The Effects of Shadow-Reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract—**The current study investigates the effects of shadow-reading on the development of the reading comprehension of undergraduate students who studied English at Ajloun University College/ Al-Balqa Applied University. The researchers randomly selected 100 EFL learners from the Department of English Language at Ajloun University College who enrolled in the reading course in the first semester2021/2022. The students were first and second-year students aged 18-22. The sample of the study was divided equally into experimental and control groups. The control group was exposed only to regular classroom reading instruction, while the experimental group received shadow-reading instruction. The researchers conducted a posttest to find out if there were significant differences between both groups. The results indicated that shadow-reading affected reading comprehension positively. It is found that shadow-reading is more effective than other traditional methods in teaching reading comprehension. The current study presents several recommendations for language learners, researchers, teachers, and syllabus designers.**

Index Terms—**EFL, shadow-reading, reading comprehension, undergraduate students, reading skills**

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the language skills that English language learners should master to improve their linguistic competency and to use language appropriately in different contexts. Among several definitions of reading comprehension, Grabe (2009) defined reading comprehension as the skill of processing text, comprehending its meaning, and integrating it with what the reader already knows. The process of reading comprehension was divided into a lower level (linkages between orthographic forms and the sounds of the language) and a higher level (building semantic and syntactic networks (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Moreover, reading comprehension depends on the readers' pre-knowledge and the text itself, so the active readers should link the pre-knowledge with the information in the text to understand its meaning in context. Many EFL students in English Language departments have problems understanding academic reading texts in their classrooms because they do not have enough pre-knowledge related to the given texts. To solve this problem and to improve their reading comprehension, students can build vocabulary, become motivation, read extensively, learn to recognize the structure of the text, and use a suitable reading method.

Reading comprehension is a basic skill in learning a foreign or second language since it is the base for improving language skills, such as writing, listening, and speaking (Anderson, 2012). Reading is also very important in real life, as it is one way to get information or knowledge about the world. Thus, it is essential to improve the reading skills of language learners.

Readers can use strategies to understand what they read, but the best reading strategies are often taught by teachers and utilized by students. There are several strategies used in EFL classrooms for comprehending the text, such as asking and answering, top-down and bottom-up reading, and extensive and intensive reading.

One of the strategies used to teach reading is shadow-reading (SHR). Murphey (2001) assumed that shadowing is a strategy used by learners in which they imitate their interlocutors by repeating and summarizing what they said. Kadota and Tamai (2004) defined shadowing as a strategy that uses listening skills, where the learner practices speech by repeating it without looking at a text. Shadowing is a useful technique used in learning a second language because it provides learners with aural input. Le Féal (1997) claimed that using the shadowing strategy has advantages in learning a foreign language because it improves foreign language learning by focusing on the words that are not recorded. In addition, using shadowing may have positive effects on brain processing.

The SHR strategy is highly effective in teaching and learning reading. When learners apply SHR, they either repeat what the readers have read completely or selectively, or they engage in conversational interaction (Commander & Guerrero, 2012, p. 8). SHR can help the students comprehend the text because each student acts as a reader and shadower. Oral summarizing, which is used in shadow reading, is very useful in developing students' reading abilities. It allows the shadowers to summarize the text in their own language, which in turn helps them comprehend the text. Moreover, interactive shadowing, which allows the students to ask questions, make comments, and discuss others, enhances the students' reading skills. They get help from each other in order to comprehend the text (Commander & Guerrero, 2013). In addition, using immediate and delayed written retelling helps students to understand the main ideas of the text, recognize the basic elements of the text/story, draw conclusions, identify significant details, and make inferences.

To apply SHR effectively, the teacher should train the students to use this technique. The teachers ask the students to read the text aloud, repeat the sentences, and read them again as whole paragraphs or passages. Then, the students are asked to summarize the text in either spoken or written form. The oral interaction between students helps them review the text and build meaning. In applying SHR, one partner (reader) reads the text, and the other partner (shadower) imitates what the reader says orally (Commander & Guerrero, 2013).

A. Statement of the Problem

Many students face several problems in comprehending the texts, and many students do not enjoy reading. Thus, there is a need to use suitable strategies, activities, and techniques that have an important role in enhancing learning skills. In the current study, the researchers discovered that many students who enrolled in reading courses at Ajloun University College in the first and second semesters of the academic year 2020/21 and the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022 received low grades on their exams. It was found that 90 students out of 400 (22.5%) failed the courses during that period. Additionally, it was found that the average of students' marks in the related courses was 54.1, which indicated that students did not perform well overall in the reading courses. The researchers then performed a pilot study to find out whether the students of English language at Ajloun University College had low reading comprehension. Twenty students were chosen randomly from first and second-year students. They sat for a reading comprehension test. The findings of the test showed that the students got low marks on the test since 13 students failed the exam (65%). These findings suggest that many students' competency in reading skills is not well developed. Thus, it is necessary to improve the reading skills and strategies of the students at Ajloun University College by using modern and collaborative teaching methods, such as shadow-reading. Based on these findings, the current paper suggests that using shadow-reading may improve the reading skills of learners of EFL.

B. Research Objectives

The main objective of the current study is to find out whether shadow-reading is more effective than the conventional strategy in enhancing students' reading comprehension. The study is beneficial for teachers, students, and researchers. For teachers, the study demonstrates the importance of using shadow-reading in teaching reading comprehension and introduces a practical application for using shadow-reading. For students, they can use this method to imitate and think critically to understand the texts easily when they use shadow-reading. Finally, the study is considered a preliminary study upon which other researchers can build by conducting similar studies on the benefits of using shadow-reading in teaching reading skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, various studies have concentrated on examining the impact of shadow-reading on students' reading comprehension. Zarei and Alipour (2020) conducted a study aimed at comparing three selected scaffolding techniques with three types of shadow-reading. They selected 120 EFL learners as a sample for the study and divided them randomly into six groups of twenty members each. After analyzing the data, the most important result related to the current study indicated that among the three shadow-reading types (complete shadowing, partial shadowing, and interactive shadowing), interactive shadowing was the most effective technique and had a significant statistical effect on students' reading comprehension.

Another study explored the impact of two reading strategies (collaborative strategic reading and shadow-reading) on EFL students' reading comprehension (Babapour et al., 2018). The sample of the study consisted of 72 participants distributed into three groups (two experimental groups and a control group). The instrument of the study was a reading comprehension test used to assess the student's achievement in reading comprehension. The researchers of the study used two-way ANOVA to analyze the obtained data. One important finding of the study revealed that shadow-reading had a positive impact on improving EFL students' reading comprehension.

In another study, Zarei and Jahanbakhsh (2016) compared shadow-reading with two other methods of teaching reading (multimedia and traditional) to find out the effect of shadow-reading on improving EFL students' reading comprehension. The participants of the study were randomly assigned and divided into three groups. Then, the researchers used a reading comprehension test as an instrument to explore the impact of the three methods on Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension. The collected data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA. The results of the

study showed that shadow-reading had a positive effect compared with the traditional method, although its effect was not statistically significant.

Sadeghi et al. (2016) investigated the impact of using shadow-reading on improving reading comprehension according to a Vygotskyan view. The sample of the study, which consisted of 52 EFL students at the university level, was divided into two groups (experimental and control). The instrument of the study is a reading comprehension test, which was used as a pre-test to be sure that both groups were linguistically equivalent. A post-test was also used to find out the effect of using shadow-reading after applying the treatments. The result of the study indicated that shadow-reading had a positive influence on the students' reading comprehension.

Mohamed (2015) explored the impact of shadow-reading on improving the reading competency of Saudi EFL students. The sample of the study included forty students at the Arar Faculty of Education and Arts in Saudi Arabia. The study found that the shadow-reading strategy improved the reading skills of EFL students. Similarly, Lee (2014) explored the benefits of shadow-reading in teaching reading to EFL students. The study found that students in the shadow-reading group perform better than those in the silent reading group in retention and comprehension of texts. In another study, Nakanishi and Ueda (2011) compared the reading results of two groups of second-language college students. One group was taught using shadow reading with extensive reading, while the other group was exposed to extensive reading only. The findings of the study revealed that shadow reading developed the reading abilities of the students slightly compared to extensive reading only.

All of the previous related studies showed a positive influence of using shadow-reading in improving students' reading comprehension, either at the school level or university level. Thus, there is a need to conduct similar studies in different contexts to examine the benefits from using shadow-reading in teaching and learning reading comprehension.

In the Jordanian context, no studies have been conducted as of yet to find out the impact of using shadow-reading on improving the students' reading comprehension. Thus, the current study sought to investigate the impact of shadow-reading on EFL students' reading comprehension in the Jordanian context.

III. METHODS

A. The Sample of the Study

The sample for this study consisted of 100 students studying at Al Balqa Applied University who enrolled in the reading course in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. The students were first and second-year students aged 18-22. The sample of the study was distributed equally into the experimental and control groups. The participants in the study were selected randomly regardless of gender, social class, regional background, and religion.

B. The Instruments of the Study

(a). Reading Comprehension Test

The study's instrument was a reading comprehension test designed by the researchers and used before the treatment as a pre-test to be sure that both groups were linguistically equivalent. After the treatment, a post-test was used to find the effect of the treatments on the students' reading comprehension. The reading comprehension test included a group of different passages followed by 50 multiple-choice items. The main purpose of the test was to figure out the meaning of the text according to different levels of comprehension (critical, inferential, and literal comprehension). After the students had taken the test, the researchers used a rubric to give them a score.

(b). Teaching Materials

The reading texts that were used to teach control and experimental groups were taken from the book 'Skills for First Certificate: Reading'. The book includes 16 units, and each unit includes a reading passage, dialogue, grammar, and exercises.

C. The Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers established the validity of the test by using content validity. A group of experts, who are professors specializing in English language teaching and assessment, were selected to comment on the test. The researchers followed the comments suggested by the experts and produced the final draft. The study used the KR-21 formula to check the reliability of the reading comprehension test. It was found that the test was reliable as it turned out to be 0.78.

D. Procedure

The experimental group was exposed to shadow-reading while the control group was exposed to traditional teaching methods. The experiment lasted for three months and a total of 40 lectures/sessions.

(a). Shadow-Reading Intervention

The shadow-reading group, which consists of 50 students, was divided into 25 pairs to play the roles of the readers and shadowers. The experiment lasted for three months with a total of 40 lectures/sessions.
Training the students

It is very important to acquaint the students with the shadow-reading strategy before implementation, so the teachers spent 6 lecture hours to teach them this method. The training focused on three strategies: chunking, shadowing sentences, and shadowing discourse. The students learned how to chunk by dividing the utterance into smaller meaningful units and how to shadow sentences by watching Murphey's (2000) Shadowing and Summarizing video. They gained the ability to shadow sentences completely (repeating the sentences), selectively (shadowing only the key words), and interactively (asking questions and making comments). Additionally, they were taught how to shadow a whole discourse/text by shadowing each paragraph and summarizing the text as a whole.

Procedure

The implementation of shadow reading in the class took place as part of an activity that had two phases: an interactional phase and non-interactional phase (Commander & de Guerrero, 2012). It is worth noting that the procedure used all three types of shadowing (complete, selective, and interactive) in the interactional phase, as described by Murphey (2001). Complete shadowing involves repeating everything the speakers say. Selective shadowing includes shadowing certain words or phrases. Interactive shadowing includes the comments and questions given by shadowers to the readers.

First, the teachers assigned same-level partners in order for students with similar proficiency to work together. They also distributed a 200-300 word text which had been chosen very carefully to suit the linguistic level of students. The teachers divided each text into two equal parts. In the interactional phase, the teachers read the text aloud to the students and explained the meaning of the unfamiliar words. Then the students were asked to work in pairs as readers and shadowers. The reader read the first part of the text word by word and used chunks when it was necessary, while the shadower completely shadowed what he/she heard (complete shadowing). Then the reader read the text sentence by sentence, and the shadower selectively repeated the keywords without looking at the text (selective shadowing). Then the reader read the whole text, and the shadower summarized it orally. During this phase the students were allowed to use interactive shadowing by adding comments and asking questions. At the end of this phase, the teachers asked the partners to switch their roles as readers and shadowers, and work on the second part of the text. In non-interactional phase, the teachers asked the students to write a summary for the whole text individually in English. The next week in class, the students were asked to write a second summary of the text.

(b). Traditional Teaching Method

The group consists of 50 students. Firstly, the teachers read the text, then they wrote the unfamiliar words on the board and asked the experimental group to guess the meaning. After giving the meanings of the new words in English, the students started reading individually. The teachers followed the three stages of reading (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading).

E. Design of the Study

The study used one of the quasi-experimental designs that included an experimental and a control group with a pre-test and post-test. The students in the experimental group learned reading comprehension by using the shadow-reading strategy, while the students in the control group learned reading comprehension by using the traditional way. Both groups were tested by using a pre and post-test. The variables of the study were the independent variable (shadow-reading strategy) and the dependent variable (reading comprehension).

IV. RESULTS

A. The Results of the Pre-Test

An independent sample t-test was used to find out if the mean scores of the experimental and control groups were equivalent. The results of the t-test were shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND T-TEST RESULTS OF THE CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS ON THE PRE-TEST.

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRE-TEST	Experimental	50	35.31	7.898	.475	98	.636
	Control	50	34.49	9.192			

Table 1 reveals that the linguistic knowledge of both groups was almost equivalent in the pre-test since there were no significant differences between the scores of both groups in the pretest. This reveals that the two groups were linguistically equivalent before conducting the study.

B. The Results of the Posttest

At the end of the experiment, the control and experimental groups sat for a posttest to find out whether there was an impact of shadow-reading on students' reading competency. An independent sample t-test was used to find whether there were statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND T-TEST RESULTS OF THE CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS ON THE POSTTEST.

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
POSTTEST	Experimental	50	44.76	5.872	5.212	98	.000
	Control	50	35.88	10.434			

Table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the means of both groups on the post-test, in favor of the experimental group. These results suggest that using shadow-reading improves the reading competence of students better than using the conventional method of reading instruction.

V. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results of the study showed a significant statistical impact of applying shadow-reading on reading comprehension for Jordanian EFL learners. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study showed that using shadow-reading in the English classrooms improved the students' reading comprehension. The findings of the study were in line with the results of other studies, such as Zarei & Alipour (2020), Babapour et al. (2018), Zarei and Jahanbakhsh (2016), Mohamed (2015), and Sadeghi et al. (2016).

The result of the study is expected because of the positive features of shadow-reading. It is one of the collaborative methods that encourage students to communicate with each other. For example, Kern (2000) claimed that social interaction among students helped students to comprehend the text. Besides, shadow-reading is based on imitation, which is considered a beneficial technique in teaching reading comprehension. Murphey (2000) reported that repetition helped the learners to be controlled by others' language and to control their own language. While using shadowing-reading, the process of learning comprehension becomes more enjoyable because understanding the text is not just a matter of recognizing the words' meaning, but also is related to psychological, social, and cultural functions. Shadow-reading makes the learning environment more pleasant and cooperative, so it motivates the students to easily comprehend the text. Most of the students work in a relaxed way without the fear of committing mistakes because they work in pairs cooperatively.

Another reason why shadow-reading positively affected students' reading comprehension in the current study was the use of the three types of shadow-reading (complete, interactive, and selective shadowing). The reader and the shadower helped each other to understand the text by repeating the same words (complete shadowing), repeating selective words or phrases (selective shadowing), asking questions, making comments, sharing elaborations, and paraphrasing (interactive shadowing). Thus, all levels of text comprehension can be achieved when the readers and shadowers use all three types of shadowing-reading.

By using shadowing-reading, the class was changed from a teacher-centered class to a student-centered class. Therefore, the students as readers and shadowers are more active in the classroom, which improves their learning skills. The role of teachers was changed from lecturers to facilitators and directors. Their job is to guide students to improve their reading skills.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current study explored the impact of the shadow-reading strategy on improving students' reading comprehension. The participants of the study were divided into an experimental group (50 students) and a control group (50 students). The study used a posttest to find out whether the shadow-reading affected the students' reading comprehension positively. The results of the study showed that the students who were taught by using the shadow-reading strategy improved their reading comprehension more than those who were taught by using the traditional method. In other words, the use of the shadow-reading strategy is more effective than the traditional method of teaching reading.

The present study provides many suggestions for learners, researchers, teachers, and syllabus designers. For the English learners who study at university, the researchers encourage them to use effective strategies like shadow-reading to improve their reading comprehension, so teachers need to try it and know how to use it inside the class. In tandem, the teachers should take courses and workshops to learn how to use and practice shadow-reading in their reading classes. Additionally, the syllabus designers and decision-makers should include such strategies while designing reading curricula. Finally, the researchers urged other researchers to conduct similar studies on other populations and collect samples from different contexts to determine whether other students can reap the same benefit from this method.

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