The Impact Of Semiotic Strategy
For Teaching Reading Texts On
Developing The Creative Comprehension Skills

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Abstract

The research pinpoints the impact of the semiotic strategy for teaching reading texts in developing the creative comprehension skills of tenth-grade female students. The semi-experimental approach is used to achieve the research objectives. The research sample consists of (50) tenth-grade female students at Mansoura Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls affiliated with the Directorate of Education for the Northeastern Badia Region. The participants are divided into two groups: a 25-student experimental group and a 25-student control group. A test in creative comprehension skills is designed, whose validity and reliability are ensured after applying the test to two pre and post-groups. The findings indicate a statistically significant achievement in favor of the group taught using the semiotic strategy over the group taught using the traditional method in creative comprehension skills. Given the results, the research recommends training teachers of the Arabic language to teach with modern strategies, such as the semiotic strategy for teaching literature in general and literary texts in particular.

Keywords**:** semiotic strategy, reading texts, creative comprehension skills.

1. Introduction

Language is primarily the most significant means of human expression and communication. With its four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it includes the means of communication used by people to express the meanings and ideas they want to convey to others. The Arabic language is distinguished among the different languages of the world by the multiplicity of its skills targeted for learning, as these skills form the integrated fabric of its curriculum as well as being the language selected by God to be the language of understanding, speech, communication, and worship.

Reading skill is among the language skills that are the most key means for the learner to comprehend the educational material and understand what is read. Soto, Rodriguez, and Gutierrez (2019) indicate that adequate comprehension of the reading text requires the production of a mental representation that is sufficiently rich and coherent, as carrying out these various cognitive tasks requires two essential things: understanding words and finding relationships between sentences and paragraphs. Therefore, comprehension is considered a live interaction between the readers and the text, but this interaction cannot take place unless the readers activate their previous experience.

Comprehension is the focus of the reading process and aims to enable the learner to understand the meaning of the text. Comprehension, therefore, has become a complex process that the learners successfully perform to derive the meaning, as this requires focus and attention, and the ability to analyze, deduce, link, and criticize, and as a result, control the various language arts. Thus, learners can build knowledge by establishing new knowledge that enables them to integrate it with their stored knowledge. However, this mental process cannot be performed unless the reading text is coherent and full of fixed logical links between its parts, in addition to comprising the required information that makes the reader qualified to restructure the text and add what can be added of meanings and ideas related to it, as the writer refers to these ideas as symbols or leave them for the reader to discover (Rawson & Kintsch, 2005).

Comprehension is categorized into multiple levels, including literal, deductive, critical, interpretive, applied, integrative, evaluative, and creative. Literal comprehension relates to understanding the meanings of vocabulary, realizing the meanings of sentences and paragraphs, recognizing the main idea, and determining the sequence of events. Deductive comprehension is about recognizing implied meanings, identifying the writer's aims, and drawing ideas and conclusions. In critical comprehension, the reader transcends the limits of understanding the direct meaning to evaluate what is read, make conclusions, and distinguish facts and opinions. Therefore, this level of comprehension requires complex mental processes that include analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

Interpretive comprehension consists of the ability to form logical conclusions and inferences, describe relationships, and create new titles. Applied comprehension is about the ability to compare the ideas involved, use what is read to solve problems, and identify values. Integrative comprehension is related to identifying the reader in the full sense, as this requires the reader to have a high cultural background that enables him to realize what the writer symbolizes through an integrated view of the events raised in the text. In

evaluative comprehension, the reader is emotionally engaged with the writer and can express the writer's opinions, attitudes, and concepts (Zayed, 2011).

Level of creative comprehension is an important level of comprehension, in which a deeper interaction takes place between the reader and the text, where this level processes and interprets rhetorical formulas and helps the reader to form new ideas. The creative level is a high level of understanding, in which the reader is required to come up with new and unfamiliar ideas. Among the indicators of the creative level are proposing new solutions to problems mentioned in the reading text, predicting events, putting an end to the reading text which is left to the readers themselves to add, or that the readers create an ending that is better than the ending set by the writer, staging the reading text as a play, and identifying and rearranging the elements of the subject, its plot, and its events creatively (Al-Dulaimi, Al-Batayneh, & Al-Khawaldah, 2021).

The creative comprehension level enables the reader to interact with the text, produce new combinations and ideas, complete information, expect problems that arise during reading, predict modifications and outcomes, and transform and employ the reading text in new ways. At the level of creative comprehension, the readers employ their imagination to produce creative perceptions, come up with creative expressions, select interesting and meaningful material, and achieve integration in understanding (Gallagher, 2009).

On a parallel line, the readers whose comprehension is creative tend to add their ideas and perceptions to the reading text, form a summary of what they read, and explain and analyze the text creatively. Likewise, creative comprehension makes the reader dive into the depths of the text, reconstruct, critique, and evaluate it, identify its secrets, and realize the significance of its words (Khater et al., 2000). Creative comprehension means that the reader possesses creative thinking skills that help in creating new insights, going beyond facts, making deep interpretations and inferences, being unique in thinking, and producing creative works (Atta, 2010).

Readers with creative comprehension skills can distinguish the important, the most important, and the unimportant text, infer content from introductions and predict the end, generalize ideas to other situations, imagine goals, restructure ideas, create new ideas, check the accuracy of sources, and suggest innovative alternatives to some events. For the comprehension process to be creative, reading texts must be selective and capable of challenging the learners' abilities, showing their capabilities, discovering their new experiences and worlds, and developing their imaginative powers (Laburi, 2003).

For comprehension to be creative as well, the reader must possess the skills of fluency, originality, elaboration, flexibility, and prediction of

problems (Al-Harthi, 2011; Amir, 2013; Qutami, 2001). Fluency means producing the largest possible number of ideas and alternatives, and producing new words and vocabulary, which is called verbal fluency, producing ideas, which is called intellectual fluency, and formulating ideas in diversity and abundance, which is called expressive fluency. Originality is the ability to give unfamiliar ideas, employ the knowledge stock, use the mind in an advanced way, and make an innovative mental effort (Al-Ghammaz et al., 2022).

Elaboration is also called expansion, as it refers to being able to give various new elements to a particular idea, so that the idea develops accordingly, explaining phenomena and situations, increasing ideas, re-addressing the topic, adding situations and personalities, and proposing more details. Regarding flexibility, it is the ability to blend ideas, move through ideas with ease, and select different and varied solutions to a problem. Prediction of problems manifests the existence of the problem and the need to solve it, as predicting the problem and thinking about its solution comes within the four main skills of creativity, namely: fluency, originality, elaboration, and flexibility.

Developing comprehension skills in general and creative comprehension skills, in particular, involves following modern strategies in teaching reading texts. Among these strategies is the semiotic strategy, which is a teaching principle based on dealing with the text in its linguistic context to ensure openness to an absent experience in the light of a visible experience, as stated by Al-Ustad (2015). Openness at this level aims at analyzing symbols and events as signs that carry meaning together with the exploration of the semantic relationships of the content in a way that develops the creative ability of the learner.

According to Al-Omari (2005), semiotics is mentioned in the writings of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure was the name of semiology, and the American linguist Charles Sanders Peirce under the name of semiotics. Semiotics as a word has Arabic roots in foreign languages, as it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an with the word (Simahem) more than one time. The Almighty says "had we willed, we could have truly shown them to you ˹O Prophet˺, and you would have certainly recognized them by their appearance. But you will surely recognize them by their tone of speech. And Allah fully knows your doings O people" (Muhammad, 30). This verse denotes what is apparent and what is hidden from the signs of the hypocrites that are not known except by signs and evidence, and the evidence for them in this verse is the sign, which is the melody of the saying.

Likewise, semiotics refers to pinpointing the content of the text to identify its embedded goals and objectives, realize the deep meaning behind the words, as well as recognize the feelings and emotions that the writer intends to communicate in an indirect manner (Atkin, 2013).

The linguistic context represents an appropriate atmosphere for researching signs and symbols that carry a superficial meaning and a deep meaning, where the deep meaning seeks to reveal the hidden meanings, necessitating accuracy in analysis, and the production of more quality outputs (Hussein, 2020).

The purpose of the study of semiotics is to search the text and move from the superficial meaning to the hidden meaning in the text; therefore, the view of semiotics has evolved from mere meditation based on the impression to a science that has its scientific foundations. Semiotics is a process that takes place after analyzing the text to reveal the relationships among the components of the text, leading to the meaning and the production of sayings far from just putting sentences and words. To be precise, semiotics goes further to define the essence of the text, and how it reaches such a deep, distant view (Duffah, 2014). According to Al-Ustad (2015), semiotics, as a teaching strategy, includes the following seven steps.

1. Text Identification: It identifies what the text is by defining its main form.
2. Text Recognition: It recognized the structure by identifying its verbal form.
3. Text Perception: It perceives the main idea in the text and finds out its semantic form.
4. Text Understanding: It is to understand the text in general, and identify sub-ideas that support the main themes.
5. Text Awareness: It discusses the text that the teacher conducts with the students, as this discussion leads to a request to the students to identify the relationships embedded in the text.
6. Text Mindfulness: It enables students to fully understand the text and identify the signifier and the signified of each relationship in the text.
7. Text Visualization: It provides students with creativity and enables them to add creative inferences more related to what they look at.

Given the previous analysis of semiotics, semiotics is a strategy that can be most valuable in its use to teach reading texts and increase comprehension of the reader, as reading is the most important means of comprehending the educational material and understanding the reading text. The creative comprehension of the reading text is the outcome of the impact of this strategy, and this is evident in two steps: text mindfulness and text visualization, as the last step indicates that students reach creativity in its various forms, including creative comprehension of the reading text. With this close analysis of semiotics and its impact on reading skills, the related studies and research are offered in the following part.

2. Literature Review

Reading comprehension has been differently addressed by various related studies and research work. A related study by Mayuni (2014) reveals the effect of integrated cooperative reading in improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade students in Indonesia. The semi-experimental research approach is used to achieve the research objectives. The research sample consists of (42) male and female students divided into two groups: control and experimental with a reading comprehension test (RCT) as a research instrument. The findings indicate a statistically significant effect of integrative cooperative reading in improving reading comprehension.

In the same mood, Al-Muhaisen and Ibrahim (2019) identify the impact of a training program based on critical thinking skills in developing students' meta-comprehension skills in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The semi-experimental research approach is used to achieve the research objectives. The research sample consists of (117) seventh-grade male and female students divided into two groups: experimental and control with meta-comprehension skills test as a research instrument. The results show a statistically significant effect of the program on the development of meta-comprehension skills.

Moreover, Al-Rababah (2020) identifies the effectiveness of some cognitive and metacognitive strategies in improving reading comprehension and spelling achievement among non-Arabic speaking students. The research sample includes (39) students, divided into two groups: a control and an experimental one. The two research instruments are a test of reading comprehension and a test of dictation. The results reveal a statistically significant effect of the under-study strategies in improving comprehension and spelling skills.

Furthermore, Al-Batayneh (2020) shows the impact of the semiotic strategy in teaching English on developing speaking skills and reading comprehension among seventh-grade female students in Jordan. The research sample consisted of (59) female students divided into two groups: control and experimental. A situational test in speaking skills and a test in reading comprehension are also designed as research instruments. The findings indicate that the semiotic strategy has a statistically significant effect on the development of speaking skills and reading comprehension.

Likewise, Abdul-Aziz (2021) defines the effect of a strategy based on meta-comprehension skills on developing reading comprehension and argumentative writing among eighth-grade students. The research sample consists of (60) divided into two groups: control and experimental. A test in reading comprehension and a test in argumentative writing are also used as research instruments. The

results show a statistically significant effect of the meta-comprehension strategy on developing reading comprehension and argumentative writing skills.

Besides, Al-Khazaleh (2021) defines the effectiveness of the semiotic strategy in developing reading and listening comprehension skills among tenth-grade students in Jordan. The research sample includes (55) students divided into a control group and an experimental group. A test in reading comprehension and a test in listening comprehension are utilized as research instruments. The results reveal a statistically significant effect of the semiotic strategy in developing reading and listening comprehension skills.

After reviewing the relevant previous studies, it is clear that they all have used the semi-experimental research approach, and their independent variables have also varied. Mayuni (2014) examines the impact of integrative cooperative reading, while Al-Muhaisen and Ibrahim (2019) look at a program based on critical thinking skills. Al-Rababah (2020) deals with the effectiveness of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while Al-Batayneh (2020) deals with the impact of the semiotic strategy. Abdul-Aziz (2021) investigates the impact of a strategy based on meta-comprehension skills, while Khazaleh (2021) explores the effectiveness of the semiotic strategy. Concerning their dependent variables, all previous studies have only dealt with reading comprehension and meta-comprehension. The results of the said studies demonstrate a statistically significant effect on the development of all their dependent variables.

The current research, however, has taken advantage of the previous studies in following the semi-experimental research approach, how to select the research sample, prepare the instruments, verify its validity and reliability, make the used procedures, the variables, and statistical processing, and how to present and discuss the results. Significantly, this research has an advantage over previous studies in dealing with the impact of the semiotic strategy in developing creative comprehension skills, which is unaddressed in any previous study. The brief literature review of the various readings and interpretations of the impact of semiotic strategy for teaching reading texts evinces that they lend themselves to one analysis to acknowledge that semiotic strategy is of great significance in the learning-teaching process (Al-Ghammaz, 2023). Against this, the research problem is provided next.

3. Research Problem

Students in different academic stages suffer from weakness and low levels of comprehension and understanding of the reading texts, especially deductive, critical, and creative comprehension. The

students understand the reading text in a superficial understanding that does not go beyond the literal understanding of the vocabulary. They also understand some of the apparent ideas in the text, as they feel the difficulty of implicit understanding while not identifying the unexpressed relationships between ideas and text formulas and their interpretation .

Creative comprehension requires also deep interaction with the course of the text, processing rhetorical and artistic formulas in it, and the reader's formation of new ideas through dealing with the text creatively. The studies of (Shawabkeh & Al-Haddad, 2019; Al-Khazaleh, 2021) demonstrate a clear weakness among students in understanding the reading text, indicating a low level of comprehension among 9th and 10th-grade students. The research problem, therefore, rests in answering the following question stipulating "are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the experimental group students and the control group students in creative comprehension skills due to the teaching method (semiotic strategy, the traditional method)?

4. Significance of the Research

The significance of the research is reflected in the theoretical and applied sides. The theoretical significance is reflected in dealing with a theoretical background of semiotic strategy and creative reading comprehension. The applied significance lies in helping the authors of the Arabic language curricula to adopt the research results, raising the awareness of the teachers of the Arabic language about the semiotic strategy to use in teaching reading texts, and the researchers and scholars to conduct studies and research in the field of the Arabic language or related other fields.

5. Research Limitations

The findings of this research can be generalized in light of the following limitations:

1. Human Limitations: This research is limited to a sample of tenth-grade female students.
2. Spatial Limitations: This research is conducted at Mansoura Secondary School for Girls affiliated with the Directorate of Education for the Northeastern Badia Region.
3. Temporal Limitations: This research is conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021.
4. Objective Limitations: This research is limited to identifying the impact of the semiotic strategy in developing creative comprehension skills.

The generalization of the findings of the current research is determined by the psychometric characteristics of the research instrument in terms of validity and reliability.

6. Research Terms and Definition

In this study, three research terms and their procedural definitions are mentioned as follows:

Semiotic Strategy: It is the strategy used to teach reading texts, according to the seven steps of this strategy, namely: text identification, text recognition, text perception, text understanding, text awareness, text mindfulness, and text visualization.

Creative Comprehension: It is the ability of female students' "research sample" to comprehend the reading text creatively with its dimensions: fluency, originality, elaboration, and flexibility. It is measured by the creative comprehension test preparation for the current research.

Tenth Grade: It is the last grade of the upper basic stage, which comprises four grades: the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth.

7. Methods

Research Approach

The semi-experimental approach is used to achieve the research objectives

Research Sample

With the nature of the research objective and problem, the research sample consists of (50) tenth-grade female students at Mansoura Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls affiliated with the Directorate of Education for the Northeastern Badia Region. The participants are divided into two groups: a 25-student experimental group and a 25-student control group.

Research Instrument

This research necessitates preparing a test in creative comprehension to achieve the research objectives. This test is prepared by reviewing the related theoretical literature and previous studies (Al-Rababah, 2020; Abdul-Aziz, 2021) dealing with reading comprehension tests of all kinds: literal, deductive, critical, interpretive, applied, integrative, evaluative, and creative. The test consists of (9) essay-type questions, with one question on each creative reading comprehension skill. Two marks are given for each question, thus the highest score is (18) and the lowest score was (0).

Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) Validity

To check the validity of the creative comprehension test, this test is validated by a group of validators specialized in curricula and teaching. These validators have made some minor comments about the test which are all taken into account. The test in its final form consists of (9) essay-type questions, as the exam includes (18) marks, with (2) marks for each question.

Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the creative comprehension test, it is applied to an exploratory sample from outside the research sample. One class including (20) students is selected from the tenth-grade classes at Rabieh Secondary School for Girls. Two weeks later, the test is re-applied to the exploratory sample. To compute the reliability, Pearson's reliability coefficient is used. The reliability coefficient is (0.89), which is a suitable reliability coefficient for the current research.

Research Procedures

To implement the research, there are several procedures such as preparing the research instrument by reviewing the relevant theoretical literature and previous studies, checking the validity and reliability of the instrument, designing lesson notes for teaching reading texts according to the semiotic strategy, determining the research sample participants, informing the Arabic language teacher of the lesson notes, applying the pre and post-creative comprehension test, and attain and discuss results.

Research Variables

The research has two variables: independent and dependent.

Independent Variables: Semiotic strategy and the traditional method.

Dependent Variable: Creative comprehension skills.

Equivalence of the Two Research Groups

To check the equivalence of the control and experimental groups, the creative comprehension test is pre-applied to the two groups, and the means and standard deviations are also calculated. To identify the differences among the means, the (t) test is used. Table (1) illustrates this.

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and 'T' Test According to the Group Variable on the Research Sample's Scores on the Pre-Creative Comprehension Skills Test

Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Sig.
Experimental	25	3.92	1.441	1.021	48	.312
Control	25	3.52	1.327			

As shown in Table (1), there are no statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) due to the group in all dimensions and the total score of the pre-creative comprehension skills test. Accordingly, this result indicates the equivalence of the two groups.

8. Results & Discussion

Results related to the Research Question "are there statistically significant differences at the significance level (α = 0.05) between the experimental group students and the control group students in creative comprehension skills due to the teaching method (semiotic strategy, the traditional method)?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the scores of the research sample on the dimensional creative comprehension skills test according to the teaching method variable "semiotic strategy and the traditional method" are computed. To show the statistical differences among the means, the (t) test is used. Table (2) illustrates this.

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and 'T' Test According to the Teaching Method Variable "Semiotic Strategy and the Traditional Method) on the Post-Creative Comprehension Skills Test

Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Sig.
Experimental	25	14.76	1.393	11.610	48	.000
Control	25	10.20	1.384			

As shown in Table (2), there are statistically significant differences (a = 0.05) due to the teaching method, and the differences are in favor of the experimental group. The results indicate the use of the semiotic strategy outperforms the traditional method in developing the creative comprehension skills of tenth-grade female students. This may be because the students studying the reading texts using semiotic strategy have listened, comprehended, interpreted, combined ideas, and

arranged them logically. This, accordingly, has led to the comprehension being creative due to the participation of the female students in the learning processes according to the semiotic strategy in a sensual, mental, and emotional manner .

Furthermore, the semiotic strategy encourages comprehension in its various forms, including creative comprehension, develops curiosity among students, and improves their thinking skills to attain creativity skills. Likewise, the reason for the effectiveness of the semiotic strategy may be because the students, amid their preoccupation with identifying the text that is the subject of the lesson, recognizing it, perceiving it, understanding it, being aware of it, minding it, and visualizing it, their thinking diverges into more than just understanding the text literally, deductively, and critically, to creative understanding. The students, therefore, can add new ideas unaddressed by the author of the text, and this addition indicates that the comprehension of the texts is creative .

This outperformance may be because the texts taught are among the texts that are suitable for the use of semiotics in teaching them more than others. Also, this outperformance may be because female students' participation is active and interactive, coupled with pleasure and suspense, under innovation trends in studying texts according to this strategy. This has motivated all of the students to possess the accuracy of observation, prediction, and inference, as well as possessing verbal and intellectual fluency, flexibility in thinking, and frequent introduction of new ideas, as this lies at the heart of the creative comprehension of the reading text.

By comparing the results of the current study with the results of previous studies dealing with reading comprehension at its different levels, overlooking creative comprehension, the current results are consistent with the results of all previous studies whose independent variables, including the semiotic strategy, have influenced its dependent variables such as reading comprehension and meta-comprehension.

9. Conclusions

In a nutshell, this research identifies the impact of the semiotic strategy for teaching reading texts in developing the creative comprehension skills of tenth-grade female students. The findings indicate a statistically significant achievement in favor of the group taught using the semiotic strategy over the group taught using the traditional method in creative comprehension skills. Given the results, the research recommends training teachers of the Arabic language to teach

with modern strategies, such as the semiotic strategy for teaching literature in general and literary texts in particular.

10. Recommendations

Given the results, the study recommends training Arabic language teachers to teach using the modern strategy of semiotics for teaching literature in general and literary texts in particular incorporating the semiotics strategy into the guides of Arabic language teachers as an effective strategy in teaching reading texts in particular,   and conducting other future studies to teach other branches of the Arabic language, especially the teaching of rhetorical and critical texts, using the semiotic strategy.

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