Applying a Cognitive Learning Approach to Unravel Problems Encountered by Arab Students in Reading and Understanding Texts in English

A Case Study Geared to Improving Reading Skill of Undergraduate Students at Khulais Faculty of Science and Arts, King Abdul-Aziz University

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Abstract

This study seeks to investigate the difficulties facing undergraduate students of the Faculty of Science and Arts-Khulais, King Abdul Aziz University in reading and understanding texts in English language. It also attempts to pinpoint the reasons behind the hurdles and how they can be dealt with successfully through a cognitive mechanism in order to improve their reading comprehension. Due to the immensely lowering reading standards, researchers have considered approaching the problem through a model that is principally designed for lower levels of education. The model, handled differently, can be made to work effectively at

university level.   The researchers tested they hypotheses of the study using a sample group of 30 out of 160 respondents have found that there is a close relationship between bad teaching at particularly intermediate school, and no attempts were made to improve the ailing standards at the secondary schools.

1. Introduction

In every sense of the word, English has become a very much powerful instrument of change in our world today. There is a universal consensus on the need to learn English as many studies conducted in this connection have shown (Mujica 2003). According to Power (2005) "There are 350 million people in Asia alone who speak English as a foreign language. This figure is continuously increasing to the point that the ratio of non-native speakers of English as compared to the native speakers –is three to one- clearly native speakers are being outnumbered by learners of English today" (p.46). In Africa, in countries like Nigeria and Keya English is spoken in the streets by laymen and is the medium of instruction at even primary schools. In South Africa it is spoken in every household that indigenous languages have started to give way to English language and they have become even endangered.

In view of the above, learning English has become an indispensible instrument for global communication. English is in fact a global lingua franca. For a nation to get along with another nation stems the need for communication and the medium of communication. It is only English that can be used to establish any kind of communication whether on diplomatic, economic or cultural levels. It is a truism that the world has become a global village and that English has, by its widespread reality, become the key channel of international affairs and communication. Even if it is not used as a medium of instruction, any aspirant student who seeks to excel in his domain of specialization must have a thorough knowledge of English in order to have an assured access to solid information. It is a must for students of empirical sciences across the globe to have a reasonably good mastery of English language. In countries where local languages are used as languages of instruction well-to-do families and enlightened parents would send their children to privately run schools where English is used as language of instruction. In the Gulf, amongst citizens who have become fully aware of the importance of English, hiring a housemaid who is fluent in English is both a source of prestige as well as for the reason of communicating with kids in English. Asian housemaids who speak English are in demand for the sole purpose of working as baby-sitters where they communicate with children in English.

Consequently, to keep abreast with the ongoing developments in the world today and meet up with the sweeping waves of globalization almost all countries of the world have manage to introduce English language learning at an early level of education. In Saudi Arabia, English is currently introduced at 5th year of the primary school. The objective is to produce learners who are moderately proficient in English language who can form the nucleus for the future generations to become actively involved in international affairs. On personal levels, any graduate who aspires to a well-paid job and hence a highly regarded social status must know how to manipulate this magic wand of English language.

In view of the above, the present study focuses on the hurdles that some undergraduate students at *Khulais* Faculty of Science and Arts- King Abdul Aziz University –experience with reading comprehension. The paper sets out detailed suggestions for the teaching of reading to undergraduate students, in a variety of situations. To help improve the reading skill for these students who have reached College level, however, with the ailments pertaining to

the elementary bases of reading, a rigorous remedial program has to be launched to teach the very basics of reading *ab nitio*. Though these basics are used with learners at tertiary levels of education, our students are truthfully in dire need to be initiated into the fundamentals of this much important skill. Classical and operant conditioning are no longer the sole techniques applied to all types of learning. Human being have the ability to learn by observation, taking instruction and imitating the behavior of others. It is a truism that knowledge is accessible via listening, watching and experiencing things. As cognitive learning enables us to process knowledge mentally and subconsciously, it turned out to be the ideal mechanism to be followed in our case with our graduate students who have reached college level and still have problems with the rudimentary tools of the language. It is through cognitive learning that we are capable of passing on complex culture that includes values, symbols, beliefs and norms. To begin with, researchers, have planned to address the following five significant areas cognitively.

- Phonemic awareness

- Phonics

- Fluency

- Vocabulary

- Comprehension

More so, these five elements were used mainly with learners at lower levels of education. However; it is possible to manipulate them in such a way that they can nicely fit at undergraduate levels, particularly having discovered that their foundation at the said areas is hugely unsteady very much resembling that of the beginners. All the five components are equally important in the present case, and shall receive the very same treatment as regards the time allotted to handling each one.

Researchers have observed that some students read words like 'made' as / mǣdi/. This observable fact reflects L1 interfere, a kind of language transfer. In Arabic morphology such words are known as having '*alif al-mad'*. So the students subconsciously apply the rules of their language to the learning of the second language. This is particularly true when we know that Saudi students start learning English at the intermediate schools when the rules of their language have become so strong and consequently influence the learning of a second language.

2. Statement of the Problem

The current reading problem owes its origin to the intermediate school where the teaching of English as a second language is introduced for the first time. In this connection, a number of factors can be considered to determine the cause of the lower standards of the reading skill. First, the teaching process at the intermediate schools is carried out by freshly recruited teachers with a degree in English either from the Faculty of Arts or Education. They were funneled into these schools to teach English without having the right kind of training as

classroom practitioners. The rationale behind their recruitment was not linked to the teaching and learning operation but rather to accelerate implementing the policy of localization of the teaching profession. Therefore, the teaching of English, at this sensitive stage is entrusted to uncompetitive ones with the English language. In an interview with a senior inspector at the headquarters of the Ministry of Education, he stated that some teachers have been exposed to short on-the-job training – known as crash courses where they have been thinly furnished with the different theories of second language teaching without having any kind of teaching practice, an essential element that should go hand in hand with such kind of training. He added that the picture was further blurred by the fact of inadequate inspection and supervision. Inspection is not as effective as it was used to be due to the fact that extension in education was not accompanied with the necessary technical changes required for effective assessment and follow up. Thus, to cope with this uncertain situation, teachers at intermediate schools are left to their own devices and talents.

The short on-the – job orientation or crash courses have inherent inadequacies which render them futile and hence fell far short of their desired objectives. Courses are held in big city centers where only teachers working at urban settings can have access to them. Their peers teaching at rural settings can barely attend the training sessions as they are stationed at distant schools. Moreover, the courses are not compulsory that teachers are at liberty to attend the thing that has encouraged reluctant ones to stay away from training at will. What makes these courses even more less attractive and unpopular is that attendees are neither financially motivated nor the completion of the course will lead to the award of a degree with any enticing promotional prospects.

Another crucial factor as regards the issue in question, is the moderately few classes allocated to the teaching of English in comparison with the other subjects. Considering the reality of English as a subject introduced for the first time at this level, an intensive dose of the language input has to be administered in order to guarantee the success of the program. This is largely true if we think of the time wasted on giving sheer directions to students to start from left to right and inculcate such similar sub skills. Consequently, the inadequate exposure to the new subject at the intermediate level, as almost all officials have admitted, can be taken to account for the overall deteriorating standards of English, namely the reading skill. This problem was further compounded by lack of parental support at home. A great number of these children were born to parents who have no knowledge of English whatsoever. So, a child finds no one at home to help him with his assignments comes next day to school with his home work undone or poorly completed, in constant fear of the harsh punishment awaiting him, shall have the effect of establishing a painful psychological barrier between him and the learning of English.

Moreover, this picture is additionally blurred by the fact that when the students are transferred to the secondary school nothing has been done to improve their ailing standards. At secondary schools teachers are only preparing students to acquire high marks in the exams. Prodromou (1995), emphasized that "Teachers everywhere are anxious about the parts of the syllabus which are expected to be part of the examinations and at the same time are afraid of taking risk with materials which clearly are not related to the examinations. Learners also

generally become impatient with Materials which they think will not be of great help in their examinations. So, straitjacketed by the frightening prospect of the examinations, teachers and students alike will ignore all the learning materials that are not expected to be part of the exam. It is this skipped material which will help the students develop aspects of oral communicative competence". So, the students' shaky language foundation goes on uncorrected until they enter university where the rift will be enormously widened even more.

An extra, yet key factor, is the nature of the English phonetic and writing system itself which is immensely different from what the students have experienced in their first language. Writing from left to right is such one big hurdle for students who are attuned to a kind of writing that does not tally to this new writing. The English Alphabet continues to pose huge obstacles to many students who could not easily get along with the new writing system. The sound system is the straw that breaks the camel's back. So these factors taken together have acted as a stumbling block for attaining adequate reading comprehension.

3. Previous Studies

Reading skill is one of the areas that is hugely researched, but research in the area is greatly associated with specific languages that hardly has implications for languages that belong to the same family of the language under consideration. Arabic is a Semitic language, non-alphabetic and hence non-Romanized. Much research has been done on Germanic languages with very scanty suggestion to Arabic.

The most significant and relevant writing in this area particularly with the challenges posed by Semitic languages has been made by the famous linguist Leonard Bloomfield and the lexicographer Clarence Barnhart (Let's read: A linguistic Approach. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961). Bloomfield and Barnhart are basically designed to teach reading to native- speaking children, it can however be slightly modified to fit into our context. Bloomfield and his fellow approach discusses two preparatory steps to their lessons. Bloomfield called the two steps the '*foundation*' of the learner's reading.

Their first preparatory step is to teach the alphabet. Learning the alphabet is not a difficult task for learners particularly at College, where they have already been introduced to much English. Bloomfield and Barnhart have thoroughly discussed the teaching of alphabet, but their technique would sound a bit out of place at university. However, we do need to revisit the teaching of alphabet.

The second step is very important, and deals with teaching the letter that have a single phonetic value. They recommended certain values which they called *regular*. To mention a few by way of example:

- a as in h**a**t

- b as in **b**at

- e as in p**e**n

- v as in **v**an

Apart from Bloomfield and Barnhart, there are many approaches to teaching reading and they have all concentrated on the teaching of phonemes and phonics chiefly. The approaches differ as to how much direction and guidance tutors should provide to the learners. They also differ in how teachers should approach the teaching of the reading skill, clearly and directly or whether they should be taught in a thoughtful sequence. Robert Lado (1957:2) claimed that "the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult". Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965) assured that "the main source for predicting the difficulties is the interference between native language and target language". This applies to the four skills.

4. Research Hypothesis

- The difficulties undergraduate students face in reading English texts are mainly due to bad teaching at lower stages of education ,mainly the intermediate and secondary levels.

- The fact that Arabic is a Semitic language, Arab students find it difficult to read words of a Romanized language with alphabetic-system such as English.

- Arabic starts from right to left contrary to the English, where the learners have already formed the *mechanics* of reading in a converse way to that of the English

- Arabic has a sound system which is greatly different from that of English.

- Concentrating on the shape of the word to be read, poor readers shall miss the meaning of the word even if they have managed to read it properly.

5. Methodology

Collecting, describing and analyzing the performance data of learners in reading which explain why they face difficulties, shall be the method of investigation in the present research. This will help highlight the problem areas, and how they can be dealt with. To have a better understanding of the nature of the hurdles students encounter in reading, their errors are categorized and then analyzed. Two types of tasks have been developed to enhance students' phonemic and phonic awareness, namely isolating and blending phonemes.

As many as 160 students studying at first year, Faculty of Science and Arts, Khulais-King Abdul Aziz University, only 30 students have been chosen for the current study. They have been divided into three heterogeneous groups, good learners, mediocre and poor. They were first taught the English alphabet for three days along the lines described by Bloomfield and Barnhart, using the two preparatory strategies. Almost all students have managed to master their alphabet quite nicely in a relatively short time for the fact that they were exposed to it so many times. However, the second step posed difficulty for the poor students.

At university setting our students are not learning the four skills in an integrated manner. That is they have four text-books, each course tackles one specific skill. Tutors handling the courses other than reading have been informed to pay special attention to the question of reading. Thus, they have been exposed to different topics of reading, which has the effect of

broadening their scope of the world culture, a thing highly desired to help with the very reading process.

Table 1. Phonemic and phonic awareness task

The task to be performed	Students' role	Tutor's role
Isolating phonemes	Students identify specific sounds at the beginning, middle and end of words.	Tutor: What is the first sound in the word *cafeteria?* Student: /k/(if students said /c/, the teacher would insist it is /k/ as is the sound that is emphasized, here.
Blending phonemes	Students blend phonemes to form words.	Tutor: What word is made by blending these sounds? /s/,/t/,/r/,/a/,/i/,/g/,/h/,/t/? Students: straight
Jumbled phonemes	Students unjumble phonemes	Tutor: What word is made by unjumbling these sounds/p/,/a/,/m/ Students: map

The above activity has been repeated several times with different words ranging from simple words to difficult ones. It started with the tutor reading the sounds for the students, and then long lists of words were drawn and presented to the students to work with. Students at a further step were asked to design their own exercises and swap it. To motivate the students, the tutor promised valuables reward, hence students set about their tasks actively making very surprising results. The tasks have been designed to make learning fun, in that they looked like cross-words.

Exactly 30 words have been selected, ranging from mono to polysyllabic words. The goal has been to provide a sense of gradation and allow room for the poor students to take part in the activity. Some of the words are concrete, others are abstract. The words are:

rain, apple, fruit, beauty, range, play, garden, happy, nice, room, straight, right , clear , have, made, neighbor , the , different, human, student , nature , paradise , perfect , area , kind, religion, tropical, rat, pen ,thin.

The English spelling is mainly grounded on the representation of phonemes by graphemes, so developing phonemic awareness, students shall find it easy to recognize unfamiliar words. This stage is only realizable through excessive practice with different sets of lexical items. Words selection should also be made on the level of difficulty they pose, as well as the type of linguistic aspect we seek to develop.

In this activity students are trained to use phonemes to decode graphemes into phonemes and to blend them again to form words with identifiable meanings. The reader matches the sounds with letters that make up the words. The reader starts making attempts at words, if the

meaning of a word is stored in his brain, he would excitedly proceed with the reading. The more successful attempts he makes, the more he is expected to develop.

Subjects for this study as mentioned above are first year undergraduate students majoring in English. The students, 30, are divided into three definite set groups.

Table 2. Shows distribution sample according to their learning standard

Group	Types of learners	No
Group 1	Good learners	10
Group 2	Mediocre learners	10
Group 3	Poor learners	10
Total		30

6. Limitations of the Study

- The study is restricted only to thirty students, the thing that would suggest that the results The more learners are involved, the more solid and reliable are the findings and results.

- The study is made to focus on reading hurdles in exclusion of the other skills. More insights could have been gained if all the skills have been handled in an integrated manner.

- The objective of the study is to cite the reading hurdles with the aim of obtaining implications for improving students' reading ability. Again, if more than one skill is involved the findings would much more comprehensive and trustworthy.

7. Remedial Program

To help the students improve their reading standards the root cause of the problem has to be addressed and remedied. Students have very poor knowledge of the sound system of the English language. So their language awareness has to be raised to a level enabling them to get along with their reading remedial program. Undoubtedly, the handling of the five suggested areas shall not be conducted along the lines at intermediate levels, but they have to be revisited in an affirmative way. One of the most effective approaches developed by scientific research in this area, is one called **systematic and explicit instruction.** Sounds are taught in order of simplicity.

To speed up the recovery process, the easiest sounds and those ones encountered more often are taught first. Sounds that readily have their corresponding ones in Arabic are given preference in the course of teaching. This is what Henry Sweet, a British philologist (1899) emphasized, " …The greatest help in learning an alphabet is to establish definite association between the symbol and its sound". On practical level, students are given sufficient practice to help them master the sounds carefully. Students assignments have to be carefully assessed to find out how far they have managed to get along with their learning. Mechanic mastery of the sounds is manageable , however reading comprehension calls for good knowledge of the world, a dimension that teachers and educators hardly thought about when dealing with the constraints of reading. So knowledge of structures and the sounds is not enough for reading comprehension. Something must be done to enhance the learners' background knowledge. One such important areas for the Arab students to have good knowledge of when learning English is the English idiomatic expressions and figures of speech which in effect reflects the target language culture, an essential component of any successful EFL teaching course.

7.1 Arabic Morpho-phonemic System

To help the students form a reasonable conceptualization of the sound system of both languages Arabic and English , the morpho-phonemic system of Arabic has to be taught to enhance their awareness of their own language sound system. There are eight vowels in Arabic ; a الفتحة ,aa الالف , u الضمة , w الواو , i الكسرة ,ii الياء, ai أى, au أو. There are eighteen consonants which are, to some extent, similar to those of the English Language.

/**b**/,/**t**/,/**d**/,/**k**/ ,/ ŝ/,/ʒ/,/f/,/s/,/z/,/h/,/l/,/m/,/n/,/w/,/r/,/Ɵ/,/ð/ and /y/. In their attempts to read

English lexical items, students are excessively influenced by the morpho-phonemic system of their L1. By the time they start learning English as a foreign language, the phonological system of their language is so strongly entrenched that it does not allow room for L2 rules. So, upon reading an L2 words, they impulsively transfer these rules *only* to spoil the shape of the English word.

Without resorting to applying diacritic signs, Arabic words may turn to be very difficult to read. This intricacy was caused by the Arabic homographic writing system. *Diacritical signs* (الحركات) are particularly useful to make up for the void sounds in Arabic. Words like *hidden* and *written* in English are written in Arabic by means of what is known in Arabic morphology as (الشدة), which simply means the doubling of consonants in order to make the listener or reader well aware of the double sounds. Diacritic signs are made to help us read the Holy books such as the Qur'an or the Bile, New Testament as these are the true words of Allah, and it would have a blasphemous effect were they mispronounced. Arabic words like 'رسب" /rəsabā/and 'رسّب' /rsəbə/ are only homographic but they belong to two different classes. The first is an infinitive form and could be taken as the past form, which means *failed* the exam, whereas the second *caused to fail or* can be taken to refer to the process when the river *deposited* its silt at its mouth. Another good example is 'شهر' which stands for brandish(one's weapon), and ' شهْر ' which means '*month'*.

It follows from that ,the use of diacritical signs has helped solve the problem of reading Arabic words. However, in English Arab students sometime find it difficult to distinguish the sounds /ð/ and /θ/ in words like [then] and [thief]. In Arabic both consonants are represented by completely different sounds [ذ `] ,and [ث] respectively. Now, consider the stem '*drs'*, and how it can have multiple derivatives. If it were not for the diacritic signs all the lexemes below would look one and the same as they are homographic. A root in Arabic does not belong to any part of speech, but is used a devise to generate all the potential parts that can be derived. The root '*drs'* below can be used to generate as many as four words belonging to different classes.
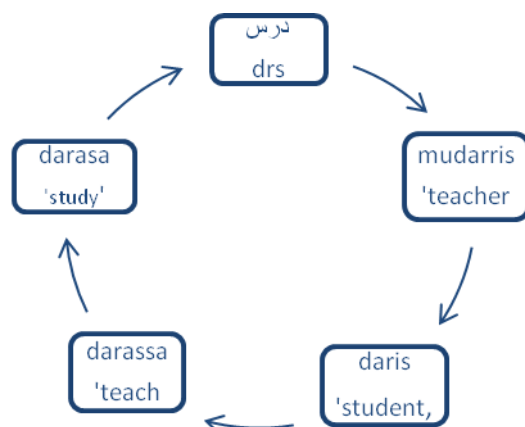

Figure 1. Example for generation of words in Arabic from root

7.2 Phonemic Awareness

Some of the areas in English language which are observed to pose specific problems are initial sounds in such words as 'stress'. Some learners would readily draw on Arabic to produce the equivalent sound 'س' and hence the word is pronounced as /sətres/. Another notorious thing is that every lexical item has /p/ whether in word initial, medial or final position are   shifted to /b/. So /pām/ is read as /bām/. Thus, in order to deal with this area of difficulty let us dwell on the suggested components for good reading, each in isolation and see how it works in our case. The English phoneme /s/ has the vowel quality of /m/ and /n/ in Kiswahili. These are treated as vowels. So words as [mbuzi] which means sheep is pronounced as /əmbʊzi/, similarly the English word [street] is something as /əstreet/.

Phonemic awareness has been cited as the first important element which is directly connected with the written word as a single entity brought about by different sounds grouped together to produce that effect. It follows from that learners should be well aware of the sounds in isolation and their effect when blended together to be able to recognize a word. To be fully aware of the different sounds of words, learners need to be drilled into segmenting or breaking words up into their basic sound components or phonemes and then grouping them together. For example, a word like *fat* has three different phonemes, /f/,/a/and /t/. This is particularly true as all learners can actually recognize the shape of the letter but not the sound.

This deficit is attributable to bad teaching at the intermediate and secondary levels where learners were first introduced to the sounds of English language. Our students right here have come up at the College with their glaring articulating mistakes at the intermediate and secondary levels. Hence, words pronounced as/mori/ for 'more' and /havi/ for 'have' are common. Teachers or instructors at intermediate levels have failed to account for the diverse sounds repertoire per different words. Learners have to be made aware of the values of sounds as they change their environment, that is /e/ in pet is not the same as /e/ in have, nor *plait* is analogous with *strait*.

The fact that Arabic is a non-alphabetic system, makes the learning of the English sounds a bit difficult but can be dealt with after all. In Arabic vowels are accounted for by means of diacritical signs. Phonemic awareness is a skill that every instructor of reading in particular and other skills should be well aware of, and be able to teach properly, (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998). A good exercise to isolate phonemes separately and represent them as grapheme is as follows. The researcher adopted this technique to help raise students' phonemic awareness: Students are asked to listen to different words and then to jot down the sounds they heard per each word:

Table 3. Phonic awareness exercise

The word	Initially	Medially	Finally
cat	/k/	/a/	/t/
have	/h/	/a/	/v/
feign	/f/	/a/	/n/
eight	/a/	/t/	
right	/r/	/i/	/t/

Students are then shown the words, and asked to make their own examples to further consolidate this exercise. Several similar exercises can be made along the line of the one shown above, and through course of time students standards shall improve.

Practically, students' awareness of a word is measured by a number of interrelated factors; which involve the following:

• Visual information (as the word appears as a grapheme and its meaning)

• Pronunciation

• Other information about the word stored in the learner's brain.

However, in order to guarantee success, the English phonemes have to be taught contrastively with those of the Arabic. It is through contrastive study that we can afford to bridge the gap

between the phonemic systems of the two languages and enhance students' awareness of the phonemic system of L2.

7.3 Phonics Awareness

Phonics simply relate to the consistency underlying the sounds of speech when represented in graphemes or in writing. They are the set of rules that govern the spelling of words due to an internal consistency between letters in words and the sounds of the spoken language. As far as the English language is concerned these sounds are predictable but not consistent enough, however, they can be used quite effectively in classroom settings. Diacritic signs(الحركات) are useful in establishing the internal relationship in Arabic words. Diacritics can serve as reminders or memory aid to help the reader apply rules to letters and sounds. They are taught along with the letters such as با , بو , /ba/,/bu/. However, these are used with children at primary school settings as they like singing and rhyming.

7.4 Fluency

Fluency is the quality of being able to write and speak a language, especially a foreign language, easily and well. However, as far as reading is concerned fluency was viewed as the reader's ability to recognize written words so rapidly coupled with understanding. A wider perspective on the issue has been provided by (Rasinski, 1990; Hooks & Jones, 2002) to mean the rapid and accurate grouping of words within a sentence into phrases to facilitate the reading and understanding process. This process has the effect of making what is read resembles spoken language. Fluency is an important component of reading comprehension. Fluency can be developed through reading and rereading , that is repeated reading under the observation of the tutor, that is guided repetition (Carver & Liebert, 1995).

One typical process of developing fluency is to ask students to reread a text a number of times until a certain level of fluency has been attained. Readers are asked to give special attention to deciphering the meaning of words. The process of rereading starts as follows:

- The tutor demonstrates clearly the theme of the text while explaining the new vocabulary, to help with understanding.

- The tutor reads the text aloud, while the students follow on their texts, without reading. This will help students to recognize the difficult words to be read rapidly when asked to read, and thus the final effect sound like natural spoken language.

- Students, were then asked to read the text aloud to themselves or their peers.

- This step is for discussing what the text is about.

In our present case, the researchers have selected a text with which students are familiar. It is about the City of Jeddah, as the students are familiar with the names of streets, markets, corporations and so on. Researchers interfere with the reading process to help, explain difficult words, make suggestions as to how to group words into meaningful phrases, and act as good eavesdroppers while students were reading aloud. To further motivate students, researchers have tended to tape-record students loud reading so that by the end of the session

students were provided with copies of their production to show to their families who might reward them for their success.

7.5 Vocabulary and Comprehension

Vocabulary is generally divided into four types, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Listening and speaking are referred to as oral vocabulary. Good vocabulary is associated with rapid word recognition. Vocabulary is also linked with understanding. However, its greatest importance is directly connected with reading to acquire information and knowledge.

There are many ways of teaching vocabulary. Restructuring vocabulary to help student retain the meaning of the lexical item for a long time is the one which we found more appropriate and effective for our students.. Again presenting words in rich contexts would help students remember them, (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Pople, 1985). Let us consider the following paradigm has been developed by (Gordon, Schumm, Coffland, & Doucette, 1992; Scott & Nagy, 1997).

- **Textbook Definition :** The system of *stars* that contains our sun and its planets.

- **Rewritten Definition**: These *stars* are collectively seen as a bright band in a night sky.

- **Sample Sentences:** A galaxy of Hollywood stars.

Comprehension involves decoding the words present at the text, understanding their meaning in relation to the reader's knowledge of the world. More reading entail accumulation of information and an increase in the reader's background knowledge. This , in effect, will help enhances comprehension quite considerably. According to some linguist and classroom practitioners, good comprehenders do the following:

• They use a range of comprehension strategies to deepen and enrich their understanding of what they are reading (Pressley, El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992).

• They are aware of their own thinking processes, and they make conscious decisions to use different comprehension strategies as they read, especially when they detect problems in understanding what they are reading (Baker & Brown, 1984).

• They attribute successful comprehension to effort more than to ability. They believe they can understand what they read if they apply the right comprehension strategies; however, they also believe that achieving this level of understanding requires effort, according to Carr and Borkowski (as cited in Brown, 2002).

8. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

To test this hypothesis, ANOVA test was used. The analysis of variance on using ANOVA test scores at 5% level of significance (p-value < 0.05) is shown in the tables below. The average scores of students in the test were obtained. The tests were prepared for the students to check and evaluate their phonological background in three areas: isolating phonemes, blending phonemes and unjumbling phonemes. The total mark of each test was 10 points, so

the passing mark is 5. The independent sample F-test and the mean scores of students in the three tests for the three groups are also compared.

As can be noted from Table (3) below, there is statistically significant differences of the main effect for isolating phonemes with F-value of (128.07), which is more than the critical value at < 0.05 in favor of at least one of the three groups: students who are good, mediocre, and poor.

Table 4. Results of the isolated phonemes

ANOVA

FREQUEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	246.667	2	123.333	128.077	.000
Within Groups	26.000	27	.963		
Total	272.667	29			

As shown in Table (4), the results reveal significant statistical differences (.000) in the isolating phonemes between students who are good learners and other groups; between mediocre learners and other groups; and between poor learners and the other groups.

Table 5.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: FREQUEN

Tukey HSD

(I) Isolating phonemes	(J) Isolating phonemes	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Good Learners	Mediocre Learners	4.0000*	.43885	.000	2.9119	5.0881
	Poor Learners	7.0000*	.43885	.000	5.9119	8.0881
Mediocre Learners	Good Learners	-4.0000*	.43885	.000	-5.0881	-2.9119
	Poor Learners	3.0000*	.43885	.000	1.9119	4.0881
Poor Learners	Good Learners	-7.0000*	.43885	.000	-8.0881	-5.9119
	Mediocre Learners	-3.0000*	.43885	.000	-4.0881	-1.9119

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As can be noted from Table (5) above, there is statistically significant differences of the main effect for the blending phonemes with F-value of (128.07), which is more than the critical value at < 0.05. in favor of at least one of the three groups: students who are good, mediocre, and poor.

ANOVA

FREQUEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	246.667	2	123.333	128.077	.000
Within Groups	26.000	27	.963		
Total	272.667	29			

As can be seen in Table (6) below, there is statistically significant differences of the main effect for unjumbling phonemes with F-value of (24,56), which is more than the critical value at < 0.05. in favor of at least one of the three groups: students who are good, mediocre, and poor.

Table 6.

ANOVA

FREQUEN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	126.067	2	63.033	24.558	.000
Within Groups	69.300	27	2.567		
Total	195.367	29			

Table (6) shows results of the unjumbling phonemes

As shown in Table (7), the results reveal significant statistical differences (.000) in the unjumbling phonemes between students who are good learners and the other groups; between mediocre learners and the other groups; and between poor learners and the other groups.

Table 7.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: FREQUEN
LSD

(I) Unjumbling phonemes	(J) Unjumbling phonemes	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Good Learners	Mediocre Learners	4.9000*	.71647	.000	3.4299	6.3701
	Poor Learners	3.4000*	.71647	.000	1.9299	4.8701
Mediocre Learners	Good Learners	-4.9000*	.71647	.000	-6.3701	-3.4299
	Poor Learners	-1.5000*	.71647	.046	-2.9701	-.0299
Poor Learners	Good Learners	-3.4000*	.71647	.000	-4.8701	-1.9299
	Mediocre Learners	1.5000*	.71647	.046	.0299	2.9701

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table (7) shows comparisons of the groups for unjumbling phonemes

9. Conclusion

Reading is such an important tool for learning in general. It is through reading that we can develop independently and have our own conception of the world. Reading is an indispensable instrument to get acquainted with the world's culture and hence develop an autonomous critical insight to the different cultural norms. In this respect it is a crucial means for communication. Brighter students who aspires to attain a higher degree of knowledge must master the intricacies of reading as it is their sole channel to realize their potential. We are judged by the amount of the reading we did as that is reflected in the way we think. Our attitude to lots of things in our lives is greatly shaped by our reading Good reading gives the reader self-confidence as the reader's world knowledge enhances chiefly through reading. Fruits of modern technology are only accessible through reading.

Arab students difficulty with reading English is caused by a number of factors, foremost of which is the inconsistency between the shape and sound of English words. A huge number of English words are written in a specific way and pronounced quite differently. Judging by the activities given to the students, dedication, hard work and commitment can bring about good promising results. The phonemic gap between the two languages can be narrowed to a surmountable level through excessive work in the said area. Teachers at intermediate schools should be trained adequately to handle the operation of teaching in a way commensurate with the desired objectives to help their students establish the difference between the sound system of L1 and that of L2. An essential dose of inspection and supervision has to be injected should the teachers' be able to perform their teaching sufficiently.

Though the activities used in this study looks moderately simple with undergraduate students, they helped a lot in healing the rift between the Arabic morpho-phonemic system and that of the English. Moreover, they have provided tutors with insights into the type of difficulties the students to have, and how they can be addressed. Students of average standards (mediocre) have shown clear signs of improvement. Poor students have also improved, and can even brush up on their standards through intensive reading.

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