

Use of Highlighting Strategies in Reading Comprehension and Effects on Attainment in Selected Reading Skills

Achu Charles Tante^{id} and Enanga Marie Sass^{id}
Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Molyko, Buea, Cameroon

Abstract

This study had two specific research objectives, two research questions and four specific research hypotheses. The study used quasi-experimental research designs. Data were collected using a standardized test. The study had a population of English Language students from secondary schools. The purposive sampling technique was used. The sample consisted of 40 students. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of .70. Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24.00). Findings revealed that reading comprehension performances of students taught skimming and scanning in the highlighting strategies were significantly higher than those who were not taught using the highlighting strategies.

Keywords: language strategies, highlighting, reading comprehension, reading skills, skimming, scanning

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, the English Language is a very important tool for communication in the new global economy, science & technology, the mass media, government and business. Competency in the English Language is even more crucial to those of English as a Second Language (ESL) context, such as English-speaking Cameroon, which due to historical occurrences, was ruled first as a Trust Territory of the League of Nations and later as a Mandated Territory of the United Nations. Unlike many Anglophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroon is yet to fully implement National Language in primary school (Anchimbe, 2005, Tante, 2018). Indeed, Cameroon's Law No. 98/004 of 14th April 1998 states that the educational system shall be organized into two sub-systems, including English-speaking and French-speaking. Furthermore, English and French were official languages, making the country bilingual. Communication in the country (Anchimbe, 2005). One implication is that it is imperative to acquire basic fluency, accuracy and communication skills to progress or develop in whatever direction.

One such skill is reading, which is a key skill, especially for instruction, business, information and development. It is important to be able to approach a textual discourse with appropriate tools. According to Harmer (2005, p. 70), reading is an incredibly active occupation. To do it successfully, one has to understand what the words mean, see the pictures, paint and understand the arguments and work out if there is agreement or disagreement with them. Therefore, reading must use all five senses to bring reasoning, comprehension and judgment.

Reading is an interactive process consisting of inferring, knowing correct sounds and comprehension (Kamhi & Catts, 2008). Reading is said to be a dynamic, complex act that involves bringing meaning to and getting meaning from the printed page. This definition implies that readers bring their backgrounds, experiences and emotions into play in any reading text (Ereksun et al., 2011, p. 6). Reading, therefore, involves a certain material, a person or persons who need to interact with these material(s) to employ their willingness, cognition, and emotions and take action

to interact with the text to make meaning out of it. Furthermore, reading could be seen as a perceptual and cognitive process (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004, p. 149).

In addition, reading habits contribute both to the cognitive and social development of individuals in so many aspects. This function of the reading habit continues in the rapidly changing process of today's world. Reading habits are the realization of reading activities continuously, systematically, and critically. However, children's television and other animated distractions take up most of their time and occupy them, thus, do not give them the patience for reading books, newspapers and so on. Sustainability in reading is begging for a lasting solution since a good quality basic education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning (UNESCO, 2011).

In Cameroon, ESL aims to encourage the teaching of the four skills in an integrated manner, to encourage communication in speech and writing, to promote the use of the English language as a national and international language and to encourage extensive reading and listening in various ways. The end-of-course examination marks the syllabus for secondary schools in the Anglophone sub-system called the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O Level) after five years of post-primary secondary education. The examination is weighted 40% for grammar, reading and listening comprehension and 60% for essay writing and directed writing (Cameroon GCE Board, 2016). The aims, objectives and sub-test content of reading comprehension are outlined below:

Aims of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension aims to encourage the teaching and learning of reading skills, reading with understanding of textual material on varied topics, increasing learner's vocabulary and fostering a love for extensive reading.

Objectives of Reading Comprehension

1. Test the ability to read various kinds of materials.
2. Test the ability to respond in different ways to various kinds of materials.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Achu Charles Tante, Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Molyko, Buea, Cameroon. **Email:** ctante2@yahoo.com

3. Test the ability to infer the meaning and use of words in context.

Sub-test Content of Reading Comprehension

The examination will be set on one or more passages about 750 to 1000 words. The passages may not have the same subject

matter. There will be 17 questions in this section; they will be of MCQ type and carry 17 marks (Cameroon GCE Board, 2016).

Despite the time allocated for teaching English daily, the GCE O Level results still show low achievement, as is seen in Table 1.

Table 1

The trend of performance at the GCE Ordinary Level Examination from 2012 – 2015

Factors' for the English Language	Years			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
Registration	81365	89898	91639	105328
Sat	80488	88789	89821	103978
Passed	29417	33781	11910	27276
Passed in percentage	36.55	38.05	13.026	26.23

Note. Cameroon GCE board 2012-2015.

The continuous poor achievement may be explained by the fact that many schools lack libraries. So there is the unavailability of books for English in particular and little in the form of reading materials, thus defeating the development of literacy as learners face the problem of authentic books. To the English-speaking Cameroonian student, it is absolutely important to be able to read fluently and competently not only because English is used across the school curriculum, but it is also a school course from pre-school to higher education and a language for both informal and formal communication (Kuchah, 2013). However, with the unviability of reading resources coupled with other variables such as reading competency of students, lack of students' interest in reading and questionable methods, techniques and strategies in developing reading skills, there is a need to investigate whether using highlighting reading strategy may be improved sub-skills of scanning and skimming.

Conceptual Review

This sub-section reviews literature that focuses on concepts of "reading," "reading comprehension," "purposes for reading," and "highlighting reading strategies."

Reading. Reading is an interactive process consisting of inferring, knowing correct sounds and comprehension (Kamhi & Catts, 2008). Reading is said to be a dynamic, complex act that involves bringing meaning to and getting meaning from the printed page. This definition implies that readers bring their backgrounds, experiences and emotions into play (Ereksan et al., 2011, p. 6) the constructivists' perspective of viewing reading. Furthermore, reading can be seen as a perceptual and cognitive process (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004, p. 149). Reading is a complex process that requires the analysis, coordination and interpretation of various sources of information. This complex process must be considered to effectively meet learners' needs during the acquisition of reading skills (Anderson et al., 2010, p. 9). Seeing that reading is the process of understanding written language, Acevedo and Rose (2006, p. 1) state that anyone who has been to school knows that the central skill that all learners need to succeed is to be able to read and to learn from reading.

Reading is the process of understanding written language. It begins with a flutter of patterns on the retina and ends, if reading is successful, with a definite idea about the author's intended message. Reading can be seen as a perceptual and cognitive process (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004, p. 149). According to Nunan (2003, p. 68), reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from the text and their background knowledge to build meaning. Yet, Carrell (1998, p. 2) views the reading process as an active "psychological guessing game," while Seyler (2004, p. 185) defined reading as the process of obtaining or constructing meaning from a word or clusters of words. It means that reading combines words and sentences to make the reader get meaning from the words (Khair et al., 2017). Word cluster as a tool for students reading helps make it easier to understand the ideas from the sentences. In word clusters, students can predict the main ideas of the sentences without reading all of the texts (Khair et al., 2017).

It would be good to look at the different reading activities in examining reading. In teaching reading, three main activities should be considered by the teacher. Brown (2007, p. 121) states that teaching reading includes pre-, during and post-reading.

Reading comprehension. According to Grellet (1987, p. 3), reading comprehension is understanding written text by means of extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. Teachers assume that to be able to comprehend, students should do exercises to improve their reading skills.

The pre-reading phase comprises of activity the students do not come into reading activity yet; the teacher tries to activate students' knowledge about the topic being discussed. The students are led to recognize the topic and some stated information. The students are also guided to become familiar with some vocabulary included in the reading text. This activity is done only to attract students' interest, motivation and enthusiasm till the end of the reading activity. In this activity, students are invited to guess and call out words, knowledge and experience that are relevant to the text, relevant language and an expected meaning (Hood & Forey 2005, p. 73; Wallace, 1992, p. 91).

In the while reading phase, the teacher can generate appropriate strategies to help students comprehend the text. The common one is reading aloud activity which is recommended to use by Gibbons (2002); Hancock and Leaver, 2006; Nuttal (1996, p. 2). There are two kinds of reading aloud; reading aloud to students can be used as an opportunity to bring students into popular culture and an opportunity to challenge text and reading aloud by students individual students to each other can develop class cohesion and encourage students about the text Hancock and Leaver (2006, p. 40). This activity is usually assumed as the core of the reading process. The students start to read the text and comprehend all information in the text. The students are also guided to identify the main ideas in each paragraph, grasp all information comprehensively and try to make some clues in the vocabulary. In this activity, the teacher encourages the students to focus on reading so that the students will find texts easy to understand and know what they have read so far (Khair et al., 2017).

In the post-reading activity, the teacher evaluates students' comprehension of the reading text. The evaluation includes vocabulary, grammar, meaning and summarising the author's purpose. In addition, to knowing these items, the teacher gives an exercise to the students. Consequently, it can be stated that teaching reading comprehension is an activity that a teacher does for language learning. The teacher will guide the students to derive meaning from what they have read. In the teaching reading process, a teacher should pay attention to the three activities that will be applied, namely pre-reading, whilst-reading, and post-teaching activity (Khair et al., 2017). These above cannot stand without the reading styles, techniques, purposes or sub-skills of reading.

Purposes for reading. Regarding scanning, skimming and their purposes of reading cannot be separated from comprehension. Each type will determine what to achieve during or after reading. In conjunction with this classroom, the activity should parallel the real world as closely as possible. A language is a tool for communication, so methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium.

A look at skimming shows that it is the process of fast reading in order to take the gist of a passage. It gives readers the advantage of predicting the passage's purpose, the main topic or message, and possibly some of the developing or supporting ideas (Brown, 2001; p. 308, Njuakom, 2011). A kind of rapid reading is appropriate when deciding if careful reading would be desirable or when there is not enough time to read something carefully.

Scanning, by contrast, is the process of quickly searching for particular information in a text. The purpose of scanning is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text (Brown, 2001, p. 308). Scanning and skimming help learners learn exactly what they need or want to understand and allow them to disregard the rest or use it as background information (Njuakom, 2011, Oxford, 1990).

Highlighting Strategy. According to Cerveny and LaCotti (2003), highlighting is a strategy that uses highlighting the main ideas and supporting details to help teachers support students to improve the organization of reading. It means that this strategy helps students organize their materials so that they can easily find the important information in the text and make students comprehend the text as well. It is supported by Schumm (2006), who stated that highlighted text which concerns the key ideas is important for a test and classroom discussion (p., 280). Meanwhile, Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) pointed out that highlighting is a valuable intensive reading skill, both for comprehension monitoring and review after reading (p. 176). To run this strategy, Harvey and Goudvis (2007) opine that it is important to consider some aspects, such as: looking carefully at the first line and the last line of each paragraph for important information is often contained there and this clue may get one to where the information is needed; highlight only necessary word and phrases, not the entire sentence or sentences; jot notes in the margin or on a stick note to paraphrase the information, merge your thinking with it, and better remember it; do not get thrown off by interesting details because, although they are fascinating, they often obscure important information (p, 157). The present researcher will use the highlighting strategy to teach skimming and scanning sub-skills.

Theoretical Review

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. According to him, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believes everything is learned on two levels. First through interaction with others and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. This applies equally to voluntary attention, logical memory and the formation of concepts.

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is based on the idea or fact that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This "zone" is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared. However, it requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999) the difference between what a learner can do alone and what the learner can do only when assisted. Therefore, a teacher or more experienced peer is required to provide the learner with scaffolding" to support the student's evolving understanding of knowledge domain or development of complex skills. Collaborative learning, discourse, modeling and scaffolding support learners' intellectual knowledge and skills and facilitate intentional learning. The implications of Vygotsky's theory to this study are that learners should be provided with a socially rich environment to explore knowledge. Vygotsky sees learners as apprentices who require knowledge and skills via the help of those who already possess such knowledge, and skills as teachers and outside experts. The combination of all sorts could be effectively added to the list of other strategies often used by teachers in teaching reading.

This theory has its justification in teaching English language strategies that ought to be used to help English language students attain the reading sub-skills of skimming and scanning. If learners collaborate with teachers through their exchanges, students will improve. Students can also collaborate with themselves and still gain knowledge. In a situation where they work as a group, the

weaker ones would be helped through scaffolding and collaboration to get stronger than before the lesson starts. Peer tutoring and cooperative learning can help teachers to achieve a higher level of understanding of instructional practices and, by so doing, improve students' outcomes.

Empirical Review

The empirical reviews outline research highlighting strategies regarding scanning and skimming in reading comprehension.

Yik et al. (2019) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of highlighting in memory and concentration and the most beneficial method. A randomized controlled trial was done in a private medical college in Malaysia from July 2018 to August 2018. Participants were divided into 3 intervention groups [important points highlighted group ($n = 37$), entire text highlighted group ($n = 37$), not highlighted group ($n = 37$)]. They were given a text on Viola Desmond to read and 14 MCQs to answer. The final percentage for the MCQ score was calculated. Post-test feedback and students' attitude towards highlighting were taken. The results of the test score percentage were calculated and analyzed using ANOVA and independent *t*-test with Bonferroni adjustment. Students' attitude towards highlighting was analyzed by the Kruskal-Wallis and Chi-Square tests, while post-test feedback analysis was done using the Fisher-Exact test.

The results showed no significant differences among the 3 intervention groups. The not highlighted group had the highest test score percentage $M = 73.7\%$ and $SD = 14.9$, followed by the entire text highlighted group with $M = 71.8\%$ and $SD = 16.3$ and the lowest test score by important points highlighted group with $M = 71.6\%$ and $SD = 16.3$. As the results confirm, simply highlighting is not beneficial for memory retention. Rather, the student should learn to identify key points to highlight, and choosing what to highlight could be an important determinant of the efficacy of highlighting. This work touches on the highlighting strategy and its effects on students learning, similar to this study. The above study had 3 intervention groups and it guided the researcher to use two intervention groups in this study. It used chi-square. This work used the chi-square to test the hypothesis. Just like the above piece of work, this work made use of mean and standard deviation.

Murad (2014) investigated Kurdish University of Zakho (English department) students' reading strategies in Iraq. A survey research design was used for this study. A total of 100 participants were used as a sample size and the instrument included a semi-structured interview. Descriptive and thematic analyses were used for the analysis of data. It was revealed that there were many strategies of reading employed by students.

In contrast, they read which were concentrating on the text only, summarizing it by using the student's own words and thoughts, skimming the text and scanning technique, previewing the text, writing some questions about the passage, and taking notes and drawing graphs. In addition, the findings show that most English department students followed the reading strategies and depended on them in their daily reading activities. These strategies included concentrating on the text, summarizing the text by using the student's own words and thoughts, skimming the text, and using the scanning technique (looking for general and specific ideas).

Objectives

1. To investigate how the highlighting strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill.
2. To investigate how the highlighting strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the highlighting reading strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill?
2. To what extent do the highlighting reading strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill?

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming in the highlighting strategies and those that are not.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming in the highlighting strategy and those that are not.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught scanning in the highlighting strategies and those that are not.

Alternative Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught scanning in the highlighting strategies and those that are not.

Methodology

Design

This design involved the administration of the pre-test and the measurement of the variable (dependent variable), administration of the independent variable which is the experimental treatment. After this, the post-test was administered, measuring the dependent variable again. Differences due to the experimental treatment by comparing the pre-test scores as recorded. The researcher chose this design to see if the treatment would make a difference on the subject and also because the study necessitated the administration of pre-test and post-test. Also, subjects were purposively chosen and no random assignment to the group was done.

Participants

A total of 40 students were drawn from two secondary schools in Buea for the experimental and control groups and 26 teachers from 6 other schools across the Fako Division were used for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the schools and the class that constituted the target and accessible population, respectively. This technique was chosen because the researcher found these schools more secure to carry out the research during this period characterized by the Anglophone crisis. First, the simple random technique was used to get the participants. The instrument used to collect data for both the control and the experimental group was the standardized test. Secondly,

Procedure

The researcher took time to plan, present and evaluate while the students were allowed to actively participate in the reading

comprehension class activities. All the lessons to be used in teaching the two groups were prepared as follows: one considering the highlighting reading strategies in teaching the skimming sub-skill and the other prepared lessons without considering the highlighting strategies (taught via the traditional read-the-passage carefully and answering the questions below strategy). The classes were organized so that different groups at different schools had the same lessons. However, one school (the experimental group) was taught with the treatment and the other without any treatment (the control group) at different times. The study lasted six weeks (September-October 2020).

A pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, 2008) database, which had in-built consistency and validation checks, was used to enter the data. Further consistency, data range and validation checks were also performed in SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012) to identify invalid codes. Data were scale variables and were explored using case summaries and, notably, the Explore statistics to identify outliers supported with Boxplot. Given that the data were scale/continuous variables, they were described using measures of central tendencies (Mean, Median) and measures of dispersion (Minimum, Maximum, Standard Error of Mean and Standard Deviation). Data were screened for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality. These two tests tested the assumption that the true distribution of the data does not depart from the theoretical normal distribution. A non-significant p -value ($p > .05$) for this assumption to be accepted is expected. In the context of this study, p -values were $< .05$ for all the indicators. Since the normality assumption was not violated, parametric tests were used to compare the test and within groups. Statistics were discussed at the 95% Confidence Level (CL), that is, $\alpha = .05$. That is, depending on the assumption or the hypothesis under discussion, this was to be accepted or rejected if the p -value was greater or less than α . For the difference between the control and the experimental groups to be significant, the calculated p -value shall be $< .05$.

Results

The first objective appraises the extent to which the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affects students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill. In contrast, the second examines how the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affects students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill.

Research Question 1: To what extent does the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' skimming sub-skill attainment?

Table 2

Comparing Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Skimming in the Highlighting Strategy and those that are not between Test Levels and within Groups

Scale	Stats	Experimental		KS test (p -value)*	Control		KS test (p -value)*	MD Experimental group	MD Control group	KS test (p -value)*
		Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test				
Main idea	<i>M</i>	1.4	1.9	$z = .791$	1.1	1.5	$z = .632$	.5	.4	$z = .632$
	<i>SEM</i>	.2	.1	$p = .560$	.2	.2	$p = .819$			$p = .819$
	<i>Mdn</i>	2.0	2.0		2.0	2.0				
	<i>SD</i>	.9	.4		1.0	.9				
Testing of ability to skim	<i>M</i>	.8	1.6	$z = 1.265$	.3	1.1	$z = 1.265$	.8	.8	$z = .349$
	<i>SEM</i>	.2	.2	$p = .082$	.1	.2	$p = .082$			$p = 1.000$
	<i>Mdn</i>	.0	2.0		.0	1.5				
	<i>SD</i>	1.0	.8		.6	1.0				
Testing the ability to judge	<i>M</i>	.6	.9	$z = .791$	.6	.6	$z = .156$	.3	0	$z = .791$
	<i>SEM</i>	.1	.1	$p = .560$	.1	.1	$p = 1.000$			$p = .560$
	<i>Mdn</i>	1.0	1.0		1.0	1.0				
	<i>SD</i>	.5	.4		.5	.5				
	<i>M</i>	.5	.9	$z = 1.265$	.3	.5	$z = .791$	.4	.2	$z = 1.107$

Scale	Stats	Experimental		KS test (p-value)*	Control		KS test (p-value)*	MD Experimental group	MD Control group	KS test (p-value)*
		Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test				
Testing the ability to interpret a question	SEM	.1	.1	$p = .082$.1	.1	$p = .560$			$p = .172$
	Mdn	.0	1.0		.0	.5				
	SD	.5	.4		.4	.5				
Testing reading skill development	M	.5	.9	$z = 1.265$ $p = .082$.5	.6	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.4	.1	$z = 1.107$ $P = .172$
	SEM	.1	.1		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.5	1.0		.0	1.0				
Testing the ability to make meaning or inferences	M	.5	.9	$z = 1.265$ $p = .082$.5	.5	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.4	0	$z = 1.265$ $p = .082$
	SEM	.1	.1		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.5	1.0		.0	.5				
Testing general comprehension	M	.5	1.0	$z = 1.581$ $p = .013$.3	.5	$z = .791$ $p = .560$.5	.2	$z = 1.423$ $p = .035$
	SEM	.1	.1		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.0	1.0		.0	.5				
Skimming	M	4.7	8.0	$z = 1.897$ $p = .001$	3.3	5.2	$z = 1.581$ $p = .013$	3.3	1.9	$z = 2.214$ $p = .000$
	SEM	.6	.5		.2	.4				
	Mdn	4.5	9.0		3.0	5.5				
	SD	2.6	2.1		1.1	1.9				

Note. KS = Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test; $N = 20$.

* $p < .05$.

As far as testing mastery of the main idea was concerned, in the Experimental Group (EG), the average score on the pre-test was 1.4 and increased to 1.9 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the Control Group (CG), there was also a slight improvement from 1.1 to 1.5. However, this improvement as well was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .5 in the EG and .4 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning the testing ability to skim, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .8 and increased to 1.6 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, there was also a slight improvement from .3 to 1.1, but this improvement as well was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was the same in both groups ($p > .05$).

Concerning the testing ability to judge, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .5 and increased to .9 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .4 and stagnated at .6 on the post-test ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was .3 in the EG and 0 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

As for the testing ability to interpret a question, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .6 and increased to .9 on the post-test, but this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .3 and rose slightly at .5 at post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The

improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .4 in the EG and .2 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning testing reading skill development, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .5 and increased to .9 on the post-test. However, this change was insignificant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .5 and rose slightly to .6 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .4 in the EG and .1 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning the testing ability to make meaning or inferences, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .5 and increased to .9 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score at the pre-test was .5 and stagnated at .5 at the post-test ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was .4 in the EG and 0 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning general testing comprehension, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .5 and increased to 1.0 on the post-test. However, this change was insignificant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .3 and rose slightly to .5 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .5 in the EG and .2 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Research Question 2: To what extent does the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill?

Table 3

Comparing Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Scanning in the Highlighting Strategy and those that are not Between Test Levels and Within Groups

Scale	Stats	Experimental		KS test (p-value)*	Control		KS test (p-value)*	MD Experimental group	MD Control group	KS test (p-value)*
		Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test				
Testing the ability to sort facts	M	.3	.8	$z = 1.739$ $p = .005$.4	.4	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.5	0	$z = 1.265$ $p = .082$
	SEM	.1	.1		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.0	1.0		.0	.0				
Testing mastery of specific facts	M	.3	.9	$z = 1.423$ $p = .035$.2	.3	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.6	.1	$z = 1.423$ $p = .035$
	SEM	.1	.1		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.0	1.0		.0	.0				
	M	.4	.6	$z = .474$.1	.2	$z = .316$.2	.1	$z = 1.107$
	SEM									
	SD									

Scale	Stats	Experimental		KS test (p-value)*	Control		KS test (p-value)*	MD Experimental group	MD Control group	KS test (p-value)*
		Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test				
Testing Specific comprehension of the given information	SEM	.1	.1	$p = .978$.1	.1	$p = 1.000$			$p = .172$
	Mdn	.0	1.0		.0	.0				
	SD	.5	.6		.3	.4				
Testing the meaning of unknown words/phrases	M	.7	.9	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.7	.5	$z = .474$ $p = .978$.2	-.2	$z = .632$ $p = .819$
	SEM	.2	.2		.2	.2				
	Mdn	.0	.0		.0	.0				
Testing the ability to make meaning or inferences	SD	.9	1.0	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.9	.9	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.1	.2	$z = .949$ $p = .329$
	M	1.2	1.3		.5	.7				
	SEM	.2	.2		.2	.2				
Testing their impression of the text	Mdn	2.0	2.0	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.0	.0	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.3	.1	$z = .632$ $p = .819$
	SD	1.0	1.0		.9	1.0				
	M	.2	.5		.0	.1				
Testing the ability to interpret information	SEM	.1	.2	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.0	.1	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.2	.1	$z = .632$ $p = .819$
	Mdn	.0	.0		.0	.0				
	SD	.5	.8		.0	.2				
Scanning	M	.3	.5	$z = .316$ $p = 1.000$.1	.2	$z = .158$ $p = 1.000$.2	.1	$z = .632$ $p = .819$
	SEM	.2	.2		.1	.1				
	Mdn	.0	.0		.0	.0				
	SD	.7	.9	$z = 1.107$ $p = .172$.4	.5	$z = .632$ $p = .819$	2.1	0.3	$z = 1.423$ $p = .035$
	M	3.3	5.4		2.0	2.3				
	SEM	0.5	0.6		0.4	0.4				
	Mdn	3.0	5.5	2.0	2.0					
	SD	2.3	2.7	1.6	1.8					

Note. KS = Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test; $N = 20$.

* $p < .05$.

Regarding the testing ability to sort facts, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .3 and increased to .8 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the performance was .4 at the pre-test and stagnated post-test ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was .5 in the EG and 0 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning testing mastery of Specific facts, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .3 and increased to .9 on the post-test. This change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, there was also a slight improvement from .2 to .3. However, this improvement was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .6 in the EG. On the other hand, just .1 in the CG and this difference was significant ($p < .05$).

Concerning testing specific comprehension of the given information, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .4. It increased to .6 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .7 and dropped at .5 on the post-test ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was .2 in the EG and .1 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

As for testing the meaning of unknown words/phrases, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .7 and increased to .9 on the post-test, but this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .3 and rose slightly at .5 at post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement

expressed here in the mean difference was .2 in the EG and -.2 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

For the testing ability to make meaning or inferences, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .5 and increased to .9 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was .5 and rose slightly to .7 on the post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .1 in the EG and .2 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

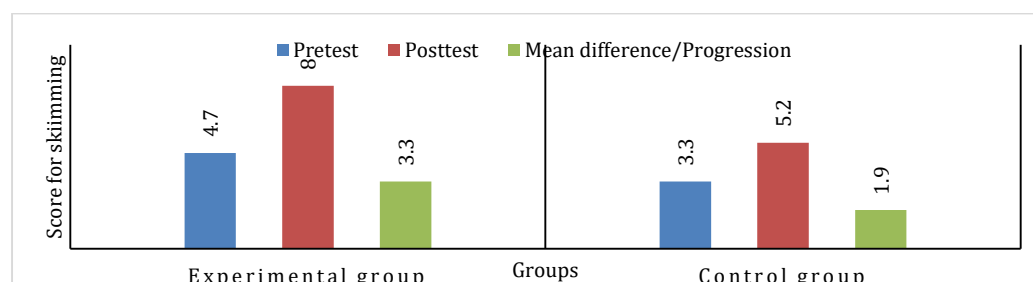
For testing their impression of the text, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .2. It rose to .5 on the post-test ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score at pre-test was .0 and stagnated at .1 on the post-test ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was .3 in the EG and .1 in the CG. However, this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Concerning the testing ability to interpret information, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was .3. It increased to .5 at post-test but this change was not significant ($p > .05$). In the CG, the score at pre-test was .1 and rose slightly at .2 at post-test. However, this change was not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was .2 in the EG and .1 in the CG, but this difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

Null hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming in the highlighting strategy and those that are not.

Figure 1

Comparing Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Skimming in the Highlighting Strategy and those that are not between EG and CG



Note. Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test: $z = 2.214$; $p = .000$

For the overall score in skimming, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was 4.7. It increased to 8.0 on the post-test and this change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was 3.3 and rose at 5.2 at post-test. This change though lower as compared to that of the EG was however significant ($p < .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was 3.3 in the EG, significantly higher than the 1.9 recorded in the CG ($p < .05$).

The hypothesis here stated is then rejected, thus implying reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming

in the highlighting strategy is significantly higher than that of those that are not. This trend is equally supported by the progression score depicted in the table below, whereby the progression rate was 95.0% in the EG and lowered 70.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$).

However, we can realize that the Hawthorn effect is highly pronounced in this experimental context given the change obtained in the CG though this change was not significant compared to the EG.

Table 4

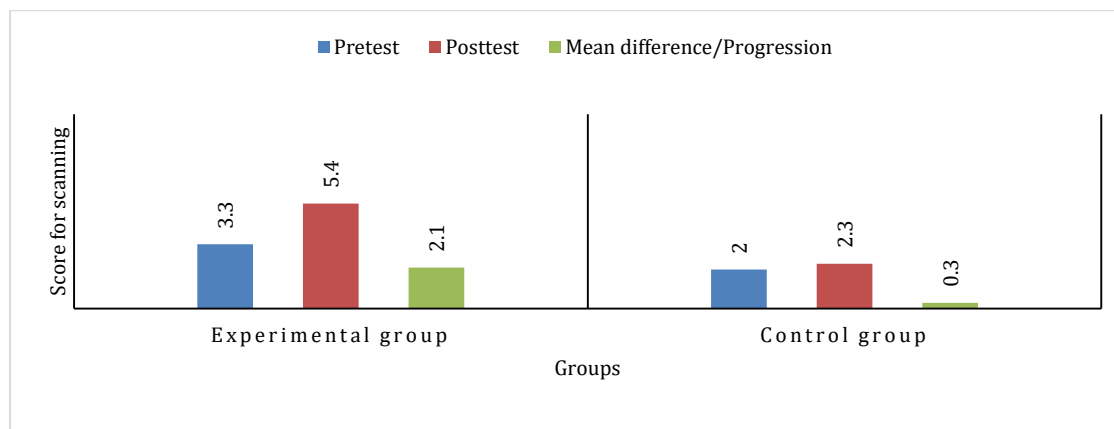
Comparing Progression in Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Skimming in the Highlighting Strategy and those that are not between EG and CG

Group	Stats	Progression skimming EG		Total
		No progression	Progression	
Experimental group	N	1	19	20
	%	5.0%	95.0%	100.0%
Control group	N	6	14	20
	%	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%
Total	N	7	33	40
	%	17.5%	82.5%	100.0%

Note. Cramer's V: $V = .329$; $p = .037$

Figure 2

Comparing Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Scanning in the Highlighting Strategy and those that are not between EG and CG



Note. Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test: $z = 1.423$; $p = .035$

Null hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in reading comprehension performance of students taught scanning in the highlighting strategy and those that are not.

For the overall score in scanning, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was 3.3. However, it increased to 5.4 on the post-test and this change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was 2.0 and rose to 2.3 at post-test. Still, this change was however not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was 2.1 in the EG, significantly higher than the .3 recorded in the CG ($p < .05$).

The hypothesis here stated is then rejected, thus implying reading comprehension performance of students taught scanning in the cognitive highlighting strategy is significantly higher than that of those that are not. This trend is equally supported by the progression score depicted in the table below, whereby the progression rate was 75.0% in the EG and lowered by 35.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$).

However, we can realize that the Hawthorn effect is not as pronounced in the context of scanning as it was with skimming, given the very slight change obtained in the CG from the pre-test to the post-test.

Table 5

Comparing Progression in Reading Comprehension Performance of Students Taught Skimming in the Cognitive Highlighting Strategy and those that are not between EG and CG

Group	Stats	Progression skimming EG		Total
		No progression	Progression	
Experimental group	N	5	15	20
	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Control group	N	13	7	20
	%	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%
Total	N	18	22	40
	%	45.0%	55.0%	100.0%

Note. Cramer's V: $V = .402$; $p = .011$

The progression was 75.0% in the EG and lowered by 35.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$).

Table 6
Summary of Findings

Research questions	Statistical test used	Comments
Research question 1: To what extent does the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill?	Case summaries (<i>M, SEM, Mdn, SD</i>). Comparing groups for significant difference (Kolmogorov-Smirnov <i>z</i> test; $p < .05$, the difference is significant). Progression rate (Cramer's <i>V</i> test; $p < .05$, difference is significant)	For the overall score in skimming, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was 4.7 and increased to 8.0 on the post-test and this change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, the score on the pre-test was 3.3 and rose at 5.2 at post-test and this change though lower as compared to that of the EG was however significant ($p < .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was 3.3 in the EG, significantly higher than the 1.9 recorded in the CG ($p < .05$). The null hypothesis here stated is then rejected and the alternative maintained. Thus, the reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming in the highlighting strategies is significantly higher than that of those that are not. Implying a significant, positive and moderate relationship between the uses of the highlighting language strategies and the attainment of skimming skills in reading comprehension by students. This trend is equally supported by the progression score depicted in the table below, whereby the progression rate was 95.0% in the EG and lowered 70.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$). We can, however realize that the Hawthorn effect is highly pronounced in this experimental context given the change obtained in the CG though this change was not significant as compared to the EG.
Research question 2: To what extent does the highlighting reading strategy used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill?	Case summaries (<i>M, SEM, Mdn, SD</i>). Comparing groups for significant difference (Kolmogorov-Smirnov <i>z</i> test; $p < .05$, the difference is significant). Progression rate (Cramer's <i>V</i> test; $p < .05$, difference is significant)	For the overall score in scanning, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was 3.3 and increased to 5.4 on the post-test. This change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, the score at pre-test was 2.0 and rose to 2.3 on the post-test. Still, this change was however not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference was 2.1 in the EG, significantly higher than the .3 recorded in the CG ($p < .05$). The null hypothesis here stated is then rejected and the alternative retained. Thus, implying reading comprehension performance of students taught scanning in the highlighting strategies is significantly higher than that of those that are not. Statistically, there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between the use of the highlighting strategies and students' attainment of the scanning skill in reading comprehension. This trend is equally supported by the progression score depicted in the table below, whereby the progression rate was 75.0% in the EG and lowered 35.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$). We can, however realize that the Hawthorn effect is not as pronounced in the context of scanning as it was the case with skimming given the very slight change obtained in the CG from pre-test to post-test.

Discussion

The findings were discussed in accordance with the specific research questions, as stated in chapter one. Discussion for each research question was done with the support of the existing literature to bring out the significance of the highlighting strategy and its effects on students' attainment of skimming and scanning skills.

Research Objective 1: To investigate how the highlighting reading strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill.

Statistically, the findings showed a positive and moderate relationship between students using the highlighting strategies in teaching the skimming sub-skill and reading comprehension performance. For the overall skimming in the highlighting strategies, the average score at the pre-test was 4.7 for the EG and later rose to 8.0 at the post-test and this change was significant ($p < .05$) while that of the CG was 3.3 at pre-test and 5.2 at post-test whose change was lower compared to that of the former which was however significant ($p < .05$). The improvement expressed here in mean difference is 3.3. This implies that students taught skimming in the highlighting strategies performed better than those who were not. These findings reveal that when students master strategies to apply in their reading, they easily gain the reading sub-skills and comprehension of texts or readable materials with little or no difficulties and certainly improve their performances.

The null hypothesis here stated was then rejected and the alternative was retained, thus implying reading comprehension performance of students taught skimming in the highlighting strategies is significantly higher than that of those that are not. This trend was equally supported by the progression score depicted in the table above, whereby the progression rate was 95.0% in the EG and lowered 70.0% in the CG and this gap was significant ($p < .05$). It can, however be realized that Hawthorn effect is highly pronounced in this experimental context given the change obtained in the CG though this change was not significant as compared to the EG. This finding is in line with the components of Vygotsky's theory which states that learning is a social interaction

process and that learners do better when accompanied and aided by a more knowledgeable teacher, in this case, the teacher.

The above relationship is corroborated by Ben-Yehudah and Eshet-Alkalai (2018), who researched the contribution of text highlighting to comprehension in Egypt. Results for the without-highlighting condition replicated previous findings of inferior comprehension of the digital text relative to the printed one. However, when participants were instructed to use text highlighting, performance improved only in the printed condition. Specifically, text highlighting improved accuracy on questions that required inferential processing, although it did not affect performance on literal questions. This shows that text highlighting is beneficial in text comprehension.

On the other hand, a study by Cheng et al. (2018) indicates that highlighting reading comprehension may not necessarily benefit text concentration, memory and attention among undergraduate medical students. In contrast, Andi's (2015) findings are different. On the effectiveness of skimming-scanning stratifying on students' reading comprehension in the second grade. Overall, the findings revealed that students' reading comprehension performance improved after gaining and using skimming-scanning skills in their reading comprehension texts.

Research Objective 2: To investigate how the highlighting reading strategies used in teaching reading comprehension affect students' attainment of the scanning sub-skill.

Statistically, the findings for research question two indicate that there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between the highlighting strategies used in teaching the scanning sub-skill and reading comprehension performance. For the overall score in scanning, in the EG, the average score on the pre-test was 3.3 and increased to 5.4 on the post-test. This change was significant ($p < .05$). In the CG, the score at pre-test was 2.0 and rose to 2.3 on the post-test. Still, this change was however not significant ($p > .05$). The improvement expressed here in the mean difference was 2.1 in the EG, significantly higher than the .3 recorded in the CG ($p < .05$).

The null hypothesis here stated was then rejected and the alternative was maintained, thus implying reading comprehension

performance of students taught scanning in the highlighting strategies is significantly higher than that of those that are not. This proves that the students who were taught scanning in the highlighting strategies gained far more than those who were not. Therefore, more strategies should be incorporated into teaching reading skills to English language students. In like manner, they should be constantly reminded or taught the importance of mastering and using these strategies in their daily reading.

According to Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory (1978), social interactions between learners and the teacher play an important role in learners learning achievement. When aided by a teacher, learners will perform better and accomplish more than when left alone to study. Similarly, Thorndyke and Hayes Roth's (1979) Schema Theory components state that new knowledge builds and fits on old knowledge and that when this happens, the new knowledge activates the prior knowledge where they match. So the old knowledge accommodates the new one and both collaborate in the learners' learning process to help them move forward. Teachers deliver instructions based on a particular order for easy understanding and mastery by learners. Usually, they teach in order, starting from the simple to the complex ones. Meaning that what is taught first usually will have a relationship with the next thing to be taught. Once the new knowledge is brought in, it immediately traces its way to the memory house and verifies where its match is. Once the new knowledge is found, it fits in the old one, the understanding, improves and learning takes place and eventually, performance improves.

Another author, Naiken (2016), researched reading difficulties as barriers to experiencing by learners entering the intermediate phase in South Africa. Findings revealed that reading difficulties are in four components.

Akyol et al. (2014) did similar research on the development of reading skills in students having difficulties in reading. Studies pointed out that the enrichment program applied in the present improved their reading skills which developed their word recognition and read-aloud skills. It was suggested that to help students with reading difficulties, learners should be given an appropriate and constructive reading environment, and the implementation of enrichment programs can be effective.

However, in spite of the results obtained in this study, it is worth mentioning that other factors can positively impact students' attainment of reading skills. Brown (2001) Harmer (2005), Nation (2009), and Loucky (1996) all affirm that intensive reading activity alongside others can lead to a high probability for learners to comprehend text. Lucky (1996) says that if intensive and extensive reading activities merge, learners will become better readers and their comprehension will improve. In a regular classroom situation, visual impairment could affect reading skill attainment. Dechant (1991) and Deponio and Macintyre (2003) agreed that visual perception is important in any learning context. Another factor that could affect reading is poor instruction (Harris & Sipay, 1990). They say that, for instance, in a large classroom, the instruction may have begun before the learner/ learners are ready.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings discussed above, it is evident that the highlighting language strategies used in teaching reading comprehension positively affect students' attainment of the skimming sub-skill in reading. Findings also reveal that the use of the highlighting strategies in the teaching of reading helped students to master the scanning sub-skill and consequently improve students' performances in reading comprehension. After working with the EG, where students were taught skimming in the highlighting strategies, their performance got better than those of the CG, who were not taught skimming and scanning in the highlighting strategies. The performance of students in reading comprehension can be better if students are equipped with the right strategies they need to master in order to be effective and efficient readers.

Several advantages of using language strategies in the teaching of the reading sub-skills were also identified, several factors that affect students' attainment of the reading skill as well as possible solutions which could bring about an improvement in students' attainment of the reading skill and their reading comprehension

performances. Prominent among the factors were; providing school reading needs, extensive reading, master reading strategies, good base, hard work, phonetic drilling, motivation, and reading competitions, to mention these. According to the findings, the above factors and challenges greatly affect students' attainment of reading skills. The least mentioned factors and challenges are; vocabulary drilling, good classroom supervision, reading alignment and being on the alert.

Recommendations

According to the findings, to tackle reading comprehension problems and help better the issue of the attainment of the reading skill, the following suggestions are to be considered; give students a stronger reading base right from the primary school level. Parents should endeavor to make students' reading needs available, and there should be constant reading and spelling drilling in their English language classrooms to help initiate them into reading. Learners should be made to master strategies that help them acquire a reading. Another suggestion was that parents should endeavor to get home teachers. In a situation where they cannot provide one, parents can solicit the support of the more knowledgeable around and the learners should still try on their own efforts. They also suggested that lessons should be made colorful and interesting to help overcome students' distraction, lack of willingness and laziness. They said that more time should be given to teaching reading comprehension based on the central importance of reading skills in the lives of the students of English Cameroon. The least mentioned measures were; vocabulary drilling, use of available resources, good classroom supervision, aligning reading passages and being on the alert.

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