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Explicit collaborative reading strategy instruction: A pilot intervention in the EFL context

Συνεργατική ρητή διδασκαλία των στρατηγικών κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου: Μια πιλοτική παρέμβαση στο πλαίσιο της ξένης γλώσσας

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The present study, quasi-experimental in design, aims to investigate the impact of a multiple-strategy intervention on Greek EFL secondary school students' reading performance. More specifically, an experimental (n=40) and a control group (n=22), comprising learners between 14 and 15 years old participated in the research that lasted two months. The approach selected for the teaching intervention was the Collaborative Strategy Instruction, which involved previewing, main idea identification, clarification and summarisation strategies. Both groups were administered pre-test, post-test and follow-up measurements to account for any potential improvement in their performance but only the experimental group received strategic training. In addition to the quantitative data, two qualitative instruments were employed in the form of a) semi-structured interviews conducted with the EFL teachers on issues related to strategy conceptualization, strategy use and teaching, before the teaching intervention and b) the researcher's journal aiming at reflecting on and assessing the strategic instruction process on an 'on-going' basis. According to the results of the study, it was revealed that the EFL teachers were not familiar with the strategy use and instruction. Moreover, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated an improvement in the students' reading comprehension ability. In particular, it was found that the students of the experimental group enhanced their reading comprehension ability between the pre-test and post-test measurement, which was statistically significant in the delayed measurement as well.

Ω

Μέσα από την παρούσα μελέτη επιχειρείται η διερεύνηση της επίδρασης μιας παρέμβασης διδασκαλίας πολλαπλών στρατηγικών στην επίδοση των Ελλήνων μαθητών στην κατανόηση κειμένων στην αγγλική γλώσσα. Συγκεκριμένα, η πειραματική εφαρμογή διήρκησε δύο μήνες και συμμετείχαν μια πειραματική ομάδα (N = 40) και μια ομάδα ελέγχου (N= 22)

μαθητών ηλικίας 14 και 15 ετών. Η προσέγγιση που επελέγη για να εφαρμοστεί ήταν η Συνεργατική Στρατηγική Διδασκαλία, η οποία στόχευε στην εξάσκηση των μαθητών στις στρατηγικές της προεπισκόπησης, της αναγνώρισης της κύριας ιδέας, της διασαφήνισης και της περίληψης. Και στις δύο ομάδες διεξήχθητε προέλεγχος και μετέλεγχος για να αποτιμηθεί η ενδεχόμενη βελτίωση της απόδοσής τους στην κατανόηση γραπτού λόγου, αλλά μόνο στην πειραματική ομάδα εφαρμόστηκε διδασκαλία στρατηγικών. Επίσης, χρησιμοποιήθηκαν δύο ποιοτικά εργαλεία: α) η ημιδομημένη συνέντευξη που διεξήχθη με τους εκπαιδευτικούς της αγγλικής γλώσσας αναφορικά με ζητήματα εννοιολογικής προσέγγισης των στρατηγικών, στρατηγικής χρήσης και διδασκαλίας και β) το ημερολόγιο του ερευνητή, το οποίο στοχεύει στον αναστοχασμό και τη συνεχή αξιολόγηση της διδασκαλίας των στρατηγικών. Από τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης διαπιστώθηκε ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί δεν ήταν εξοικειωμένοι με τη χρήση και τη διδασκαλία στρατηγικών. Επιπλέον, τόσο τα ποσοτικά όσο και τα ποιοτικά δεδομένα κατέδειξαν βελτίωση της κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου από τους μαθητές. Συγκεκριμένα, διαφάνηκε από τα αποτελέσματα του προελέγχου και του μετελέγχου ότι οι μαθητές της πειραματικής ομάδας βελτίωσαν την ικανότητα αναγνωστικής κατανόησης σε στατιστικά σημαντικό επίπεδο.

Keywords: collaborative strategy instruction, reading strategies, reading comprehension, EFL learning

1. Introduction

Learning to read, as Barnett (1989) maintains, is actually “an invisible process” (p. 38), while its complex and multifaceted nature places great demands on the learners, especially when Second Language (L2) reading is concerned. More specifically, since reading entails multiple and complicated cognitive functions, text interpretation requires more active and versatile readers that orchestrate strategies in an effort to become more successful and independent (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

Graesser (2007) defines a reading strategy as a “cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual conditions with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension” (p. 6). Hence, an effective reader deliberately implements conscious and time-consuming techniques in order to repair or avoid reading elements not thoroughly understood (Block & Parris, 2008; Graesser, 2007).

Among the many strategy classifications, Grabe and Stoller (2011) classified reading strategies in four categories including global, context level, monitoring and support strategies. At the same time, Psaltou-Joycey (2010) adopts the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading framework accounting for time of use and class interaction. These categorisations attempt to provide instructors with the tools to help their learners achieve deeper understanding of the L2 texts (Oxford, 2011).

2. Theoretical underpinnings

Evidently, becoming a strategic reader is not accomplished rapidly and effortlessly. Learners need to be exposed to various text types and reading strategies for long periods of time in order to manipulate their strategy inventory, while instructors should provide them with ample opportunities for practice (Mokhtari & Shorey, 2008; Griva et. al., 2009). In this way, explicit instruction aims at raising students' awareness of strategy deployment, while the teacher's role is to model proper use and prepare students to transfer this knowledge to similar tasks (Chamot, 2004). Concurrently, Grabe (2009) highlights the importance of students' exchange of ideas after strategy use in order to secure better comprehension of their reading processes. The focal point of explicit instruction is to create strategic readers who automatically coordinate their strategy use (Koda, 2005). Metacognition, which is raised through explicit strategy training, plays a critical role in controlling comprehension, since it provides knowledge about how cognition works (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).

The learning strategy literature is loaded with instructional approaches, which guarantee students' success in the L2. Some of the most widely used models are Oxford's (1990) framework, where she emphasises the importance of gradually releasing teacher control and O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Another popular model, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), draws its main principles from reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning. It is directed primarily to mixed-achievement reading learners who work in groups. The gains in the development of learners' reading skills are a result of the selected reading strategies and the group members' communication (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999).

Research on reading strategy intervention programmes abounds in the past few years, as the results manifest significant progress in the readers' comprehension ability after explicit strategy instruction (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Kusiak, 2001; Takavoli & Koosha, 2015; Wichadee, 2011). Regarding the Greek context, particularly, research showed significant improvement in the learners' reading performance when implementing strategy deployment (e.g., Manoli, et al., 2016; Sarafianou, 2013). With reference to the CSR approach, relevant research has proved the benefits collaborative strategic teaching has on EFL learners' reading performance (Fan, 2010; Karabuga & Kaya, 2013; Puspita, et.al, 2013).

However, most research put emphasis on the immediate impact of strategy training disregarding the delayed benefits explicit instruction may offer to L2 readers. Only few studies investigated the effects strategic intervention programmes had on learners after a substantial time from the instruction withdrawal. To be more accurate, Ikeda and Takeuchi (2003) as well as Jafari and Ketabi (2012) confirmed the long-lasting influence of strategic instruction on EFL readers, as in all their measurements the experimental group outperformed the control. In the Greek context, Manoli et al. (2016) working with 99 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) primary students and using the Direct Explanation approach indicated a positive correlation between explicit strategic training and reading comprehension, which was maintained in the delayed post-test measurement. Allowing for the fact that most studies investigate the immediate impact of strategy training, this research focuses on both the immediate and delayed effects of a multiple-strategy instruction in public secondary schools in Greece.

3. Method

3.1. Research hypotheses

Before conducting the research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

It was assumed that Greek L2 student reading performance can be improved after strategy instruction (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Kusiak, 2001; Manoli et al., 2016; Wichadee, 2011).

It is expected that the experimental group will be able to maintain their test scores even after the intervention withdrawal (e.g., Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Manoli et al., 2016).

Last but not least, it is assumed that reading strategies are not explicitly taught in Greek state schools (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013).

3.2. Research design

The present study, quasi-experimental in design, investigates the influence of a small-scale multiple-strategy intervention on secondary EFL school students. The intervention lasted 2 months comprising an experimental and a control group. The experimental group underwent explicit multiple-strategy training in particular text genres. In contrast, the control group continued their regular EFL lessons without any special attention paid to reading strategies. Both groups were administered a standardised language proficiency test and a researcher-designed reading test before and after the intervention as well as two months after the intervention withdrawal. However, it should be mentioned that before the teaching intervention, an interview was conducted with the Greek EFL teachers in order to explore whether strategy instruction was taking place.

3.3. Participants

The participants of the research consisted of 62 Greek EFL students, aged 14 and 15 years old, who attended the third grade of Junior High School in two different schools located in the city of Thessaloniki. Their linguistic level was determined B1-B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2001). The experimental group, who received explicit-reading strategy instruction, comprised 40 students belonging to two separate classes. The control group included 22 students in a single class and received no explicit strategy treatment.

Moreover, both teachers who participated in the study graduated from the Faculty of English Language and Literature of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and were approximately 40 years old. They both spent a few years teaching in language schools and for the past years they have been teachers in secondary state schools.

3.4. Teaching intervention

The teaching intervention lasted five weeks consisting of a 45-minute session per week. The teaching method implemented was CSR because, according to Klingner, et al. (1998), it is considered effective for heterogeneous groups of learners of various cultural backgrounds, as is often the case in Greek classrooms. The particular strategies that were selected

involved previewing, clarification, main idea determination and summarisation (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999).

The first session included a detailed introduction on the nature and usefulness of reading strategies aiming to raise the students' awareness of the strategies they have already used, provide a purpose for this new venture and motivate them to become more successful readers. During this first session the students were divided in groups and particular roles were assigned and explained. It was made clear that roles would rotate so that everyone would get the chance to lead the group. More specifically, besides the leader who relegated responsibilities to the group members, there was the clarification expert, who reminded the students of which strategy to follow when there was a problem, and the gist expert, who focused everyone's attention on the main ideas. Finally, the encourager provided feedback and urged all of them to participate. As Klingner and Vaughn (1999) illustrate, through this social interaction students learn how to "listen attentively...take turns speaking, provide positive feedback, and resolve conflicts" (p. 743).

In the second session, the instructor was involved in strategy modelling by verbalising her thinking step by step. During the 'think aloud' process, the researcher explicated the choice of the specific strategies providing scaffolding for learners (Macaro, 2001). More specifically, during preview, prompted by the pictures, she predicted the text topic and highlighted the usefulness of background knowledge in this process. When she started reading, she stopped, whenever a tricky point occurred, verbalising her thoughts on how to resolve the problem. In most cases, she reread the obscure sentence, while sometimes it was helpful to look at the word prefixes and suffixes to make sense of the text. When she completed reading the first paragraph, she asked herself questions about the content to identify the main idea. During this process a graphic organiser was completed to help recall and retrieve the information. In summarisation, she used her personal interpretation, thus, encouraging the students to personalise the text and not write a mere copy of actual facts and events. The initial passage used was relatively short but deliberately a little demanding to help students familiarise with this new process.

When strategy modelling was over, each group was provided with a new text, intentionally less demanding than the previous text to facilitate the use of the requested strategies. A number of clarification cards, formulated according to Klingner and Vaughn's (1999) pattern, was also handed out aiming to assist the groups to work more independently. During the reading activity, the teacher circulated encouraging the application of the appropriate strategies, thus, facilitating comprehension. After discussing the answers with the whole class, a short conversation on what led them to the particular answers was conducted concluding the session.

In the third session, the teacher introduced an instructive text and, while modelling the strategy use, she highlighted the importance of brainstorming attempting to draw a mental picture of her interpretation of the text. Before students were administered a similar text, they were encouraged to ask questions about the different genre and started doing the requested activities using their clarification cards. During the rest of the session the teacher guided and assisted all the groups reinforcing the use of headings and images as time-saving devices, when skimming and scanning for particular information.

In the fourth session, the learners encountered a quite challenging expository text about football focusing on the inferences students could draw about the content through the sub-headings. Mental imagery was instigated by the pictures and students were urged to share

these images with the rest of the class. While summing up, the students could also evaluate their effort ensuring that they understood the text message and ideas. Since students had already practised strategy deployment, the teacher limited her role allowing more freedom to the group members.

The final session included narrative passages, which are by nature more open to multiple interpretations and require concentration on subtle details like mood or the author's intentions. The story administered, despite its length, was deliberately easier than the previous texts, because the students were asked to deal with it more independently. To be more accurate, besides previewing, the students were left alone to create their own graphic organiser in an attempt to regulate their learning and expand on the previous lessons feedback. The instructor gradually released control and allowed students to take full responsibility. After the activity completion the instructor and students evaluated the usefulness of strategy employment through a short discussion.

3.5. The reading materials

The material used during the lessons included authentic texts, which were considered to be slightly beyond the learners' current proficiency level, as passages without a degree of difficulty require no strategy use (Bereiter & Bird, 1985). As far as the passages are concerned, four types of genres were selected: descriptive, instructive, expository and narrative texts, as students should practise reading strategies in a variety of texts, which will help them to further consolidate their use (Mokhtari & Shorey, 2008). The topics were selected according to students' interests and the opportunity to present the required strategies in a satisfactory way. The texts selected for the instruction were between 60 and 90 according to a Flesch-Kincaid scale readability measurement, which is considered appropriate for students between 12 and 15 years old.

3.6. Estimating the intervention: Research instruments

In order to estimate the feasibility of the teaching intervention, the following research instruments were used:

The TOEFL Junior test was administered as a pretest, post-test and follow-up measurement both to the experimental and control groups to certify their reading proficiency level and possible changes in it. It is a formalised test designed for learners over 11 years old and establishes the English proficiency level worldwide.

Concurrently, a researcher designed test was applied before and after the intervention as well as two months after the intervention withdrawal. The same test was administered in all three measurements to ensure that all measurements were comparable. The test comprised four texts, reflecting the four different genres the students were exposed to during the strategy instruction and involved multiple-choice questions based on the particular strategies the learners were taught and summary writing.

Additionally, qualitative information was collected through interviews with the two EFL educators in an effort to gain an insight into the teaching of reading comprehension within the official assigned syllabus and investigate the instructors' awareness of strategy training. To accomplish that, semi-structured interviews were designed, which are flexible enough to involve both parties in a focused discussion and concomitantly allow a degree of freedom to talk about something not planned in advance (Oxford, 2011; Psaltou-Joycey, 2010).

Finally, the researcher's reflective journal was used as an instrument of 'on-going' evaluation with the purpose to gain an in-depth understanding and monitoring of the teaching intervention. Thus, the focus was not only on reporting data of the intervention process, but also on reflecting on students' behaviour and progress, the difficulties and problems they faced during the interventions (Georgopoulou, & Griva, 2012). Concerning the form of the researcher's journal, it was based on the "questions for journal keeping" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994 in Korosidou & Griva, 2016), and was designed around three axes of questions related to the strategy training intervention.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative measurements

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20,0 was used, while the statistical analyses of Repeated Measures of ANOVA, One-Way ANOVA, Further Univariate analyses of variance, and Paired *t*-test were computed. The level of significance was set at .05. Concurrently, the teachers' interviews were analysed using content analysis to give a thorough account of the research qualitative results.

4.1.1. Comparison of the reading ability of the experimental and control groups before the training

Prior to the strategic instruction, the students were administered two reading comprehension tests: Reading Ability Test 1 (RAB1) and Strategy Test 1 (STR1); the former was a standardised reading ability test, while the latter was designed by the researcher. One-Way analysis of Variance was conducted between the experimental and control groups to evaluate their difference in reading proficiency. The results of the formalised test, RAB1, $F(1, 60) = 1.00, p > .05$ ($M = 22.74, SD = 7.07$), revealed no statistical difference between the experimental and control group reading ability. Similarity to the experimental and control groups' proficiency level was also confirmed by the designed test: STR1, $F(1, 60) = 0.05, p > .05$ ($M = 15.71, SD = 5.26$). This finding is valuable, as it proves that the reading ability of both groups was comparable before the teaching intervention and, therefore, renders the results after the teaching intervention more reliable (see also Figure 1 and Figure 2).

4.1.2. Comparison of the reading ability of the experimental and control groups based on the immediate and delayed post-test measurements

The Repeated Measures Anova analysis was conducted using the group as the between subjects independent variable, the time of measurement as a within subjects variable, and the scores of all reading comprehension tests in the three different measurements as the dependent variables to determine the effect the strategic training can have on EFL students' performance. In particular, the findings revealed that in the standardised test the main effects of group, $F(1, 60) = 69, p < .001, \eta^2 = .92$, time, $F(2, 120) = 112.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .65$ as well as the interaction between time and group factors, $F(2, 120) = 45.01, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$ were statistically significant. The mean scores and standard deviation for the experimental group were $M = 29.88, SD = 7.15$ for the standardised reading ability post-test (RAB2), and $M = 28.13, SD = 7.79$ for the delayed test (RAB3). The scores for the control group were $M = 25.82, SD = 8.39$ (RAB2) and $M = 25.09, SD = 7.97$ (RAB3) for the post-test and delayed test measurement respectively (see also Figure 1).

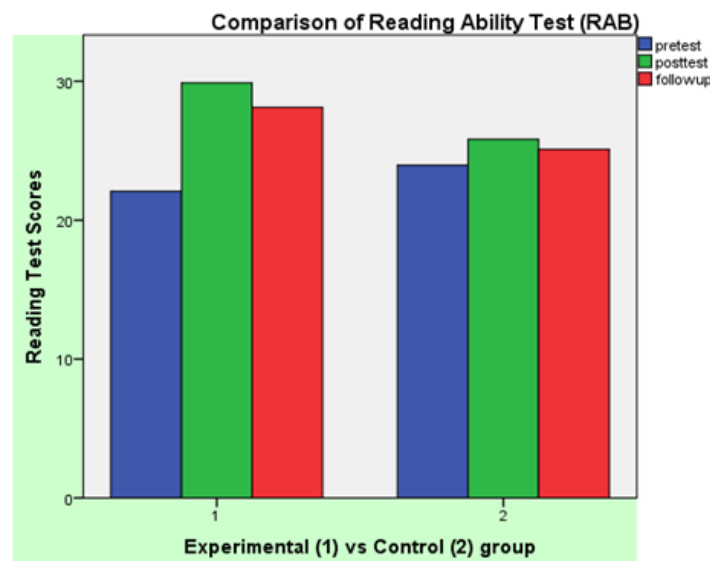


Figure 1: The Results of the Reading Ability Test (the standardised test)

Additionally, in the constructed test the main effects of group, $F(1, 60) = 55, p < .001, \eta^2 = .90$, time, $F(2, 120) = 90.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .60$ as well as the interaction between time and group factors, $F(2, 120) = 32.78, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$ were statistically significant. The mean scores and standard deviation for the constructed test were $M = 23.22, SD = 6.25$ (STR2) in the immediate post-test measurement and $M = 22.13, SD = 6.37$ (STR3) in the delayed post-test measurement for the experimental group. The respective scores for the control group were $M = 17.14, SD = 6.74$ (STR2) in the immediate post-test measurement and $M = 17.41, SD = 6.98$ (STR3) in the delayed post-test measurement with an obvious predominance of the performance of the experimental group (see also Figure 2).

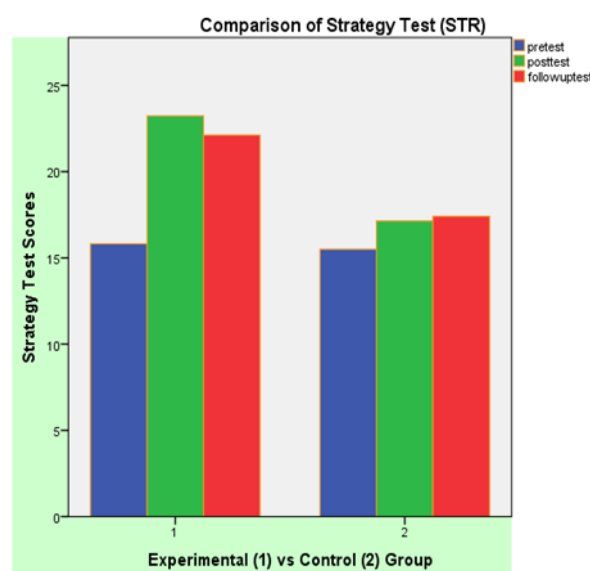


Figure 2: The Results of the Researcher-Designed Test

Further Univariate Analysis of Variance with group as the independent variable indicated that the difference in the standardised test between the two groups was statistically significant only after the intervention in favour of the experimental group, $F(1, 60) = 2.8, p > .05, \eta^2 = .71$ (RAB1, pre-test measurement), $F(1, 60) = 57.8, p < .001, \eta^2 = .98$ (RAB2, post-test measurement) and $F(1, 60) = 31.6, p < .001, \eta^2 = .77$ (RAB3, follow-up measurement).

As for the designed test, the difference between the two groups was statistically significant in favour of the experimental group only after the explicit instruction, as further Univariate Analysis of Variance with group as the independent variable verified, $F(1, 60) = 0.41, p > .05, \eta^2 = .54$ (STR1, pre-test measurement), $F(1, 60) = 14.8, p < .001, \eta^2 = .85$ (STR2, post-test measurement) and $F(1, 60) = 11.4, p < .001, \eta^2 = .66$ (STR3, follow-up measurement).

4.1.3. The progress of the experimental group

It is worth examining the progress of the treatment group throughout the three measurements. For that reason, Paired t -test analysis was conducted, which illustrated a statistically significant difference in the scores of the designed test between the pre-test and immediate post-test measurement (STR), $t(58) = -12.65, p < .001$, between the post-test and follow-up measurements, $t(58) = 4.22, p < .001$ as well as between the pre-test and follow-up measurement, $t(58) = -10.34, p < .001$. The scores revealed the gains in the students' reading performance after the teaching intervention, which remained statistically significant two months after the intervention withdrawal (see also Figure 3).

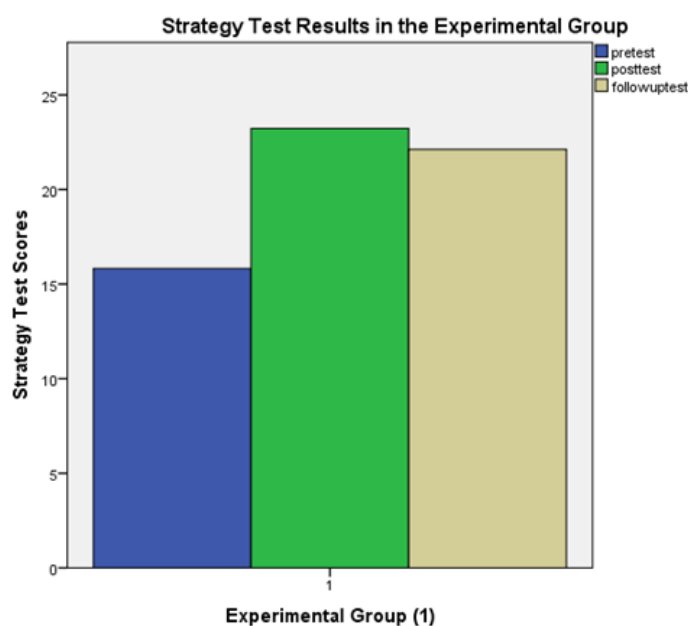


Figure 3: The Results of the Researcher-Designed Test in the Experimental Group

The benefits from the strategic instruction can also be noticed in the statistical values of the standardised ability test (RAB). Paired t -test demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the standardised test between the pre-test and immediate post-test measurements, $t(58) = -16.84, p < .001$, between the post-test and follow-up measurements, $t(58) = 6.43, p < .001$, and between the pre-test and follow-up measurement, $t(58) = -11.36, p < .001$ (see also Figure 4). Although a slight drop in the

learners' performance was observed between the post-test and the delayed measurement, the difference was still statistically significant.

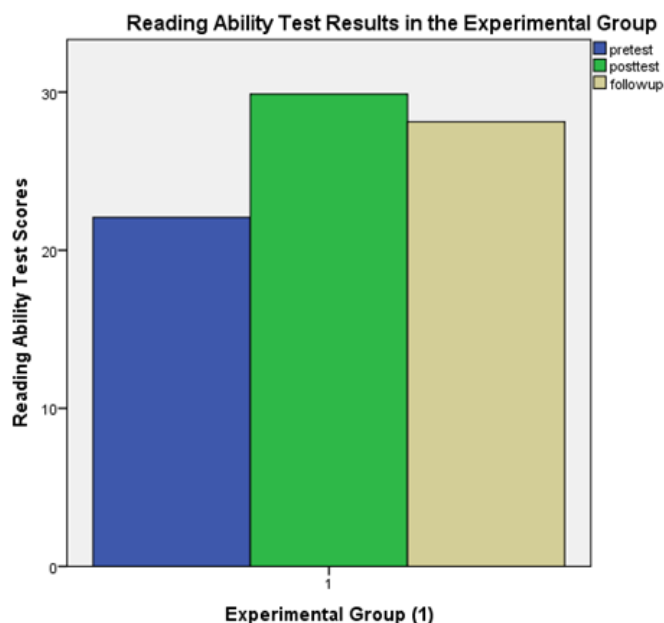


Figure 4: *The Results of the Reading Ability Test (the standardized one) in the Experimental Group*

4.2. Qualitative measurements

4.2.1. Teachers' interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from teachers, which comprised the following sections: a) types of classroom reading, b) reading strategy use, c) explicit strategy teaching and d) co-operative learning. The interviews were conducted individually, were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed through using the content analysis method.

Qualitative data analysis, consisting of identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns or themes found in the interview data, was followed. More specifically, the data underwent the following procedure: data reduction, which involved first and second level coding, resulted in groups of categories and codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Table 1).

Categories	Codes/descriptions	Codes/descriptions
	Ms Smith	Ms Young
<i>Types of classroom reading</i>	RORORE=Round robbing reading SILREAD=Silent reading	RORORE=Round robbing reading -
<i>Reading strategy use</i>	PREVIST=Previewing strategy SKIMSCA=Skimming/Scanning TRANSL1L2=Translating from L2 to L1 USEDICT=Using Dictionary USCOMQU=Using Comprehension questions USECONT=Using context DEMAIDE=Determining Main idea	- SKIMSCA=Skimming/Scanning TRANSL1L2=Translating from L2 to L1 USEDICT=Using Dictionary USCOMQU=Using Comprehension questions USECONT=Using context -
<i>Explicit strategy teaching</i>	LAEXPTE= lack of awareness of explicit strategy teaching	LAEXPTE= lack of awareness of explicit strategy teaching
<i>Co-operative learning</i>	MOTICO=Motivating students to cooperate CONDIPR=Expressing concern about discipline problems	NOMOCOP=Not promoting cooperating learning

Table 1: Categories and codes related to Reading comprehension process

Interviewing the instructors revealed a lack of awareness of the reading strategy instruction. The control group teacher admitted: “I had no idea that I could explicitly teach my students specific techniques to comprehend a text better”. Although being experienced educators for nearly twenty years, they acknowledged no relation to strategic reading other than skimming and scanning, to which they devoted very little time within the lesson. Their responses indicated that when facing a syntactic or lexical difficulty they advised their students to use the context or a dictionary without explicitly presenting the proper way to do it. In particular, the experimental group teacher reported “I tell my students to deploy certain strategies when facing unknown vocabulary but usually in a hurry and without analysis as to the conditions of their use”. Likewise she stated, rather emphatically, “Since I can give them all the definitions they need, why waste time to explain alternative ways to understand the text meaning!”.

Finally, as far as cooperative reading was concerned, both educators professed their dislike because they would not “have enough time to deal with the syllabus instructional material”, as the control group teacher explained. The experimental group teacher, however, displayed a more positive attitude towards group-work admitting that cooperative work “is enjoyable to the students... but causes discipline problems”, which was the reason why it was a rather infrequent occurrence in her classroom.

4.2.2. Researcher's journal

The qualitative analysis of the journal entries led to the emergence of three typologies (Bailey, 1994): a) Strategy Training Process, b) Strategy development and c) overall reflection on the intervention, encompassing a number of categories and subcategories, which are presented on Table 2 below.

Typologies	Categories	Subcategories	
Strategy Training Process	Methods	Strategy modeling	
	Techniques	Scaffolding a combination of strategies	
		Thinking aloud	
	Ways of working	Brainstorming	
Verbalizing thoughts			
Providing solutions			
i. Pair/group work			
Teacher's Role	ii. Individual work		
	iii. Intergroup cooperation and interaction		
	iv. Cooperation between teacher-class		
	Encouragement – motivation		
	Facilitating student comprehension		
Strategy development	Cognitive strategies	Guidance – assistance	
		Familiarizing student with the process	
		Previewing	
		Predicting the text topic	
	Metacognitive strategies	Using mental imagery	
		Using the context	
		Summarisation	
Overall reflection on the intervention	Problems Encountered	Create a graphic organizer	
	Learning Outcomes	Coordination of strategies	
		Students' difficulty in cooperation	
		Students' difficulty in using original phrases to summarise	
Regulation/responsibility of the learning process			
Strategic/efficient readers	Improvement on the reading performance	Effective collaboration among students	
			Awareness of the reading usefulness

Table 2: *Typologies, categories and subcategories of journal entries*

5. Discussion

Scaffolding learners to orchestrate a combination of strategies in order to become more efficient readers was a primary goal of the present study. It was hypothesized that the strategy training would improve students' reading performance. The results of the study verified the specific research hypothesis. Namely, it was found that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both reading comprehension measures after the strategy training. These results were in accordance with the findings of other empirical studies on the effectiveness of strategic intervention (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Kusiak, 2001; Manoli et al., 2016; Wichadee, 2011). Moreover, considering the fact that both groups were at a similar proficiency level before the teaching intervention, the experimental group improvement can be attributed to the strategy instruction, which offered students step-by-step guidance on how to use particular strategies under specific circumstances helping them become more efficient and strategic readers.

In addition, the results of the follow-up measurement demonstrated that the experimental group maintained the gains of the strategic instruction after the intervention withdrawal. Thus, the results validated the second hypothesis of the study regarding maintenance effects and supported relative research findings (Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Manoli et al., 2016). The lack of studies exploring the maintenance effects of strategy training, which is obvious in the reading literature, makes the need for further research more urgent.

Regarding the CSR approach, the coordination of several strategies and student collaboration seemed to facilitate reading comprehension, as it was revealed by the treatment group test scores. The improvement in the scores of the experimental group can also suggest that the set of strategies selected addressed the needs of the particular learners. Gains in reading performance after the application of collaborative instruction were verified by the findings of similar studies (Fan, 2010; Karabuga & Kaya, 2013; Puspita, Tasnim & Ariyanto, 2013).

In the Greek context, the interview data validated the assumption that Greek EFL teachers were not familiar with reading strategy training, as they found traditional teaching easier to implement and closer to their field of expertise. These findings were in agreement with previous studies revealing that Greek EFL teachers were unaware of the efficiency of strategic instruction (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013; Vrettou, Psaltou-Joycey, & Gavriilidou, 2016). In this way, the need for special seminars to educators emerges to help them adopt new, learner-centred methods of teaching and adjust their role in the classroom, where teachers are no longer the ultimate source of information, but they are coaches and facilitators who encourage strategy use, class interaction and learner communication (Cohen, 2011; Weaver & Cohen, 1994).

Conclusion

Concluding, the present study provides evidence for reading comprehension improvement in EFL secondary students after strategy instruction, especially in the Greek context, where explicit multiple-strategy instruction has not been sufficiently explored. According to the results of the study, strategy training had a positive impact on students' reading performance not only in the immediate but also in the delayed post-test measurement, which has not been extensively investigated in the relevant literature as well. The

encouraging findings of this study can signify the beginning of a new approach to reading comprehension in Greek public schools, which can make collaborative learning and multiple-strategy instruction an integral part of the curriculum.

However, it should be mentioned that this study had certain limitations, such as the rather limited number of participants and duration of the teaching intervention, which should be considered for future research. In this way, further longitudinal research is required, which should shed more light on the contribution of CSR instruction to EFL learners' reading ability.

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