






Developing Iraqi EFL preparatory students' performance in reading comprehension by flipped learning strategy

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Abstract

According to the researchers, the aim of this study is to determine the impact of the flipped learning approach on fifth-year students' understanding of reading content during their last year of preparatory education. To confirm the results of the study, the null hypothesis was developed, which claims that the experimental group's mean scores are not statistically significant when compared to the control group's mean scores when using the flipped learning strategy. To test the effectiveness of flipped learning, an experimental approach was used to create two equivalent experimental groups with a control group. One group learned by the flipped learning strategy and the other used the regular method for the second course (2019-2020) over eight weeks, with three classes each week. According to the findings, there are significant differences between experimental and control group means of reading comprehension and experimental group favor. The divergence in these parameters is a result of the experimental group using the Flipped Learning Strategy in their lessons.

Keywords: EFL; preparatory students; performance; reading comprehension; flipped learning; strategy

1. Introduction

Linguistic communication is a way of establishing connections between people all over the globe. It is the most crucial attribute for improving the state of a nation's affairs. "The English language is regarded the first global language, and it is utilized in every sector, including education, media, formal conferences, science and medical, trade and industry, tourism, and the economy. "It is also used in "politics." Individuals who do not speak English well, and those who do, are both important in academic contexts and in a range of social settings, and it is essential to be able to utilize the four language skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. In the field of education, students studying English as a second language place a high value on reading abilities, as it is the primary source of exposure to the target language in most cases (Kibui, 2012).

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Grellet (1996: 8) adds that relecture is not isolated from other abilities. This is the whole total of what is said or written about any work that is read. The ability to understand what one reads is connected to the act of reading. Children strive to comprehend written words by absorbing entire sentences, phrases, and paragraphs, so they may fully understand the general meaning of a document. Communication requires an understanding of reading comprehension. This gives all students the opportunity to pursue their interests in all academic subjects. EFL students benefit from it since it exposes them to a real-world language and helps them to both speak and read with a voice of their own (Sikiotis, 1981: 300 & Ali et al., 2019).

The ultimate goal of all reading is comprehension, and it is what readers achieve through reading (Cohen and Cowen, 2005).

Wigfield et al., (2005: 45) contend that reading comprehension is the method of developing meaning from written texts. Cognitive strategies such as questioning, measuring comprehension, summarizing, and activating prior knowledge are included.

The fundamental purpose of learning English in Iraqi schools is to improve pupils' ability to communicate effectively with others. In order to effectively communicate, clear and specific attention on the true growth of all four abilities is required: speaking, listening, writing, and reading are all skills that may be growth through practice (Harris et al., 2009).

Children of all ages are told to become proficient readers. Ali, Al-Rifa, & Hamad (2019) describe it as a joint creative process in which readers take into account their existing knowledge of a text as they interpret, respond to, and connect with it.

A man's capacity to absorb written content is something that he may learn and practice. Due to the fact that understanding is the aim of reading, the connection between the text and the reader is transformed into one that is participatory in nature. (Rivers, 1981; Hammad et al., 2018).

By following the curriculum implemented in Iraqi schools by the Ministry of Education, students' reading comprehension skills, as well as other language abilities, are expected to be strengthened. A large number of reading passages are furnished for this aim; yet, many students find difficulties with understanding. When the learners complete their elementary school courses, they show little evidence of having developed these abilities (Bairmani et al., 2021).

Students have difficulties grasping the transcript while they are reading the text, as revealed by the researcher via several studies in the area of education. Prior to attempting to treat them using the Flipped Learning Strategy, the researchers tried to identify different sub-skills, such as reading for specific words, reading for details, and reading for the gist, that might be addressed.

It has been shown in studies that the standard method of teaching may be unsuccessful for certain children. Traditional lecture places a strong emphasis on the instructor and does not place as much emphasis on the pupils as it does on the teacher.

Improved student-teacher relationships may be achieved via the use of student-centered communication and teaching by teachers. In order to enhance this connection, Huang (2016) advocated that communication in the classroom should be a two-way discussion. Improved communication between students and teachers has been seen in classrooms where modern teaching approaches such as blended learning or flipped learning have been used (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).

Although the authors of *Ibid* did not explicitly mention flipped learning in their work, they found that students with previous understanding of a topic had more in-depth discussions on the topic than students with no previous knowledge. In conventional lecture, information is acquired almost completely via lectures, with homework assignments undertaken after the knowledge has been mastered to help students reinforce their understandings of the material.

Prior knowledge is acquired at home in the case of flipped learning approaches, for example. This allows for more time in the classroom to be spent on the application of existing knowledge and experience with unfamiliar ideas. Various sorts of research have aided in the development of innovative teaching approaches, for example (Dehham, 2021).

Some instructors and students may find the conventional method of instruction appealing. Traditional instructional methods, such as lectures, have certain advantages. According to current research, when new teaching techniques are used instead of traditional ones, these advantages are reduced (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Because many teachers and students have never experienced non-traditional lecture or other instructional methods, they may feel uncomfortable and maybe apprehensive, making them less able to fully participate in the learning process.

Turning classrooms upside down has been advocated as a cutting-edge strategy for educators to use in schools all around the globe. The advantages of flipped learning are many, and include a more student-centered classroom, higher student involvement as well as motivation, and better student results, among other things (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Huang, 2016). Flipped learning, according to its proponents, is an extension of the traditional classroom (Kareem et al., 2019; Bishop & Verleger, 2013).

Flipped learning enables instructors to integrate activities in both the classroom and the student's home life. Memorization and rote learning abilities are developed via at-home exercises. Application, analysis, and assessment are the primary focuses of in-class activities. As a result, flipped learning allows for greater in the classroom, there will be many levels of learning (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016).

It is significant to note that flipped learning is a method of ensuring that students rectify any misunderstandings or mistakes that are exhibited during class hours. In general, learners may restructure their understandings, own thoughts, and ideas by making it less difficult to acquire material, which can help them learn more effectively (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). These advantages demonstrate why instructors are adapting to modern teaching approaches such as flipped learning, among other things.

The purpose of this research is to determine how effectively Iraqi EFL 5th grade students improve their performance in reading comprehension by using a flipped learning strategy in the classroom.

It was proposed to test the following hypothesis in order to achieve the study's objective:

According to the hypothesis:

"A statistically significant difference between the scores of participants who learn reading comprehension using the Flipped Learning Strategy and those of the test group who learn reading comprehension using the prescribed technique does not exist in this study".

2. Literature Review

Reading, according to Nuttal (1982), is the clarification of written or printed signals that is enriched with meaning. Those who read may notice symbols and attempt to decipher their meaning at any point throughout the process of understanding them or immediately after they have been sent. The reader has particular reading qualities that are connected with it. The first component deals with symbols as if they were visual objects, but the second component deals with the meaning that symbols have for us. What a reader can read is determined by the interaction between a reader's linguistic and cognitive skills, as well as his or her world knowledge and capacity to comprehend visual information. During this technique, the reader attempts to convey the writer's intended meaning as accurately as possible (Rahoomi et al., 2019; Rivers, 1981 & Dehham et al., 2021).

The reader must understand the content while he or she is reading it in order to fully absorb it. The goal of reading a book is determined by the reader's ability to comprehend what they are reading. To put it another way, understanding is a precondition for comprehension. The act of constructing a meaning or understanding previously read content is referred to as the capacity to comprehend what has been read. Understanding a book is a collaborative effort that involves the reader's prior knowledge as well as the text in its entirety.

It is necessary to relate what you read to your own experiences for the comprehension to be truly effective. Merely understanding individual words, phrases, and texts does not constitute full language comprehension.

Smith (1982) contends that comprehension is an essential component of reading, and doing something sensible, like reading to oneself, is certainly a logical thing to do. It is readers' job to make sense of what they find in written materials, which may include letters, symbols, or charts. Therefore, they understand the message from the text.

In addition, Doyle (2004) regards comprehension as a skill that starts out attaching meaning to one part of a text and then works up to the entire reading selection. The ability to gain and recognize the main idea and topic sentences in a text is at the heart of all comprehension (Abbas et al., 2018; Abood & Alalwany, 2021).

Reading comprehension is a complex intellectual process, as Rubin (1993) points out, which requires multiple abilities. The word meaning and verbal reasoning abilities are the two major components. Reading comprehension is needed for reading, and reading is necessary for reading comprehension. Because of this, reading demands comprehension.

Reading comprehension, according to William (2009:332), is defined as the capacity to understand literature, absorb its meaning, and integrate it with one's current knowledge after having read it. The meaning of a sentence is established by the words that make up the phrase.

Reading comprehension, according to Oude (2012: 20), is the capacity to derive meaning from any kind of written text. In order to be effective in reading comprehension, it is essential to have a good grip on word meanings, to understand the meaning of a word based on its context, and to be able to comprehend the structure of a paragraph and identify its antecedents and allusions. A passage's content can be inferred from its literary or propositional structures; it can also be identified as a main idea; it can be answered as a question; it can be identified as an arrangement of literary or propositional structures and its tone can be determined as an arrangement of literary or propositional structures. (8) Communication of situational mood comprehension via remarks, inquiries, requests, and refrains Finally, assuming the writer's aim, intention, and point of view, as well as making judgments about the writer (discourse-semantics), is the final step (Davis, 1944; Kelly, 2004; & Dehham et al., 2020).

In Nuttal's view (as presented in the next few sections), there are five types of reading comprehension: paraphrase, paraphrase, paraphrase, paraphrase, paraphrase. Identifying the central point, locating concrete information, or a specific passage Identifying Reference, Inference, and Vocabulary Understanding. The figure 1 explains about the Reading Comprehension Matrix.

The Comprehension Matrix

	The reader	The text	The situation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interest ■ Emotional state ■ Physical state ■ Strategies known ■ Background knowledge ■ Self-image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Layout ■ Style ■ Organization ■ Vocabulary ■ Concept load ■ Illustrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The purpose ■ Activities that help students construct/extend their understanding
Prereading	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Get students interested ■ Build and activate background knowledge ■ Model strategies Example: Observing real objects, discussion, list-group-label, graphic organizers	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help students understand text structure ■ Introduce new concepts and vocabulary Example: Picture walk, organizational walk-through, graphic organizers	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a purpose for the reading Example: K-W-L, anticipation guide
During reading	SILENT READING Occasionally, activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help students use strategies ■ Model thinking Example: DRTA, ReQuest, think-aloud	SILENT READING Occasionally, activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus student attention on text structures ■ Help students understand vocabulary and concepts Example: Reading guides, story maps	SILENT READING Occasionally, activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a purpose for the reading ■ Helps students construct and extend their understanding Example: Reading guides, pattern guides
Postreading	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extend understanding ■ Help students solidify strategies Example activities: news reports	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help students understand vocabulary and concepts Example activities: labeled drawings or other graphic organizers	Activities that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use ideas from the reading ■ Help students construct and extend their understanding Example activities: timelines, graphic organizers

Figure 1. Reading Comprehension Matrix (Farrell & Farrell, 2009:18)

3. Flipped Learning Strategy

For most learners who are used to conventional learning modes, online learning without extra classroom teacher-learner interaction is a completely new and distinct experience from traditional learning modes. This exact reality necessitates the necessity for ongoing review of the teaching style and the direction of learners in order to provide the optimum learning chances (Aromaih, 2021).

According to Ahmad and Arifin (2021: 640), flipped learning has begun to establish a reputation in higher education environments because it is seen as a viable alternative to traditional teaching approaches.

According to Diab (2016), when it comes to implementing snap-on teaching, whereby the computer takes over the work of delivering instructional information so that the time it has to utilize the contents it learns actively, the use of technology for teaching is a requirement. Snap-on teaching is defined as follows:

A teaching strategy that was developed for in-person courses but also featured an at-home, online component was created for this project. The traditional classroom is turned upside down or inverted with this method. Through the use of teacher-developed materials, direct teaching is delivered at home, enabling class time to be spent studying and expanding on the topic and connecting with peers to fulfill individual learning requirements (Park & Kim, 2014).

Aromaih (2021) asserts that communication is a fundamental component of the EFL learning environment, and that collective knowledge is formed primarily via the dialogic engagement of students in a dialogic context. When selecting whether to use synchronous, asynchronous, or a combination of the two modes of online instruction, the course content and goals play a significant impact in determining which mode to use.

In contrast, Bergmann & Sams (2012) say that flipped teaching is a new teaching technique which tries, through technology and moving homework, to improve student engagement and performance and exercise with concepts in the classroom by means of learning activities, to improve the lecture outside the classroom.

Girmen and Kaya (2019) define the flipped classroom as a teaching system that emphasizes interactive and social learning, with students completing preparatory and post-class activities to ensure that they derive the maximum benefit from in-class instruction.

Ibid has demonstrated that in traditional education, students must always interrelate with the content before it is accepted in the classroom, which means that the primary focus in the EFL classroom is on mastery of grammar, speaking, writing, literature, society, or any of the other fluids stated through the learning consequences, rather than on content knowledge. Figure 2 sketch about the activities in flipped classroom and traditional classroom.

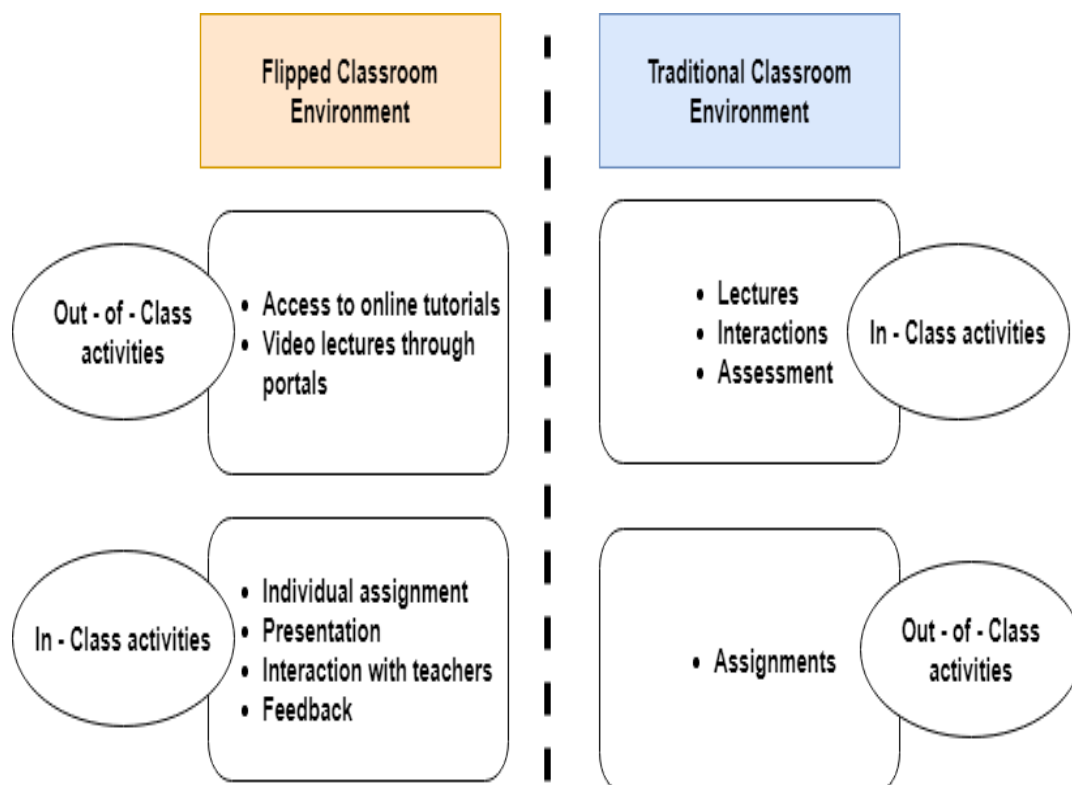


Figure 2. Activities in Flipped Classroom and Traditional classroom (Alwehebi, 2021)

Since the study of the new language skills that demand greater communication between students, classroom instruction has been structured by the theory of constructivism while teaching new concepts. Since students learn new language skills.

McDonald & Smith (2013) proposed that instructors move the abilities of higher-order thinking towards the classroom by reversing the taxonomy of Bloom (see Figure 3). If educators flip the taxonomy of Bloom and move the lower phases of recalling and understanding out of the school by

employing technology, students may utilize higher level thinking skills such as usage, analysis, evaluation, and production in the classroom (Ibid).

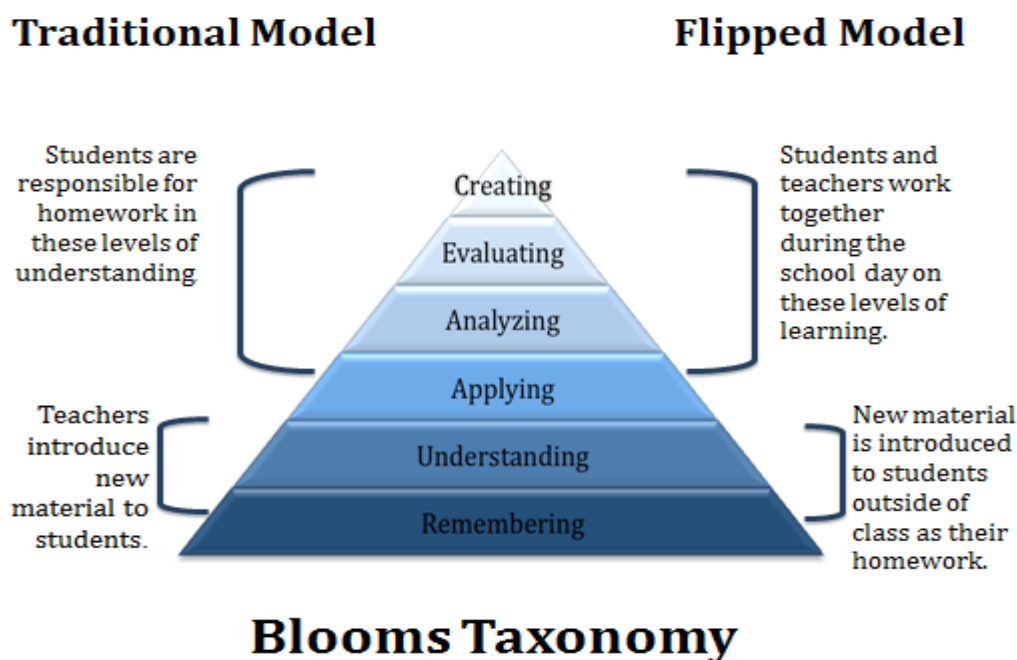


Figure 3. Bloom's Taxonomy in Flipped Classroom, (Williams: 2009)

4. Classroom Studies Related to Many Subjects

Ruddick (2012) employed a rounded-class strategy in his chemistry classes, which he found effective. Students in flipped courses may watch videos created by the instructor at home before coming to class to complete their assignments. According to the study's findings, students who took more exams performed better than typical students in terms of overall performance and test scores.

On a secondary level course at high schools in Kentucky, Johnson and Renner (2012) are studying the effect of the sloppy classroom approach. Six weeks of study took place, with two groups: one with a flipped training in a classroom and the other with a standard education in a classroom (Johnson & Renner, 2012).

5. Methodology

5.1. Design of Experiment

Two groups: control and experimentation group (Tavakoly, 2012: 264) are tested before and post-testing design. The two groups are tested beforehand, and only the experimental group has a reversed style of learning (independent variable); the control group is educated by the traditional way.

The two groups were also given a post-test to check the change in the dependent variable (reading comprehension) and make sure the difference was statistically significant.

5.2. Population of Samples

In the academic year of Babel's Governorate, the population of the research included female Students of 5th grade from preparatory schools (2019-2020).

5.3. Sample

Students from Al Huda Middle School were classified into two groups, A and B, in order to engage in a sample collection. Section A was randomly assigned to the test group, whereas Section B was randomly assigned to the control group. In the experimental and control groups, there were 36 and 37 students, respectively, in each group. Following the first removal of repeaters from the individual groups, the experimental and control groups were lowered to 30 and 31 pupils respectively, as a result of the initial removal of repeaters from the individual groups. (See Table 1 for additional details)

Table 1. The Sample

Group	Section	Students' No. before exclusion	Students' No. after exclusion
Experimental	A	36	30
Control	B	37	31
Total		73	61

To enroll in the first-class exam, pupils must be at least 10 months old, have graduated from school, and have a proficient grasp of the English language. To ensure equality between the two groups, certain values have been tweaked. All variables within the two groups had been accounted for, and the two groups were identical in all facets of the experimental design.

5.4. Test Application

The experimental and control groups received their respective findings on February 24 about the performance in the pre-and post-tests.

The post-test was completed by both groups on April 19, 2019, according to the results. The reliability methods for the post-test were developed using the pre-test scoring technique, the validity pilot research, the item issue, and item discrimination as the foundation. Following evaluation by a panel of 15 applied linguistics specialists and language instructors, the exam's wording was slightly changed to guarantee its long-term usefulness and validity.

6. Results

To test the hypothesis of the research, data from the pre- and post-test is statistically assessed. The goal of this research is to compare pre- and post-test results in two different groups.

6.1. Experimental vs. Control Group Post-Test Scores Comparison

In the flipped learning method, the experimental group had post-test scores of (38.00), while the control group had post-test scores of (22.75), so the experimental group did better.

Using this T-test formula, it is possible to ascertain whether two groups differ statistically. The tabulated T-value is; however, the post-test T-value is (5.422). The groups differ within a 63 degree of freedom range at the 0.05 significance level, as we can see (see Table 2). The claim that no significant difference exists between the experimental group's mean reading comprehension scores and the control group's mean reading comprehension scores when teaching via a flipped learning strategy is incorrect. Finally, the mean scores for the two groups differed statistically.

Table 2. T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Post-test

Group	No	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					CTV	TTV	
Experimental	30	38.00	13.75	63	5.422	2	0.05
Control	31	22.75	8.11				

6.2. Comparison of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Control Group

The post-test mean was the opposite (23.593). One-sample T-tests are used to discover if pre- and post-test results are significantly different. According to the numbers, the T-value is (20.712), but it is also listed as (20.712). (2). While, pre- and post-test results are similar. The post-test results are only slightly higher (see Table 3).

Table 3. T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Pre- and Post-test for the Control Group

Test	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of Significance
					CTV	TTV	
Pre-test	31	23.125	9.061	62	20.712	2	0.05
Post-test	31	23.593	9.122				

6.3. Comparison of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group

The mean scores of the experimental group were 21.515 before and after the tests, and they were 38.000 after the tests. Another one-sample T-test is performed to determine if the results of the pre- and post-tests vary. When comparing the results of the tabulated and calculated T-tests, the tabulated T-test result was (15.454), whereas the computed T-test result was (15.454) (15.454). (15.454). (15.454) is the area code for the city of Chicago (2). It would be discovered that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test, with a p-value of 0. (0.05). As seen in Table 4, the group of experimental outperformed the group of control on the post-test, representative that the study was successful.

Table 4. T-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the Pre- and Post-test for the Experimental Group

Test	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of Significance
					CTV	TTV	
Pre-test	30	21.515	12.949	64	15.454	2	0.05
Post-test	30	38.000	13.756				

7. Discussion of the Results

The results of the investigation revealed a significant difference between the test and control groups. The experimental group received a mean score of (38.00) on the post-test, while the control group had a mean score of (36.00). (22.75). According to the results of the tests, the kids in the experimental group outperformed the pupils in the control group. It has been shown that a flip learning strategy, which is used to educate fifth grade students in the experimental group, is more effective, advantageous, and preferred to conventional teaching methods when it comes to reading comprehension than normal teaching techniques.

8. Conclusions

According on the empirical data offered in this study as well as the researcher's observations during the experiment, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. The Flipped Learning Strategy, which is used to teach reading comprehension skills to second-year intermediate students, has a significant influence on the development of general ability in these students. In terms of psychology, using the Flipped Learning Strategy to teach reading comprehension skills engages pupils and produces an atmosphere of excitement and interest, leading them to disruption the pattern and engages in other activities instead.

2. The Flipped Learning Strategy provides students with opportunities to practice social development, which is a vital life skill. It has been shown that the Flipped Learning foreign language learning technique results in more freedom for students since they have several chances to practice their language skills without direct teacher direction.

3. It is not only feasible for low-level students to engage in classroom activities using the flipped learning technique, but it also provides them with more opportunities to learn from and question their peers.

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