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Developing a strategic reading approach in Greek primary EFL classes: An exploratory study

Ανάπτυξη στρατηγικών κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου σε Έλληνες μαθητές Δημοτικού σχολείου που μαθαίνουν την αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα: Μια διερευνητική μελέτη

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The present study probed into the immediate and delayed effects of a multiple-strategy instruction on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reading performance. The sample of the study consisted of 20, 11 to 12 year-old, Greek-speaking EFL learners, who received a three-month multiple-reading strategy instruction set within the Direct Explanation framework and participated in pretest, immediate and delayed posttest measurements. The data came from two reading comprehension measures, one standardized EFL reading ability test and one researcher-designed reading test. The results of the study indicated that the EFL students improved their reading performance both in the immediate and delayed posttest measurements when compared to their pretest measurement. Empirical evidence for not only the immediate but also the delayed effects of strategy training in young EFL contexts is provided. Pedagogical implications and recommendations for further research are also discussed.

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Η παρούσα έρευνα διερεύνησε τα αποτελέσματα της διδασκαλίας στρατηγικών κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου στη βελτίωση της ικανότητας των μαθητών/τριών να κατανοούν τα γραπτά κείμενα στην Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα αλλά και τη διατήρηση των αποτελεσμάτων της διδακτικής παρέμβασης στο χρόνο. Το δείγμα της έρευνας αποτελούνταν από 20 Έλληνες μαθητές Δημοτικού, ηλικίας 11 έως 12 ετών, οι οποίοι μάθαιναν την αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα. Οι συμμετέχοντες διδάχθηκαν μια σειρά στρατηγικών κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου για περίπου τρεις μήνες μέσω της διδακτικής προσέγγισης ''Άμεση Επεξήγηση'' και συμμετείχαν στις δοκιμασίες ελέγχου κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου, οι οποίες δόθηκαν πριν και μετά την παρέμβαση, καθώς και τρεις μήνες μετά την ολοκλήρωση της παρέμβασης. Τα δεδομένα της έρευνας προήλθαν από δυο δοκιμασίες ελέγχου της επίδοσης των μαθητών/τριών στην κατανόηση γραπτού λόγου στην Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα, μια

σταθμισμένη δοκιμασία και μια άλλη κατασκευασμένη από την ερευνήτρια. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας έδειξαν ότι οι μαθητές/τριες βελτίωσαν σημαντικά την επίδοση τους μετά τη διδακτική παρέμβαση συγκριτικά με την επίδοση τους στην αρχική μέτρηση αλλά και διατήρησαν τα αποτελέσματα της παρέμβασης τρεις μήνες μετά το πέρας αυτής. Τα εμπειρικά δεδομένα της έρευνας καταδεικνύουν τη συμβολή της διδασκαλίας στρατηγικών στη βελτίωση της επίδοσης των μαθητών/τριών Δημοτικού στην κατανόηση γραπτού λόγου στην Αγγλική γλώσσα αλλά και τη διατήρηση των αποτελεσμάτων στο χρόνο. Γίνεται, επίσης, αναφορά στις παιδαγωγικές επιπτώσεις της έρευνας και στις προτάσεις για περαιτέρω διερεύνηση του θέματος.

Key words: multiple-strategy instruction, direct explanation, EFL reading comprehension, reading strategies, strategic reading, primary school students

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1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is viewed as the result of complex interactions between the text, the setting, the reader, and the reading strategies -both in a first (L1) and second language (L2)[1] (Erler & Finkbeiner, 2007). Reading strategies, which are regarded as "ways of getting round difficulties encountered while reading" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 95), "are of interest not only for what they reveal about the way readers manage their interactions with written text, but also for how the use of strategies is related to effective reading comprehension" (Carrell, 1998, p. 1). Macaro (2006) highlighted that strategies attempt to turn a L2 text from a state in which it is not understood into different states or levels of understanding and integration into existing knowledge or experience.

A considerable amount of L2 reading research shed light on the use of reading strategies and strategy instruction in order to enhance learners' reading achievement. More recent trends in L2 reading research emphasized multiple-strategy instruction rather than individual strategy instruction highlighting the fact that strategic readers draw on a repertoire of strategies, perceive the nature of the problem, choose the appropriate strategies and co-ordinate their use with other strategies according to the purpose of reading (Anderson, 1991; Grabe, 2009).

Although there is some empirical evidence for the effects of multiple-strategy instruction on EFL reading performance or strategy use (see section 2.2), there is a lack of studies investigating the maintenance of comprehension gains after intervention withdrawal; examining the delayed effects of strategy instruction should constitute one of the main aims of the different intervention programmes, as the value of strategy training draws on whether its impact lasts over time when the strategy sessions have ceased (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 2011; Plonsky, 2011). Concurrently, research evidence points to a dearth of focus on the reading comprehension skill in classrooms highlighting that it is often limited to a short text comprehension and simply regarded as a tool for exposing learners to vocabulary (Grenfell, 1992; Janzen, 2007; Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategy instruction

The line of reading research that examined the strategies that skilled and less-skilled readers deploy (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Block, 1986; Geladari, Griva, & Mastrothanasis, 2010; Malcolm, 2009; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Zhang & Wu, 2009) in an attempt to construct meaning from written texts was conducive to strategy instruction in order to help less proficient readers develop strategic reading and improve comprehension (Koda, 2005). It is assumed that the cognitive enterprise of effective reading comprehension requires readers' use and control of a variety of strategies when faced with comprehension difficulties (Cohen, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005; Oxford, 2011). However, efficient strategy use cannot be attained merely as a result of reading but should be integrated in the reading instruction process through explicit teaching the reasoning associated with strategy development (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009; Duffy, Roehler, Meloth, & Vavrus, 1986). Explicit strategy instruction includes a cycle of direct explanation of strategies, modelling, guided and independent practice of strategies to familiarize students with strategy use, raise students' metacognitive awareness of the reading process, and enhance comprehension (Duffy, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Oxford, 2011; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Metacognitive awareness during the reading process refers to readers' metacognitive knowledge of the nature and purpose of reading and the self-control mechanisms they can use to monitor and control comprehension (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).

In this way, reading instruction should involve direct verbal explanation on behalf of the teachers in order to communicate information about what the strategies are (declarative knowledge), when and why to use them (conditional knowledge), and how to use them (procedural knowledge) (Duffy et al., 1986; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). There is consensus among researchers that children's declarative knowledge of strategies is not sufficient for high performance without both procedural and conditional knowledge about the strategies (Sperling, Howard, Staley, & Dubois, 2004; Weinstein, Husman, & Dierking, 2000).

2.2. Research on multiple-strategy instruction

Based on L1 reading research (e.g., Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Spörer, Brunstein, & Kieschke, 2009), a number of EFL studies dealing with adults or university students in a range of cultural and learning settings have probed into the immediate effects of multiple-strategy training that develops within students' metacognitive awareness. The findings of these studies, which mostly implemented multiple-strategy training consisting of teacher strategy modelling followed by student practice with a focus on comprehension monitoring, showed that strategy training could enhance strategy use and improve EFL reading achievement.

To be more precise, Cotterall (1990) and Song (1998), drawing on Palincsar and Brown's (1984) study, conducted metacognitive strategy instruction via the Reciprocal Teaching approach in pre-university EFL classes and lent support for the effectiveness of the training on learners' reading achievement. Salataci and Akyel (2002) explored the effects of applying a four-week metacognitive multiple-strategy instruction through the Reciprocal Teaching approach indicating that the Turkish-speaking university EFL students increased strategy use in both languages and enhanced EFL reading performance. Dreyer and Nel (2003) conducted a 13-week multiple-strategy training within a technology-enhanced learning environment in

South African college students learning EFL for professional purposes indicating that students in the experimental group received significantly higher marks on three comprehension measures as compared to the students in the control group. Zhang (2008), when applying a two-month multiple-strategy instruction within a constructivist framework to Chinese university EFL students, revealed positive effects of the training on learners' reading achievement. In another study, Aghaie and Zhang (2012) demonstrated the positive impact of a four-month multiple-strategy instruction on Iranian high school EFL students' reading performance and strategy transfer. Akkakoson (2013) also indicated positive effects of implementing strategy training on Thai university EFL students' reading achievement and strategy use. More recently, Dabarera, Renandya, and Zhang (2014), who investigated the impact of applying strategy training via the Reciprocal Teaching approach to EFL secondary school students in Singapore, found that the training improved students' reading achievement and boosted their metacognitive awareness.

Regarding the Greek socio-educational context, no study has so far focused on multiple-reading strategy instruction, while few studies have examined the impact of individual reading strategy instruction providing positive results (Hatzitheodorou, 2005; Pappa, Zafiropoulou, & Metallidou, 2003; Rizouli, 2013).

Relying on EFL reading research, there is a dearth of empirical studies exploring the maintenance of comprehension gains after intervention withdrawal, though it is assumed that the value of strategy training draws on whether its impact lasts over time (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 2011; Plonsky, 2011). Allowing for the gap identified in the literature review, the purpose of this study was to investigate the immediate and delayed effects of implementing multiple-strategy instruction on primary students' reading performance who were attending EFL classes in Greece.

3. Method

3.1. Research questions and hypotheses

Allowing for the theoretical underpinnings discussed above and the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

- Can a multiple-strategy training set within the Direct Explanation approach enhance primary EFL students' reading achievement?
- Can the comprehension gains from strategy training be maintained in a subsequent non-treatment measurement?

Concurrently, the following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- It was assumed that the EFL students would significantly improve their reading performance after the strategy training.
- It was expected that the EFL students would maintain comprehension gains in a subsequent non-treatment measurement.

3.2. Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 20 Greek-speaking EFL learners registered in the sixth grade -the last grade- of a primary state school in a provincial city of central Greece, Trikala. The participants were approximately 11-12 years old and of A2 level according to the levels

of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2001). This particular age was chosen, as it was expected that students at the age of approximately 12 would have been more receptive to the acquisition of strategies when compared to younger or older students, as strategies develop between the age of 7 and 13, though their spontaneous use materializes around the age of 10 or above (Garner, 1990; Kolić-Vehovec, Bajšanski, & Rončević Zubković, 2010; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Simultaneously, it was assumed that Greek students would already have had a cumulative EFL learning experience of at least four years at the time when the data were collected, since EFL is taught as a compulsory subject from the third to the sixth grade of state elementary schools -Greek primary education consists of six grades- three hours per week -each teaching hour lasts for approximately 40 minutes.

3.3. Procedure

One week before and after the teaching intervention a standardized EFL reading ability test and a researcher-designed reading test were administered to investigate the immediate effects of the strategy instruction on students' reading performance. In addition, three months after the intervention withdrawal the same researcher-designed test as the one used as a pretest and posttest measure was administered to explore the delayed effects of the strategy training on students' reading achievement. All the research instruments were administered to the students by the researcher in order to be in control of the testing procedure, that is, the provision of the appropriate guidelines and the avoidance of possible interference on behalf of their EFL teachers.

3.4. Research instruments

Two research instruments were used to collect data in this study: one standardized EFL reading ability test and one researcher-designed reading test. All reading tests were scored by two judges, the researcher and another colleague, independently; the inter-rater agreement was quite satisfactory (92%). Acceptable responses were determined at the outset of the scoring procedure. Possible differences were resolved through regular meetings between the two scorers. Simultaneously, most items were multiple-choice and short answer questions, which demand no judgment on behalf of the scorer and render the whole scoring process more objective and reliable (Hughes, 2003).

The standardized reading ability test. The reading section of a national, standardized foreign language exam system was used to assess sixth graders' reading performance before and after the teaching intervention. It included cloze texts and short texts that were accompanied by 40 multiple-choice and 10 fill-in-the-gap questions. It was completed within a teaching hour, that is, within 40 minutes, to avoid disruptions in the normal flow of classes. According to the instructions provided by the examination board, the scoring procedure of this section relies on a 50-point scale, 1 point per correct item. At the same time, the standardized reading ability measure was used to check the validity of the researcher-designed measure; significant Pearson correlations were found between the results of the reading section of the standardized test and the researcher-designed measure (r = .54, p < .01).

The researcher-designed reading test. It comprised three texts consisting of multiple-choice and short answer questions, which were specifically designed to examine the reading strategies the teaching intervention emphasized. The constructed test was also designed to be completed within a teaching hour. Moreover, the time limit of the tasks designed to

measure the use of skimming and scanning was particularly tight, as both skimming and scanning are selective types of reading requiring a high speed (Carver, 1992; Grabe, 2009). The constructed test was also scored on a 50-point scale in agreement with the scale used in the reading section of the standardized test. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach's alphas was satisfactory for the constructed test -above the .7 acceptance level (α= .86).

3.5. The teaching intervention

The strategy instruction, which was conducted by the researcher, lasted for approximately three months and included 12 instructional sessions, one per week, to avoid disruption of the normal flow of class. Allowing for the English Curriculum (2003) that is intended for the level at which this study was conducted and the framework set by the CEFR (2001), the reading strategies taught in the present study were: predicting text content and using semantic mapping prior to text reading, getting the gist (skimming), identifying specific information (scanning), and guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. The instructional approach adopted in the study was based on Direct Explanation, which followed a cycle of strategy explanation, modelling and extensive practice consisting of gradual removal of scaffolding in order to familiarize students with the strategy use and raise their metacognitive awareness of the reading process (Duffy et al., 1986; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

To be more precise, the first two instructional sessions were devoted to direct strategy explanation and modelling where the researcher's main aim was to communicate particular pieces of information about what each strategy was (declarative knowledge), how it could be applied (procedural knowledge), when and why it could be used (conditional knowledge) (Duffy et al., 1986; Paris et al., 1983). The researcher's strategy modelling relied on concrete examples from a text by thinking aloud the cognitive processes taking place during each strategy application to turn the covert comprehension processes into overt (Dewitz et al., 2009; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). On subsequent days, the students were given chances to put the new strategies into guided practice, where the researcher and students worked together. In this context, the students were asked to work on a variety of reading materials and activities that were chosen and designed to facilitate the use of the specific strategies applying a combination of strategies to each text. The researcher's assistance was gradually removed leading to more independent practice (Pearson & Dole, 1987; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) to help students "find their own pathways to success" (Cohen, 1998, p. 67). The participants were constantly encouraged to reflect upon their own strategy use in each activity aiming to help them enhance their ability to monitor the reading comprehension process. Answers were checked in class and corrective feedback was provided, where necessary. In the last instructional session, the researcher provided students with the chance to co-ordinate all the strategies they had been taught in a new reading material without interfering in the whole learning process to help them transfer the taught strategies to new but similar reading situations (Cohen, 1998; Duffy et al., 1986; Pearson & Dole, 1987).

Reading materials. The reading materials were chosen to promote the use of the specific reading strategies. Concurrently, the researcher attempted to expose students to a range of texts, such as narrative, expository, argumentative, and descriptive (see De Beaugrande, 1981; Koda, 2005). Most of them were mainly drawn from educational internet sites, as the researcher's aim was to use authentic texts that would attract students' attention and activate their background knowledge. These texts covered a variety of topics ranging from pen pals, museum maps, mobile phones to Disneyland Park and horror stories allowing for

students' interests and preferences, which, according to Nuttall (1996), is the most important selection criterion. Furthermore, though students' reading proficiency was taken into consideration, most of the texts used in the training were of a higher reading ability level than students' actual level, because strategy development is required when students face comprehension difficulties (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Regarding the activities accompanying the texts, they were designed to practise the use of the reading strategies emphasized in the instructional sessions. Activities, such as multiple choice, matching, true/false/not given, and short-answer questions were mainly designed, which limit students' choice and allow objectivity in the scoring procedures.

3.6. Data analysis

The present study included three sets of data: a) the pre-intervention data (pretest), b) the post-intervention data (posttest) and c) the follow-up data. For the statistical analyses of the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used. In accordance with the aims of the study, the statistical analyses of Repeated Measures of ANOVA and Paired T-Test were computed. The level of significance was set at .05.

4. Results

To investigate the immediate and delayed effects of the strategy training on EFL students' reading performance, a Repeated Measures ANOVA design was conducted with the scores of the standardized test in the two measurement times (before and after the intervention) as within subject variable. The results showed that the main effect of time was statistically significant, $F(1, 19) = 19.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .504$. Additionally, the application of Paired T-Test demonstrated that the difference in comprehension scores was statistically significant between the pretest and posttest measurement, $t(19) = -4.395$, $p < .001$. The mean scores of the standardized reading measure before and after the intervention are depicted in Table 1 below.

	Pretest		Posttest		Follow-up
	SRAT1	RT1	SRAT2	RT2	RT3
Mean	31,60	18,4	39,75	34,80	24,70
SD	8,70	9,52	9,11	8,9	11,8

Note. SRAT1= the score in the Standardized Reading Ability Test in the pretest measurement, SRAT2= the score in the Standardized Reading Ability Test in the posttest measurement, while RT1= the score in the Researcher-designed Reading Test in the pretest measurement, RT2= the score in the Researcher-designed Reading Text in the posttest measurement, RT3= the score in the Researcher-designed Reading Text in the follow-up measurement.

Table 1. Means and SD of the students' reading performance in the three different measurements.

Moreover, a Repeated Measures ANOVA design was performed using the time of measurement (pretest, posttest, and follow-up) as a within subjects variable and the scores of the researcher-designed reading comprehension test in the three different measurements as the dependent variables. The results indicated that the main effect of time factor was statistically significant, $F(2, 38) = 61.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .765$. Concurrently, the application of Paired T-Test showed that the difference in comprehension scores was statistically significant between the pretest and the posttest measurement, $t(19) = -10.208$, $p < .001$, between the pretest and the follow-up measurement, $t(19) = -4.730$, $p < .001$, and between

the posttest and the follow-up measurement, $t(19) = 6.668$, $p < .001$. Even though there was a loss from the posttest to the follow-up measurement, the difference in performance between the pretest and the follow-up measurement was still statistically significant in favor of the follow-up measurement (see Table 1).

The above results confirmed not only the immediate but also the delayed effects of the strategy instruction on students' reading performance after the intervention (posttest measurement) as well as in a subsequent non-treatment measurement (follow-up measurement).

5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the immediate and delayed effects of implementing explicit multiple-strategy instruction on EFL primary students' reading performance. Initially, it was assumed that students would improve reading performance in an immediate and delayed posttest measurement as compared to their pretest measurement. Indeed, the analyses of the research data confirmed the above hypotheses.

To be more precise, a comparison of the data collected before and after strategy instruction revealed that the EFL students significantly improved their performance on both comprehension measures. This finding is in accordance with previous studies that have also examined the immediate effects of multiple-strategy instruction on EFL students' reading performance and yielded positive results (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Cotterall, 1990; Dabarera et al., 2014; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Salataci & Akyel, 2002; Song, 1998; Zhang, 2008). However, no direct comparisons can be made with the above studies, as there are major differences in the characteristics of the sample, the duration of the teaching interventions, the strategies used or the instructional approach adopted in each study.

In addition, the results of the study provided strong support for the maintenance of comprehension gains after treatment withdrawal. Namely, it was shown that the Greek-speaking EFL students who received metacognitive multiple-reading strategy instruction maintained comprehension gains in a subsequent measurement, which did not disappear after treatment withdrawal. Indeed, the results indicated that the means of the researcher-designed comprehension measure differentiated significantly not only between the pretest and the posttest measurement but also between the pretest and the follow-up measurement, confirming the immediate and delayed effects of the strategy training on students' reading performance both after the intervention (immediate posttest measurement) and some months after the intervention withdrawal (delayed posttest measurement). Although a loss from the posttest to the follow-up measurement can be observed, which is quite normal due to the passage of time, the difference in performance between the pretest and the follow-up measurement was still statistically significant in favor of the follow-up measurement. Given that the delayed effects of strategy training have not been examined thoroughly in the EFL reading research, the comprehension gains found in a subsequent non-treatment measurement of the study contribute to this line of research and strengthen the theoretical belief that explicit multiple-strategy instruction involving metacognitive awareness raising could be a valuable instructional tool for EFL reading comprehension (Duffy et al., 1986). After all, the value of strategy instruction is critical when its impact lasts over time when the instructional sessions have ceased (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 2011; Plonsky, 2011).

Concomitantly, the data of the study supported the effectiveness of the instructional approach adopted, which seemed to be conducive to students' significant comprehension gains. In other words, the Direct Explanation approach, which followed a cycle of direct strategy explanation, modelling, and extensive practice emphasizing the three types of metacognitive knowledge (declarative, procedural, and conditional) proved to be really efficient in helping students internalize strategy instruction (Duffy et al., 1986; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Paris et al., 1983; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Paris et al. (1983) alleged that these three types of knowledge constitute necessary components of strategic behavior, as they assist learners in selecting the appropriate strategies to facilitate reading comprehension. Moreover, it is highly possible that the duration of the training, which lasted for three months including 12 instructional sessions, have contributed to the positive results yielded, as developing students' strategic reading behaviour is a long-term educational process requiring teachers' perpetual support, explanations, modelling, and feedback throughout strategy training (Carrell, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005).

In fact, the teaching intervention diverged from the rather traditional and teacher-centered way of approaching EFL reading comprehension in the Greek primary classes, which consisted of oral text reading through mainly the Round Robin Reading (RRR) technique, text translation, vocabulary instruction, oral comprehension questions and written task completion following text reading (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013). The former approach emphasizes a strategic, active and selective type of reading according to the goals of reading; on the contrary, the latter approach can be regarded as rather traditional and teacher-centered focusing on readers' passive text interaction and word mastering, as the extensive use of RRR technique is seen as an instance of ineffective and pedagogically obsolete oral reading practice (Kelly, 1995; Opitz & Rasinski, 2008). In this way, it would have been very difficult for these EFL learners that used to stick to word-for-word text translation to adopt a strategic and selective type of reading if they had not been taught during the training strategies, such as guessing unknown words from context and searching for the gist or specific pieces of information by reading quickly and omitting large parts of the text.

Overall, the results suggest that a similar instructional design should be implemented in EFL classes, including the Greek socio-educational context, in which the present study was conducted, in order to help learners approach reading materials strategically, construct text meaning and derive the pleasure of achievement notwithstanding the difficulties they may come across while interacting with reading materials. In fact, a large number of students, particularly less skilled ones, are not able to deploy reading strategies effectively lagging behind in their academic tasks (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Block, 1986; Geladari et al., 2010; Malcolm, 2009; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Zhang & Wu, 2009). Therefore, teaching students *how* to approach EFL texts by developing a repertoire of strategies should constitute the main focus in the various instructional sessions; explicit multiple-strategy training involving strategy explanation, modelling, and practice seems to be a promising instructional approach and could be paving the way to the future (Duffy, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Grabe, 2009; Oxford, 2011; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Nonetheless, the findings and the pedagogical implications of the present study should be viewed with some skepticism allowing for its limitations, such as the rather small number of participants and the lack of an experimental group, which render the results less reliable. In this way, the findings of this study should be replicated and similar instructional design should be implemented in various L2 learning contexts in order to get more tangible research evidence.

6. Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that the Greek-speaking primary EFL students enhanced their reading performance in an immediate and delayed posttest measurement. Therefore, it was shown that the strategy training was effective in helping EFL students not only improve reading achievement after the teaching intervention but maintain comprehension gains in a subsequent non-treatment measurement. The findings of the study provided empirical evidence for the maintenance of comprehension gains after treatment withdrawal, which is the main contribution of the study to the relevant L2 reading research, as, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, most studies have investigated only immediate intervention effects. However, allowing for the limitations mentioned above, future research is needed to extend and validate the findings of the present study.

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Note

1. Though the researchers are aware of the difference between the terms foreign language (FL) and L2 (Oxford, 2003), they adopt the terms L2 and EFL, as they are widely used in literature.

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