2. Developing Faculty of Education university of Sadat City English majors critical thinking skills.
3. Developing Faculty of Education university of Sadat City English majors self-esteem

Significance of Study:

The present study seeks to improve the reading comprehension critical thinking skills of faculty of Education English majors at **City of Sadat University**. In so doing, students will have access to understand the different pieces of literature they will have to study all the way long until they will have finished up and graduated. Also expected is the improvement of participants self-esteem as a result of the good scores they are expected to get after being taught by the learning contract strategy

Hypotheses of the study

- 1- There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for reading comprehension skills for the first year English majors students.
- 2- There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for critical thinking skills for the first year English majors students.

- 3- There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for self-esteem for the first year English majors students.
- 4- There are no significant correlations among reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test for the first year English majors students.
- 5- There are no significant differences between male and female for reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in pre- and post-test for the first year English majors students.

Delimitations of Study:

The present study will be confined to the following.

- Faculty of Education university of Sadat City first year English majors
- Only the dependent variables of reading comprehension, critical thinking skills , and self-esteem.
- The second semester of the academic year 2017/2018

Definition of Terms:

a. Learning contract

According to Schwarzer, D, and Robert E. Kahn, and Kristi Smart (2003) a learning Contract is a specific agreement between the student and teacher and/or parents that allows opportunities for various choices in exploring, learning, applying and completing a product within certain specifications. It is used to expand, enrich and extend the essential curriculum. The Learning Contract provides differentiated opportunities according to Learning Styles which help define interests and abilities

In this study, the operational definition of learning contract is a guide to monitor and direct the student's learning and the instructor's teaching. It is a joint process and negotiated agreement between the student, the instructor in which the student agrees to achieve particular objectives in a particular time.

b. Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message

Critical thinking

critical thinking as the process of using reasoning to discern what is true, and what is false, in the phrases and 'sound bytes' we hear every day.

Self-Esteem:

"The self-concept is what we think about the self; self-esteem, is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it

Material and Method

The learning contract is typically completed in a meeting between the student and instructor. While there are many possible variations on the learning contract, they often contain these components (Frank & Scharff, 2013; Greenwood & McCabe, 2008): However, the researcher will prepare lessons based on the learning strategy.

Sample:

One group selected randomly from among first year English majors enrolled in the reading course at Faculty of Education, university of Sadat City. Consisted of 33 students

Variables:

- a. The independent variable will be the learning contract strategy
- b. The dependent variables will be reading comprehension, critical reading skills, and self-esteem

Duration of Experiment:

Duration of the present study at the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018

Instruments of Study:

The research will prepare the following instruments to achieve the objectives of the present study; these are:

- a. The learning contract strategy
- b. A pre-post reading comprehension
- c. A pre-post critical thinking skills test
- d. A pre-post self-esteem scale

Procedure :

1. Reviewing the literature related to all the variable of study
2. Writing the learning contract strategy and validating it by a panel of EFL specialists.
3. Preparing and standardizing the pre-post reading comprehension test
4. Preparing and standardizing the pre-post critical thinking test
5. Preparing and standardizing the self-esteem scale
6. Pre-testing
7. Teaching the reading content
8. Post testing
9. Getting the data and statistically analyzing them
10. Discussing the results
11. Writing the conclusion, recommendation, and suggestions of further studies

Review:

Brunton. E (2004) declares that as education is a joint venture between faculty and students, students must involve themselves in their class-work and take advantage of the opportunities and resources provided by the educational institution. To this end contracting with students can educate them on their responsibilities and demonstrate their accountability in the learning situation. It

may help students to view themselves as ‘professional students’ with set tasks and responsibilities.

Frank & Scharff (2013).state that a learning contract is a voluntary, student-completed document that outlines actions the learner promises to take in a course to achieve academic success. This contract is signed by the student, the instructor, and (optionally) the parent. Benefits of all such contracts, however, are that they provide academic structure and support, motivate struggling learners by having them pledge publicly to engage in specific, positive study and learning behaviors.

The strategy of contract learning has been used in the field of education in the general and teaching English in particular (Ali, 2007). Many studies have confirmed the effectiveness of learning contracts on developing and improvement second language learning. Ali (2007) investigated the students` accomplish and attitudes towards the English language in particular. The sample of the study was 41 graduate students registered in the special diplome, in the Faculty of Education, Benha University, Egypt. The results of this study showed that the subjects ‘seriousness and commitment to the learning contract motivated them and they, as a result, scored highly on the achievement test. Most topic posted positive attitudes toward English.

Moon (2007) explained the extent of the impaction on contract learning could facilitate individualized learning. The sample included four international graduate students of different background with respect to their main study, first language, and pervious writing experiences. The result showed that contract learning could be an effective tool to handle these diverse writing needs and facilitate the students learning specific-field writing in English for academic purposes.

Slogeriene (2006)explored learning contracts in self-directed language learning with a view of its structure the learning process and sign up the progress students make. The results showed that students’ progress should be registered in some form to enhanced responsibility for their studies. Additionally, there was an important linked between structure and power and student`s motivation and responsibility.

Anderson and Boud (1996:225) state that learning contracts have the following advantages:

- 1- Support individualized learning and flexible learning.
- 2- Enhance self-reflection, learning to learn and self-managment.
- 3- Provide learners with clear goals and pathways for achieving these, bases on their own learning needs.

Reading comprehension:

Reading comprehension is the basis of the reading process, which is the most important of its gains, its skills, and the value of reading without understanding .therefore, many studies seek to develop their multiple skills in different ways and method, In the this framework comes this study; which deals with the reading comprehension in this section in terms of its concepts, importance, processes, elements, principles, levels and skills

Reading comprehension involves two levels of processing, shallow (low-level) processing and deep (high-level) processing. Deep processing involves semantic processing, which happens when we encode the meaning of a word and relate it to similar words. Shallow processing involves structural and phonemic recognition, the processing of sentence and word structure and their associated sounds. This theory was first identified by Craik Lockhart (1972: 671-684).

Improving reading comprehension skill

Good readers interact with texts to expand an understanding of the information before them. Some good reader strategies are predicting, forecasting, deducing, summarizing, examining, and evaluating. There are a lot of tasks that teachers can use them to help with reading strategies in particular content areas. The application of effective comprehension strategies is very important when learners want to improve their reading comprehension skill. These strategies provide particular instructions for expanding comprehension skills (Cain & Oakhill, 2009).

There are some useful strategies for improving reading comprehension skill. They are reciprocal teaching, instructional conversations, visualization, partner reading, multiple reading strategies, assessment, and running records. According to reciprocal teaching, teachers teach learners to predict, summarize,

clarify, and ask questions for parts of a text. These strategies have been regarded as effective strategies for developing learners' reading comprehension skill. That is, learners will develop stronger reading comprehension skills on their own if teachers give them mental instruments for understanding a text (Pressley, 2006).

Visualization is a mental image created in a readers' mind while reading a text which brings words to life and helps them improve their reading comprehension skill. Asking sensory questions can help learners become better visualizers. Partner reading is a strategy that is created for pairs. Teachers select two suitable books for their learners to read. Learners should first read their own book. Once they have finished this, they are given the chance to write down their own general questions for their partners. Learners read books out loud to one another and ask one another questions about the book they read. This strategy can provide a model of fluent reading and helps learners learn decoding skills by presenting positive feedback and direct chances for teachers to circulate in the class, watch their learners, and present individual corrections (Bell, 2009).

Tompkins (2011) expressed that there are informal and formal assessments to check an individual's comprehension skill and utilization of comprehension strategies. Informal assessments are done by observation and the use of instruments such as story boards, word sorts, and interactive writing. Formal assessments are district or state assessments that assess all learners on significant skills.

Critical thinking:

Critical thinking is not a set of skills that can be deployed at any time, in any context. It is a type of thought that even 3-year-olds can engage in—and even trained scientists can fail in.

Critical thinking consists of seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth. Then too, there are specific types of critical thinking that are characteristic of different subject matter: That's what we mean when we refer to "thinking like a scientist" or "thinking like a historian." (Taconis, R., et., al., 2001)

Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a positive outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is

purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed - the kind of thinking involved in problem solving, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task. Critical thinking also involves evaluating the thinking process - the reasoning that went into the conclusion we've arrived at the kinds of factors considered in making a decision. Critical thinking is sometimes called directed thinking because it focuses on a desired Outcome.

Some lessons for developing critical thinking skills:

There are six lessons from cognitive science for teachers of critical thinking to help their students for improving their critical thinking skills (Tim van Gelder, 2005),(Cindy L., et., al.,2001).

First, being expert in critical thinking is hard. Because human being are not critical by nature, so they should not be expected to acquire expertise in it overnight. It should be considered as a long-life journey rather than considering it accessible as a two-week module.

Second, practice in critical thinking skills themselves enhances skills. The practice should be deliberate, which means it is not only enough to think critically about a topic, but also engaging specific exercises related to critical-thinking improvement is necessary.

Third, the transfer of skills must be practiced. Transferring the skills from one situation to another is essential for students to practice. Because usually a skill picked up in one situation cannot be applied in another situation.

Fourth, some theoretical knowledge is required. A critical thinker improves in case of acquiring knowledge about the theory of critical thinking, because it provides a situation for receiving feedbacks from teacher.

Fifth, diagramming arguments, “Argument Mapping”, promotes skills. Argument constitute a body of evidence in relation to some proposition. The proposition is expressed in some claims and the evidence is explained in other claims. It is beneficial to draw maps that make the logical structure of the argument completely explicit. So asking student to draw a map of their reasoning helps to enhance their argumentation skills.

Sixth, students are prone to belief preservation. Belief preservation is the tendency to use evidence to preserve our opinion rather than guide them. So a good critical thinker, searches for those evidences, which are opponent to his or her current beliefs, respects to those arguments that goes against her position and is ready to open her mind to those more proper evidences.

Self esteem

Everyone, at some point or another, are uncertain about themselves, lacks self-confidence, doubts their abilities, or thinks negatively of themselves. However, if you think that you might have problems with low self-esteem, or are not sure if you have this problem but want to find out, then this information package might be helpful to you. In this module, we will discuss what low self-esteem is and what kind of impact low self-esteem might have on a person and their life

Self-esteem and Language Learning:

In a study carried out by Heyde (1979), three kinds of self-esteem, global or general, situational or specific and task self-esteem had equal and positive effects on oral production of American students learning French as a foreign language. The effects of self-esteem on high school students' learning in Dezfoul (Kamarzarrin, 1994) suggested that students with low self-esteem were faced with problems in general learning.

In a study conducted by Hayati (2007) could infer that self-esteem correlated (positively) higher with the listening comprehension scores of females than those of males. They are precocious than males in emotional development (see Ahadi&Jomehri, 2001). They are more sensitive and are more affected by psychological affairs in learning than males. A number of studies have suggested that learning, in general, cannot be achieved without careful consideration to psychological factors (Carter & Nunan, 2001; Derville, 1996). In all educational environments, students get different grades. Some believe that they get either higher or lower grades than expected to. Most of these problems are closely related to psychological factors out of which self-esteem is an overwhelming issue that has determining effects on language learning, specifically listening comprehension

Objectives of the strategy:

- 1- The main aim of the (CL – RC, CT, SE) was to develop the reading comprehension, critical thinking and self-esteem of first year of education, English majors through using contract- learning by developing the following skills:

A- Reading comprehension skills:

1. Identify important factual information that supports the main idea
2. Make inferences based on what is not explicitly stated in a text
3. Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or expressions from context
4. Identify the words that pronouns represent
5. Recognize an author's purpose

B- critical thinking skills

1. Inferences
2. Assumptions
3. Deductions
4. Interpreting Information
5. Arguments

C- self-esteem

1. feeling proud
2. satisfy
3. respectful
4. trust
5. positivity
6. the strategy also aimed to develop students' life-long learning habits.

Statistical analysis, Results and discussion

Hypothesis Testing:

A- Testing the first hypothesis of the study:

There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for reading comprehension skills for the first year English majors students.

To test the previous hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the pre and post application, std. deviation and "t" value. a

comparison between “t” value and the tabulated “t” was calculated. The results are shown in table (1)

Table (1)

Comparison of the pre-post mean scores and value of the treatment group subjects on total reading comprehension skill test.

Passage 1		Post		pre		T	sig
		Mean	Sd	mean	sd		
Pair 21	Passage 1	0.979	0.042	0.470	0.181	16.17	Sig***
Pair 22	Passage 2	0.961	0.066	0.276	0.139	26.94	Sig***
Pair 23	Total RC	0.970	0.041	0.373	0.133	26.29	Sig***

Table (1) shows that there was a statistical difference between the mean scores of the group subjects on the pre and post application of the all of reading comprehension skill test. The mean scores for **Passage 1, Passage2** and total RC SKILLS of the pre application were 0.470, 0.276 and 0.373, respectively; the mean scores of the post application were 0.979, 0.961 and 0.970, respectively, then, “t” value was calculated which was 16.17, 26.94 and 26.29, respectively. This difference was significant at (0.01) level. These findings confirmed the first hypothesis of the study and showed a clear improvement of reading comprehension skill that might be attributed to the administration of the program.

Testing the second hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis two stated that: “There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for critical thinking skills for the first year English majors students”. To test the previous hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the pre and post application, std. deviation and “t” value. A comparison between “t” value and the tabulated “t” was calculated. The results are shown in table (2)

Table (2)

Comparison of the total pre-post mean scores and value of the treatment group subjects on the “critical thinking skills test”.

	Pre		post		t	Sig
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
total	0.928	0.089	0.224	0.165	8.497	Sig***

Table (2) shows that there was a statistical difference between the mean scores of the treatment group subjects of the pre and post application of the critical thinking skills test. The mean scores of the pre application was (0.224), the mean scores of the post application was (0.928), then, “t” value was calculated which was 8.497). this difference was significant at (0.01) level> these findings confirmed the two hypothesis of the study and showed development of the participating student in the critical thinking skills that might have been caused by the administration of the program.

Testing the third hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis three stated that: “There are no significant differences between pre- and post-test for self-esteem for the first year English majors students”.

To test the previous hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the pre and post application, std. deviation and “t” value. A comparison between “t” value and the tabulated “t” was calculated. The results are shown in table (3) below.

Table(3)

Comparison of the total pre-post mean scores and value of the treatment group subjects on Self-Esteem test.

Sent.	Post		Pre		t	level
	mean	Sd	mean	sd		
total	4.478	0.252	2.208	0.513	14.82	Sig***

Table(3) shows that there was a statistical difference between the mean scores of the treatment group subjects on the pre and post application of the

self-esteem test. The mean scores of the pre application was (2.208), the mean scores of the post application was (4.478), then, “t” value was calculated which was (14.82). this difference was significant at (0.01) level. These findings confirmed the first hypothesis of the study and showed a clear improvement of Self-Esteem skill that might be attributed to the administration of the program

Testing the fourth hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis four stated that: “There are no significant correlations among reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test for the first year English majors students”.

To test the previous hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the pre and post application, std. deviation and “t” value. A comparison between “t” value and the tabulated “t” was calculated. The results are shown in table (4) below.

Table (4)

Correlations matrix among reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test.

Correlations						
		post_ct_tot	post_rc1_tot	post_rc2_tot	post_rc_tot	postsst_tot
post_ct_tot	Pearson Correlation	1	.974**	.763**	.904**	.996**
	Sig. (2tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
post_rc1_tot	Pearson Correlation	.974**	1	.774**	.921**	.963**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
post_rc2_tot	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.774**	1	.959**	.771**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
post_rc_tot	Pearson Correlation	.904**	.921**	.959**	1	.903**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
postsst_tot	Pearson Correlation	.996**	.963**	.771**	.903**	1
	Sig. (2tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed).						

Table(4) shows that there were positive statistical correlations among reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test the correlation coefficients range from .763** to .996**.

Testing the fifth hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis five stated that: “There are no significant differences between male and female forreading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in pre- and post-test for the first year English majors students”.

To test the previous hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the pre and post application, std. deviation and “t” value. A comparison between “t” value and the tabulated “t” was calculated. The results are shown in table (5) below. Independent t test samples statistics

Table (4)

Effect of gender on reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test

TTest

	sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
pre_ct_tot	male	16	0.214	0.164	1.672	0.105
	female	17	0.234	0.166		
pre_rc1_tot	male	16	0.440	0.178	5.895	0.000
	female	17	0.500	0.184		
pre_rc2_tot	male	16	0.246	0.136	4.569	0.000
	female	17	0.306	0.142		
pre_rc_tot	male	16	0.194	0.162	5.323	0.000
	female	17	0.254	0.168		
presst_tot	male	16	2.3632	0.62278	1.741	0.092
	female	17	2.0616	0.34005		

There are significant differences between male and female forreading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in pre-test for the first year English majors students, the mean of female greater than male except presst_tot and pre_ct_tot

TTest

	sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2tailed)
post_ct_tot	male	16	0.918	0.088	0.113	0.911
	female	17	0.938	0.090		
post_rc1_tot	male	16	0.949	0.039	0.576	0.569
	female	17	0.949	0.039		
post_rc2_tot	male	16	0.931	0.063	0.196	0.846
	female	17	0.991	0.069		
post_rc_tot	male	16	0.960	0.038	0.377	0.709
	female	17	.990	0.044		
postsst_tot	male	16	4.4879	0.3599	0.227	0.822
	female	17	4.4678	0.06976		

There are no significant differences between male and female forreading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem in post-test for the first year English majors students

Discussion of results:

Based on the study results, the contract learning strategy proved its effectiveness on developing first year English majors' reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem. Their performance in the post speed reading test was better than their performance in the reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem tests. The effectiveness of this strategy could be ascribed to the following elements:

- The contract learning strategy was based on students' actual needs and interests. Through administering the needs assessment questionnaire, which was considered an essential step to decide upon the objectives and the content of the program, students participated in the process of diagnosing personal needs, deriving objectives, identifying resources, choosing strategies, and evaluating accomplishments. Thus, they participated in designing the whole program according to their real needs and interests.

- Through participation in the whole learning process, students were enthusiastic and motivated to the learning process because of the lessons and techniques used in the program were interesting to them and derived from their actual needs. Also, they become more committed to accomplish the program objectives because they felt that it was a successful and promising way to improve their reading speed.

Findings of the present study are consistent with other studies such as study of Lewis (2004) that assured the effectiveness of a contract learning strategy on improving college reading skills, study of Ali (2007) that confirmed the effectiveness of a contract learning strategy on teaching English language to post graduate students, study of Moom (2007) that assured the effectiveness of a contract learning strategy on teaching writing in English for accidents, study of Moom (2007). That assured the effectiveness of a contract learning strategy on teaching writing in English for academic purposes (EAP)course, study of Schwarzer; Kahn & Smart (2000) that reported positive results on suing a contract learning strategy on teaching writing to international students who were learning English as a second language, study of McGarrell (1996) that assured positive results on using a contract learning strategy on teaching English language and study of Davidson (1987) that showed the benefits of contract learning in pre university ESL writing classroom.

The researcher also observed that the use of contract learning strategy increased students' self-confidence and positive attitudes toward.

This strategy. Through answering the given questions in the limited time and providing appropriate and complete answer, students gained self-confidence and this encouraged them to develop positive attitudes to wars this strategy. The researcher also noticed that the use of contract learning strategy increased students' self-direction and autonomy. At the end of the program, a group of students expressed their intention to read about medical and political texts using contract learning main principles and speed reading techniques because they felt that they need to know more information about these fields and to double their reading speed.

Conclusion

In the light of the study results, it could be concluded that the contract learning strategy proved effective in developing first year, Faculty of education, English majors' reading comprehension skills, critical thinking skills and self-esteem.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Stressing students' interests and needs in teaching/learning reading comprehension.
2. Establishing positive learning climate where students assume greater responsibility for their own learning such as learning contracts.

Suggestions for further research

In the light of the study results, the researcher suggests the following:

1. The present study may be replicated to develop other language skills such as writing speaking and listening.
2. Expanding contract learning based-programs to other school subjects such as Arabic, French, social studies....etc. to explore its real contributions in these study areas.
3. Extending the role of contract learning strategy in other courses aiming at teaching English as a foreign language and reporting the results of this application.
4. Investigating students' attitudes towards contract learning and studying the effect of their attitudes on the level of intended learning outcomes.

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