

An Impact of Explicit Teaching of Reading Strategies on the Reading Motivation of Pakistani ESL Learners

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Abstract



Researchers advise teachers to help students develop a passion for reading to enhance their reading abilities. This action research aims to ascertain the effect of explicit teaching of reading strategies on Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners. The students received explicit reading strategy instruction over a four-month period in two cycles. The data was gathered with the help of a questionnaire i.e. Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) before and after the intervention stage. The findings show that teaching reading strategies explicitly ensures a positive impact on students' motivation to read. As a result, it is discovered that students can get motivated to read if they are familiar with reading strategies, but what is the primary step to create initially is an interactive and interesting environment in the classroom. This study is important for language educators and teacher educators who want to motivate students. It additionally reinforces the usefulness of various existing reading strategies for motivating learners at a Pakistani private institution.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Motivation, Reading Strategies, Explicit Teaching

Introduction

English is valued in many spheres of Pakistani society, including commerce, education, law, and the judicial system (Mehrpour et al., 2011). The inadequate attention to reading in schools in Pakistan is perhaps one of many reasons for the low competence in the English language (Christie & Afzal, 2005; Warsi, 2004). According to Anjomshoaa et al. (2012), reading is crucial for developing the other three language skills of listening, speaking and writing. According to research, educators must promote reading among current, and future literacy specialists in order to empower students (Nathanson et al., 2008). Zare (2007) also emphasizes the importance of skilled reading to succeed in higher education. In Pakistani society, it appears that reading does not receive the importance it demands (Christie & Afzal, 2005; Warsi, 2004). In this regard, Iqbal (2008) claims that Pakistani students often open their books because they receive a simplified version of their textbooks in the form of ready-made notes.

According to Wigfield & Eccles (2000), a person's assessment of their reading ability affects their motivation to read. For struggling readers, the low perception of reading capability might be a motivational barrier (ibid). As indicated by Torgesen et al. (2007), a lack of interest and desire may lead to less time devoted to the reading material, which in turn reduces practice and experience. It affects how well they read; fluently, productively, and with knowledge. Suyitno (2017) asserts that these characteristics distinguish proficient readers from struggling readers. Because of this, motivated students read more consistently (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012; Wigfield & Tongs, 2004; William-Pierce, 2011). According to Torgesen et al. (2007), the behavior of motivated readers includes determination, perpetual efforts, and persistence. This beneficial reading behavior allows readers to process information in their minds as they read (Suyitno, 2017).

The literature reveals that a reading culture must be promoted in society (Younus & Khan, 2017) as students will be unable to compete in the rapidly changing world without being skilled readers (Anjomshoaa, 2012). To succeed in their professional and academic pursuits, Grabe (2009) believes that members of present-day societies must be proficient readers. He adds that educating learners about various reading strategies would help them improve their reading abilities. As a result,

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reading skills can be strengthened if a student is familiar with reading strategies; nevertheless, the motivation to read must come first (Khurram, 2015).

Mustafa (2010) claims that the Pakistani government lacks the motivation to encourage reading among the youth. Besides that, Younus & Khan (2017) claim that reading is taught in Pakistan using conventional ways, even though these methods have failed to generate proficient, independent English readers. Conventional methods of teaching reading include using exercises from poor-quality textbooks that encourage memorization and rote learning (ibid.). However, as Vygotsky (1999) mentioned, the main goal of learning is to create an independent and autonomous individual. Therefore, a more independent and self-reliant method is required to teach students reading. Moreover, the reading proficiency of students in Pakistan's lower socioeconomic classes is alarmingly low (Ansari, 2015). According to Mustafa (2010) and Muhammad (2013), students from the Sindh Board education have low reading abilities and encounter many challenges at the university level.

The literature reveals that research on reading motivation at the university level is scarce in native English-speaking nations, although studies for the primary and secondary levels are in abundance. Furthermore, in Pakistan, there are limited studies available on reading motivation at the university level. This gap was further explored in this present study. It aims to determine how explicit teaching of reading strategies impacts students' motivation to read in the Pakistani ESL undergraduate program.

Research Question

This study examines the following question:

- What impact does the explicit teaching of reading strategies have on students' motivation to read in a classroom?

Literature Review

Reading

According to Smith (2012), reading is a multifaceted skill that involves decoding symbols, and deducing their meanings. It lays the groundwork for mastering listening, speaking, and writing (Mahar, 2008). According to Ashraf & Ahmed (2003), reading extensively is the only effective way to improve language proficiency. Lee and Schallert (2016) found a connection between reading, and writing skills. They identified that improved comprehension of the texts makes it easier to incorporate textual structures into writing. According to Senechal & LeFevre (2002), learners improve their vocabulary and listening skills if they have access to reading materials. Mart (2012) stated that reading extensively will help in vocabulary acquisition resulting in enhanced speaking ability.

Reading Motivation

According to Lau and Chan (2003), cognitive and motivational factors are crucial for developing reading skills. Cambria & Guthrie (2010) states that the terms "interest" and "motivation" are synonymous. Dornyei (2001), explains that "motivation" refers to a cause for doing something or behaving in a certain way. According to Taboada et al. (2009), motivation helps students succeed by improving their cognitive skills and reading comprehension. They further added that motivation not only boosts reading performance but also the development and application of other skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing. De Naeghel et al. (2012) indicate that reading motivation is multifaceted and numerous factors can encourage learners to read. They also believe that reading autonomy has positive effects, including higher reading frequency, enhanced reading interest, and better comprehension. Wigfield & Guthrie (1997) identify that learners are perceived to be driven either extrinsically or intrinsically. Therefore, to encourage students to become avid readers, teachers should raise students' intrinsic motivation while lowering their extrinsic motivation.

Reading Strategies

According to Afflerbach et al. (2008), "the cognitive components of information processing" began to be referred to as "reading strategies" in the 1970s. As explained by Sheorey & Mukhtiar (2008), reading strategies can be defined as "comprehension strategies to decipher the text, comprehend the words, and infer their meanings". Moreover, Khurram (2015) explained reading strategies as "specific actions, mental and/or physical, consciously employed by the reader in order to achieve and adapt cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social goals and objectives during and through reading."

Pressley (2002) claims that the process of reading comprehension involves pre-, while, and post-reading strategies. Pre-reading strategies include planning and setting reading objectives,

skimming, generating predictions, and activating prior knowledge. To become efficient and strategic readers, they must have a predefined reading objective, and select an appropriate strategy. While-reading strategies involve rereading, making notes, and inferring the meaning. Post-reading consists of summarizing.

Studies on Reading, Reading Motivation, and Reading Strategies

Khand (2004) identifies the below-average English reading ability of Pakistani students at various school, college, and university levels, which reflects in their poor academic performance. Khan & Pandian, (2014) attribute this to substandard reading instruction at the school level, subsequently resulting in low reading motivation. Butt et al. (2019) examined the reading habits of tertiary-level students in Pakistan across different fields. They selected 600 undergraduates from six different universities majoring in various subjects. They highlighted that reading is a crucial skill for success in academics and otherwise. They further added that reading habits involve reading magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. This quantitative study indicated that students only read their academic books. The reasons for bad reading habits include anxiousness, ineffective time management, a lack of materials, and a lack of support from parents and teachers.

Ullah & Fatema (2013) investigated different causes of disinterest in reading, using both public and private university students in Bangladesh. To gather and examine the data, they used a mixed-method approach employing simple random sampling. To collect the responses, teachers and students were each given a questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended statements. The study identified the characteristics like the poor performance of students, the absence of teacher training, and the difficult and boring reading texts as the major causes of disinterest in reading. The paper also included some suggestions to motivate learners to read in class. It does not, however, emphasize how crucial reading strategies are for motivating learners in a classroom.

Khurram (2016) in her pioneering study explored how metacognition of reading strategies can be promoted in a classroom at the tertiary level, an area that was under researched previously. Metacognition involves self-awareness and self-understanding of one's thought processes. She investigated how teaching methods affect students' awareness, use, and regulation of reading strategies. Over the course of two action research cycles, data was gathered using "interviews, learner diaries, think-aloud protocols, class feedback slips, researcher journals, note-taking, questionnaires, and reading tests". The reading strategies used were prediction, activating prior knowledge, identifying the main idea, skimming, and scanning. The results indicated that the metacognition of reading strategies among the students was enhanced by using explicit instruction, providing opportunities for group discussions regarding strategy use, and helping raise reading motivation. Moreover, the metacognition worked along the motivation throughout the lessons which not only helped in increasing students' reading interest but also in raising awareness, use, and regulation of the reading strategies. She used different "motivational teaching practices" to enhance the reading interest among students. However, her major focus was not to promote reading motivation but to promote metacognition of reading strategies.

Abdelhalim (2017) proposed an instructional method to enhance reading interest and reading comprehension at a university in KSA. He used two groups in a quasi-experimental design. The interventions spanned 12 weeks and included 10 classes. The experimental group received varied reading strategies as well as reading engagement tasks, while the control group undertook only reading comprehension exercises. Previewing, questioning, rereading and reflecting were the strategies employed to teach comprehension to the experimental group. Data was collected by a reading comprehension test and a survey about reading interest. According to the findings, the experimental group developed both their reading comprehension skills and interest however the control group just slightly improved their reading comprehension abilities. On the other hand, Fu (2014) investigated how motivational techniques support reading strategies to upgrade undergraduate students' English reading ability. In order to investigate this, he explored the following questions: (a) does the use of motivational techniques in an intensive reading class help students improve their English proficiency? (b) Do motivational techniques help learners become interested in and feel less anxious about participating in language class tasks? (c) How does students' motivation relate to their reading ability? (d) The students' level of motivation, or if they are sufficiently driven to read utilizing motivational techniques; and (e) The role of the instructor in motivating learners to read and the methods by which he or she improves it. Acting, planning, observing, and reflecting were the four

cycles that made up this action research. Different tools, including classroom observations, questionnaires, teacher diaries, and informal interviews, were used for data collection and analysis. The strategies taught to the students were as follows: “preview; contextual cues; questioning; reflection/examination of personal responses; outlining and summarizing; evaluating an argument; and contrasting and comparing related readings”. The findings showed that motivational techniques were effective in improving the passive situation that existed in English classrooms.

The above two mentioned studies show an effective link between reading, motivation, and reading strategies. The former study, emphasizes more on improving reading comprehension through various reading strategies and less not on motivating students to become proficient readers. The later study, however, disregards the significance of reading strategies for motivating EFL learners. Instead, it concentrates on motivational strategies in a reading classroom. Therefore, more research is required to better understand how explicitly teaching reading strategies affects motivation in tertiary ESL situations in Pakistan.

Methodology

The current study adopted an action research methodology to investigate the impact of explicit reading strategies on the students' motivation to read.

Research Design

There were two cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting in this action research study. The first cycle began in September 2019 and finished in November 2019, during the Fall semester. The second cycle began in January 2020 and finished in March 2020 i.e. during the Spring semester. Both the first two sessions of each cycle served as the pre-intervention phase, facilitating a general understanding of the students' attitudes, anxieties, and competencies, particularly in reading. The main objective of the pre-intervention phase was to establish a rapport with the students and make sessions engaging and student-centered. Concurrently, notes were also taken on how the class is organized for teaching and learning, the seating arrangement, student-student and teacher-student interaction, and other relevant data.

The third session marked the beginning of the intervention stage, during which reading strategies were introduced to maintain students' motivation and interest in reading. Prediction, activating prior knowledge, questioning, extracting the main idea, skimming, scanning, and contextual clues were the selected reading strategies. These reading strategies were incorporated into teaching techniques in an effort to increase students' interest in reading. The teaching techniques include discussions about the significance of reading and reading strategies, teacher modeling, guided and independent practice, and collaborative peer work. For effective teaching of reading strategies, teacher modeling was performed to elaborate on the use and application of each reading strategy. This helped the students to comprehend the implementation of these strategies for further readings. Moreover, students were given ample opportunities for peer discussions which helped them in sharing, reflecting, and interpreting their texts. Students were also assigned many pair and group work activities that helped to promote active learning and provide the students a chance to practice the reading strategies together. Every new intervention session was developed using feedback slip replies from the students, and observations of the teaching-learning process.

Sample and Sampling Technique

For both cycles, the population was first-semester B.S. students with majors in media sciences, business, engineering, etc. at a private university in Karachi. They were between the ages of 18 and 22. The sample was chosen through the use of convenience sampling and the Functional English class served as the sample.

Data Collection Tools

The Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) has been adapted for this study. In 1996, Dr. Allan Wigfield and John Guthrie created it to evaluate a number of aspects of reading motivation through different behavioral and attitudinal statements supplemented by demographic information. The data was collected in two cycles of the action research for the purpose of exploring the impact of explicit teaching of reading strategies on reading motivation. The students were given the MRQ at the beginning and toward the end of both cycles to track changes in their motivation to read.

Data Analysis

To assess the effectiveness of the intervention stage, pre-and post-questionnaires were analyzed by means of SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics involving percentages and the mean of the data were employed to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the responses of the students before and after teaching the reading strategies. Those MRQ components that were consistent with the goal of this study have been chosen for the analysis. Based on their similarities, the chosen items are separated into four separate constructs. The four constructs are: Current Motivation; willingness; Importance of Reading and Contextual cue strategy.

MRQ Analysis of Cycle 1:

S.No.	Construct	pre-mean score	post-mean score
1	Current Motivation	1.43	3.03
2	Contextual Cue	2.05	2.93
3	Importance of Reading	1.33	3.21
4	Willingness to Read	1.26	3.10

Table 1: Comparison of mean values of pre & post MRQs

The pre-mean value of the ‘current motivation’ construct was calculated as 1.43; however, in the post-questionnaire, the mean value increased slightly to 3.03. This indicates that students had below-average current motivation before the interventions and it shifted to average after the sessions. Also, for contextual clues, there is an increase in the mean value showing that students started using this strategy. For the importance of reading, as evident from the table, the students became more aware of the significance of reading that it plays in academics and also in their professional life. The last construct shows students’ willingness for reading, again the mean value has shifted from below average to average indicating an increase in the motivation for reading.

Below are the percentage of the mean results presented in the form of bar-graphs. These were taken from a comparison of the MRQ responses provided by the students both before and after the sessions. The bar graphs show each construct with their respective items and their results:

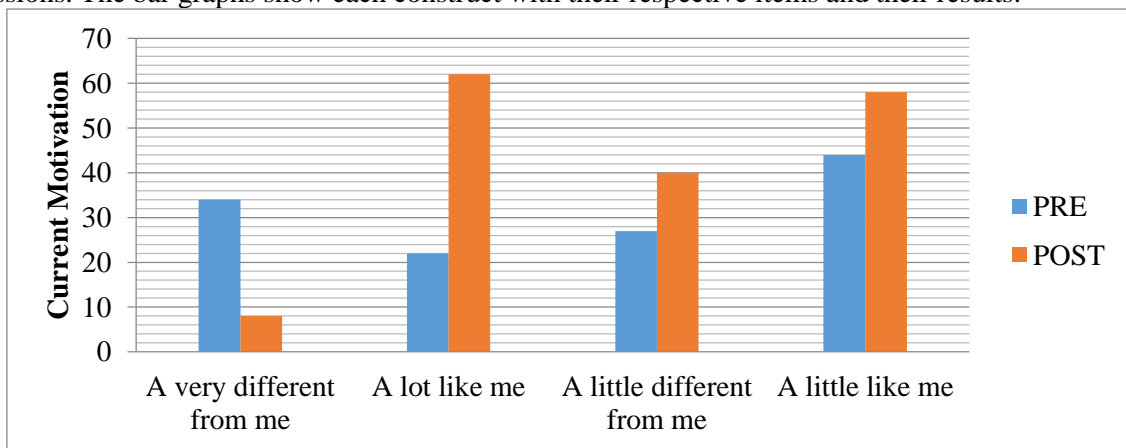


Figure 1: Pre & Post- “Current Motivation” of the Students

The bar graph compares students' reading motivation levels before and after reading sessions. It depicts that after the intervention, the current reading motivation of the students has increased. Most students had minimal reading interest before the intervention, as evidenced by their replies "a very different from me." Although there is a noticeable improvement in current motivation after the intervention as many students choose "a lot like me." As a result, students' motivation to read increased due to the explicit teaching of reading strategies.

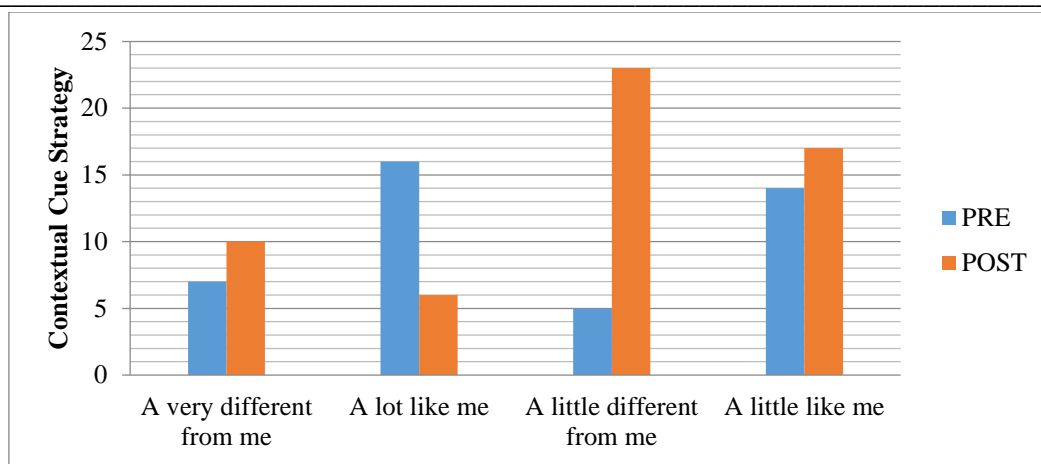


Figure 2: Pre & Post "Contextual Cue strategy" used by the Students

The item chosen for another construct, "contextual cue strategy," is "I do not like reading something when the words are too difficult." The findings indicate a change in the students' perceptions of this reading strategy. Participants' responses varied throughout the pre-MRQ, but after the intervention, their responses seem positive. Most of them choose "a little different from me," suggesting that they do not consider challenging words a substantial barrier while reading.

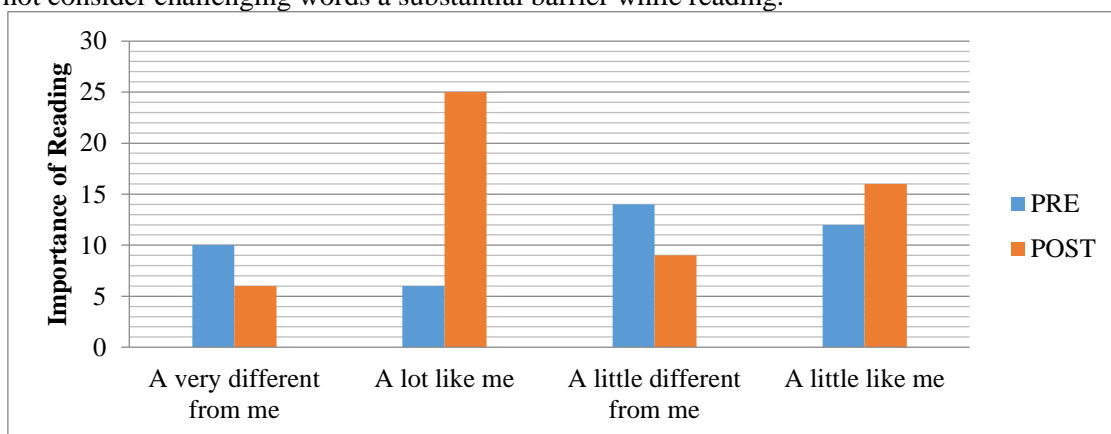


Figure 3: Pre & Post "the importance of reading" among the students

The importance of reading; "It is very important to me to be a good reader" is the third construct. Some students were already aware of the importance of reading as indicated by MRQ. However, there is a noticeable shift in the post-MRQ towards "A lot like me," showing that a number of participants now understand the value of reading. These results imply that students' understanding of the value of reading might have improved as a result of the explicit instruction of reading strategies.

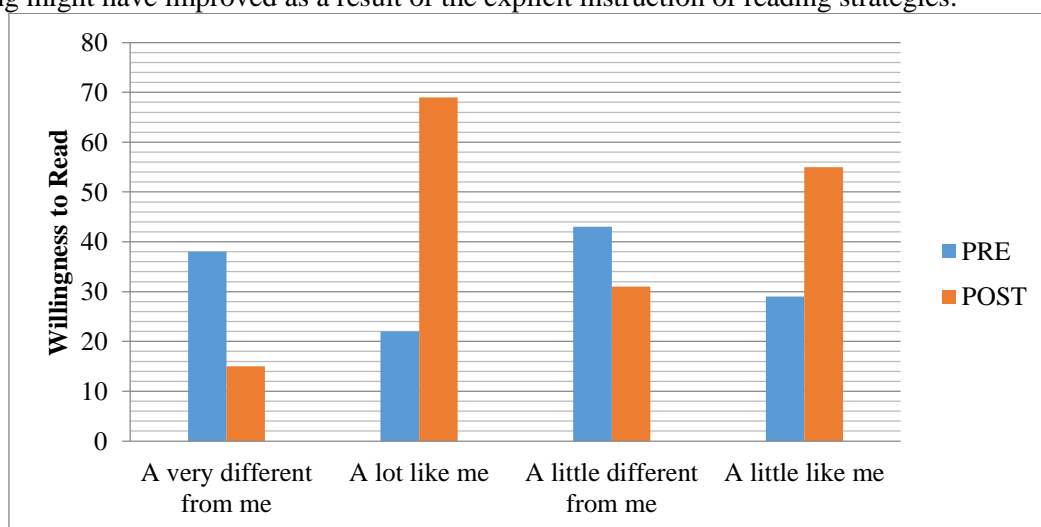


Figure 4: Pre & Post Students' "Willingness to Read"

The 'Willingness to Read' is the final and most significant construct. It is evident that the participants are more eager and driven to read. The majority of participants initially chose "A very different from me" across the three items on the pre-MRQ; however, the bar shows a significant change in the post-MRQ. The shift indicates that participants now have confidence in their ability to read well, expect to improve their reading grades, and are prepared to put in extra effort to read more proficiently than their peers.

MRQ Analysis of Cycle 2:

Like in Cycle 1, the evidence of students being motivated has been extracted from the analysis of the pre-and-post Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ).

S.no	construct	pre-mean score	post-mean score
1	Current Motivation	2.61	3.11
2	Contextual Cue	2.84	3.03
3	Importance of Reading	3.01	3.91
4	Willingness to Read	3.10	3.71

Table 2: Comparison of mean values of pre & post MRQs

Unlike in Cycle 1, where students had below-average mean values before intervention. In Cycle 2, students seem to have an average mean value indicating higher reading motivation than the previous students from Cycle 1. The pre-mean value of the 'current motivation' construct was calculated as 2.61; while, in the post-questionnaire, the mean value increased slightly to 3.11. It exhibits that students had below-average current motivation before the interventions and it shifted to average after the sessions. Also, for contextual clues, there is an increase in the mean value showing that students have started using this strategy. For the importance of reading, as evident from the table, the students have become more aware of the importance of reading that it plays in their academics and also in their professional life. The last construct shows students' willingness for reading, again the mean value has shifted from below average to average indicating an increase in the motivation for reading.

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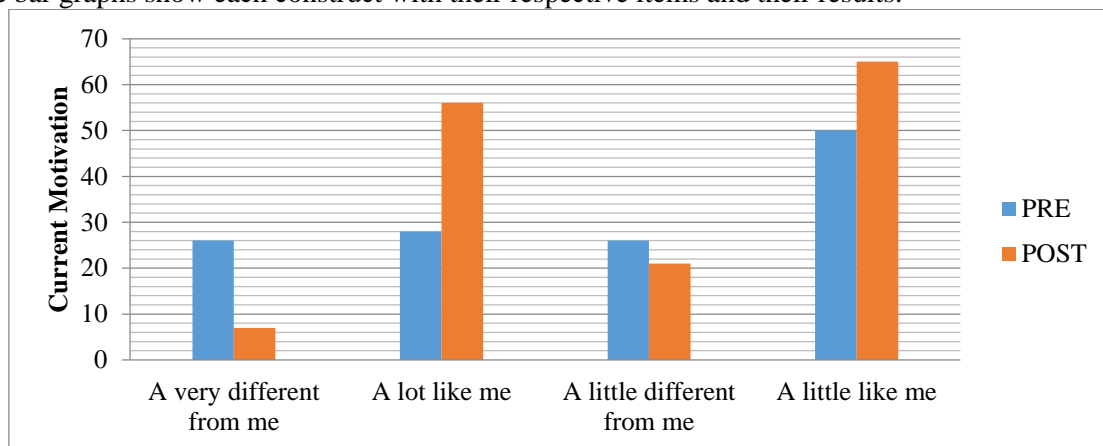


Figure 5: Pre & Post-Current Reading Motivation of the Students

The aforementioned bar graph shows that following the intervention stage, students' "current reading motivation" increased. The graph demonstrates that before the interventions, student motivation was average, while the red bar depicts a rise in student motivation. The results, while not radically different, do show a change in their level of motivation. Thus, a change from average to above-average motivation can be observed.

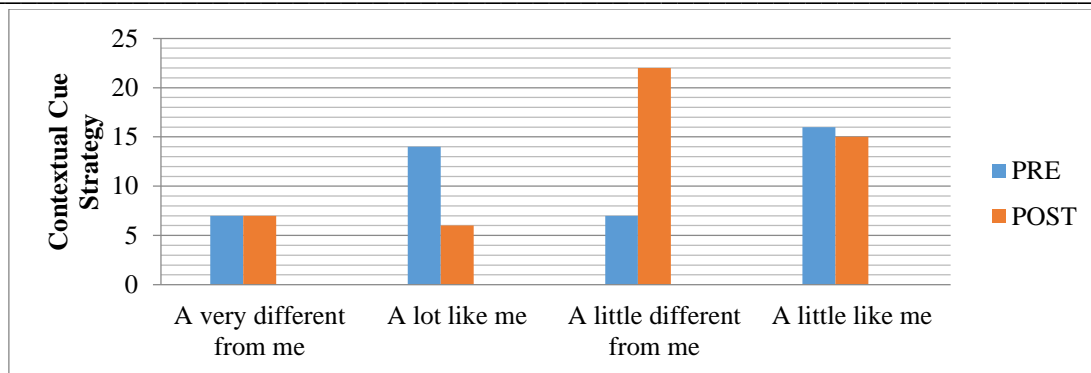


Figure 6: Pre & Post "Contextual Cue Strategy" Used by the Students

The item chosen for the other construct, "contextual cue strategy," is "I don't like reading something when the words are too difficult." The students' attitudes about using this reading strategy show a change. Participants in the pre-MRQ had demonstrated dislike towards challenging words. The post-MRQ results, however, indicate a shift in the use of this reading strategy, indicating that after acquiring the reading strategies, the learners are not reluctant to read when they come across difficult terminology.

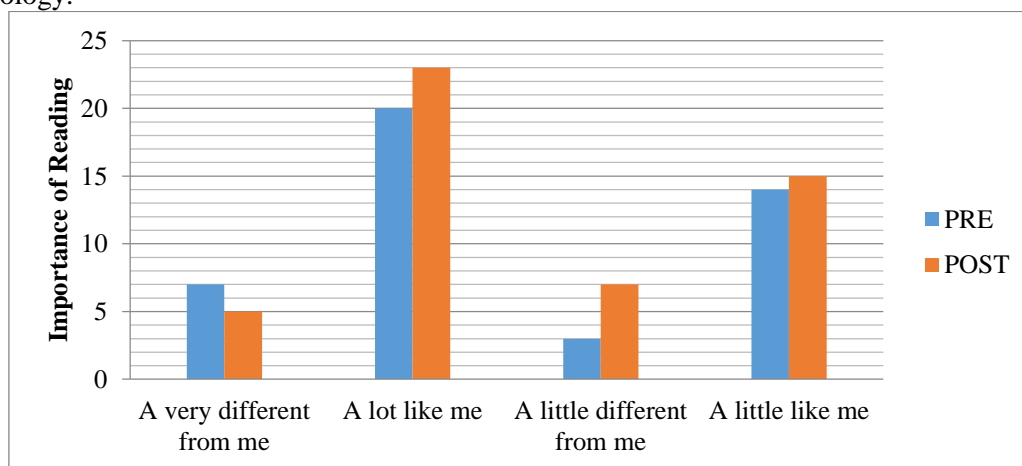


Figure 7: Pre & Post "Importance of Reading" among the Students

The importance of reading in terms of "It is very important to me to be a good reader" is the third construct. It is observed that some students in the pre-MRQ already believed that becoming an avid reader is crucial. Notably, there is a modest change in the students' responses. This leads to the conclusion that after intervention, more students are aware of the value of reading.

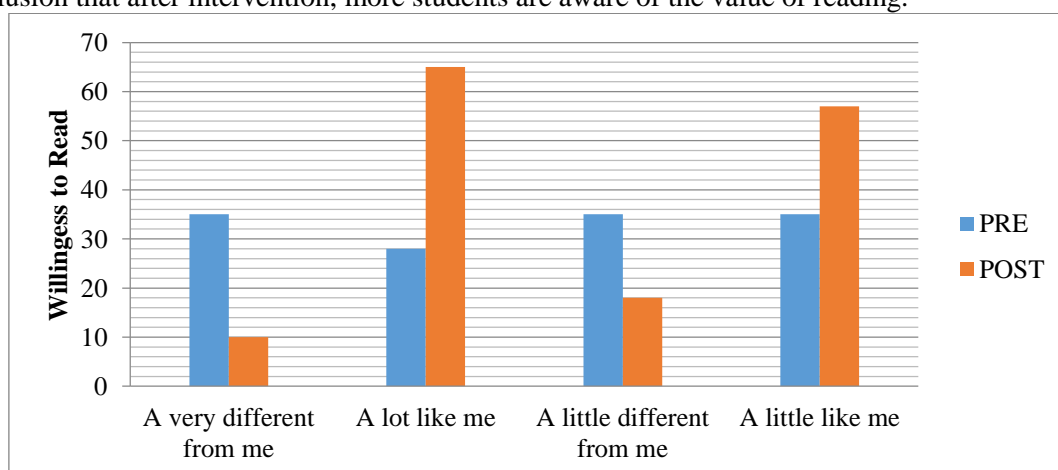


Figure 8: Pre & Post Students' "Willingness to Read"

The final and most crucial construct is "Willingness to Read." As can be observed from the graphs, participants' willingness to read was average prior to the interventions, but it underwent a significant shift following those interventions. This demonstrates their self-confidence, positive

expectations about their reading grades, and willingness to put in extra effort to read more proficiently than their friends.

Findings

According to the data from Cycles 1 and 2, students have shown a greater interest in reading because of explicit instruction of reading strategies. It is noteworthy that the students' reading motivation was initially average in Cycle 2, as opposed to the first cycle, where it was below average. However, there was a discernible improvement in the students' motivation following the interventions in both cycles.

Two main causes can be accounted for this rise in motivation. Firstly, explicit teaching of reading strategies increased motivation. Secondly, the use of motivational techniques throughout the sessions was crucial in this regard. These strategies likely contributed to the students' engagement, promoting a more positive behavior toward reading. Moreover, the students' motivation was likely boosted by the availability efficient reading strategies and approaches, which made them feel more competent and confident.

Overall, it seems clear that teaching reading strategies explicitly has a positive impact on students' motivation to read, independent of their initial reading level. This research highlights the significance of explicit reading instruction when attempting to foster a strong motivation to read.

Discussion

This study sought to determine how explicitly teaching reading strategies to students affects their motivation to read. MRQ was given before and after the intervention to achieve this goal. These pre- and post-questionnaire data were analyzed, and the outcomes demonstrated an increase in the reading motivation of the students. As was described by Baker & Wigfield, (1999); Guthrie et al., (2000); Wigfield, (2004), highly motivated students apply more reading strategies as compared to less motivated students. However, the majority of students in both cycles did not initially show any reading interest, the data show that this interest started to begin during the intervention stage. This could be credited to the reading strategies used in the sessions to increase their motivation in reading.

There have been a few limitations to using MRQ as the only data collection tool. Firstly, the social desirability bias might have affected the responses of the students. It causes participants to respond according to societal standards or researcher preferences. Secondly, since MRQ is a quantitative tool, it does not provide in-depth insights into participants' motivation. For that, including qualitative interviews alongside MRQ could have produced a more well-rounded and thorough understanding of different aspects of reading motivation.

To boost students' confidence in their reading abilities, they were informed that the challenges they face while reading might be a result of an ineffective choice of reading strategy instead of a lack of abilities. According to research, students' self-perceived capabilities influence their level of effort while completing tasks (Paris et al., 1991). By boosting their self-confidence in their reading abilities, the goal of the teacher researcher was to motivate students to exert more effort and interact in greater detail with the texts.

The researchers (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000 & Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007) believe explicit instruction can enhance reading motivation. The research shows that teaching reading strategies explicitly can boost students' willingness to read, particularly when the assignments are difficult, and demands engagement actively (Turner & Paris, 1995). To enhance students' motivation to read, explicit teaching of reading strategies was encouraged. The explicit instructions included in the sessions were: discussions on the importance of reading and reading strategies, teacher modeling, guided and independent practice, and collaborative peer work.

This study also indicates that teachers must reflect constantly during the sessions since action research is a cycle of "acting, planning, observing, and reflecting". Teachers must be smart, adaptable, and flexible while creating lesson plans. To boost students' reading motivation, they should encourage autonomy and self-efficacy. Additionally, teachers must abandon their teacher-centered methods of instruction and switch to flexible, and student-centered classrooms. In addition, teachers should only teach one reading strategy at a time to give students sufficient opportunity to learn and apply it.

Recommendation

The study provides significant information regarding the effectiveness of explicitly teaching reading strategies to boost students' reading motivation. The findings also highlight the importance of incorporating these instructions into lesson plans to enhance students' reading skills and develop their motivation in reading. Therefore, additional research is required to determine the long-term effects of

explicit reading instructions on reading motivation and to reproduce the findings in various settings. Moreover, further research can also be carried out investigating comparative studies across different age groups, proficiency levels and academic disciplines.

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