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The Effect of Oral Presentation as a Reading Assignment on Students' Reading Comprehension

**The Case Study of Second Year EFL Students at Abdelhafid
Boussouf University Center-Mila**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the
Master Degree in
Language sciences and Didactics of Language

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ABSTRACT

Reading is one of the four skills that contribute to L2 proficiency and reading comprehension is the purpose of any reader-text interaction. This research tackles students' reading comprehension breakdowns when reading English texts. The present study investigates the effect of oral presentations as follow up reading assignments on foreign language reading comprehension. To achieve this goal, an experimental study was carried out with the participation of second year students of English as a foreign language studying at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center, in Mila, during the academic year of 2016-2017. The data gathered through the experiment and the teachers' interview led to the following conclusions: 1/oral presentation assignments as reading tasks do indeed enhance the students' reading comprehension performance as measured by multiple choice test scores. 2/ Teachers at the English department, at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center, are well aware of the difficulties that students face while reading as well as the causes behind them. 3/ Oral presentation assignments are underused by teachers of modules which do not deal with oral expression or TEFL. Deriving from these results, a number of recommendations are put forward by the researchers. The most crucial of said recommendations is the integration of the reading skill as an independent module into the curriculum.

ملخص

القراءة هي واحدة من المهارات الأربعة التي تسهم في بناء الكفاءة اللغوية لطلاب اللغات الأجنبية وفهم النصوص هو الغرض الأول وراء أي تفاعل بين النص و القارئ. يعالج هذا البحث مشكلة إخفاق الطلبة في فهم النصوص الإنجليزية أثناء قراءتها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اختبار تأثير العروض الشفوية على قدرات التلاميذ في فهم النصوص. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف أجريت دراسة تجريبية بمشاركة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، مستوى سنة ثانية ليسانس، والذين يزاولون دراستهم في المركز الجامعي عبد الحفيظ بوالصوف خلال العام الدراسي 2016-2017. وقد أدت البيانات التي تم جمعها من خلال الدراسة التجريبية و المقابلات الشفهية مع الأساتذة إلى الاستنتاجات التالية: 1. العروض الشفهية تعزز فعلا أداء الطلاب في فهم النصوص. 2. أساتذة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في المركز الجامعي عبد الحفيظ بوالصوف مدركون كل الإدراك بالصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب أثناء القراءة، وكذلك الأسباب الكامنة وراء هاته الصعوبات. 3. العروض الشفهية لا تستعمل بشكل كاف من قبل أساتذة الوحدات النمطية التي لا تتعامل مع التعبير الشفهي. استنادا إلى هذه النتائج قدم الباحثان عددا من التوصيات أهمها ضرورة دمج القراءة كوحدة مستقلة في المناهج الدراسية الجامعية.

List of Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

L1: First Language.

L2: Second Language.

FL: Foreign Language.

EG: Experimental Group.

CG: Control Group.

SVR: Simple View of Reading.

C: Comprehension.

D: Decoding.

LC: Language Comprehension.

OP: Oral Presentation.

RC: Reading Comprehension.

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching.

TBL: Task-Based Learning.

PBA: Project-Based Approach.

%: Percentage.

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Introduction

Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem.
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Introduction

When learning a foreign language, there are four skills that we need to acquire to be proficient in the target language; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, learning to read is one fourth of learning a language. Promoting and enhancing the EFL students' reading skill is fundamental to their progress in acquiring the English language. In this study, we will investigate the possibility of improving the students' reading comprehension through the use of oral presentation as a reading assignment. Oral presentation (OP), in an EFL classroom, is beneficial in itself, but its potential impact as a reading assignment on students' reading comprehension is what we are seeking to investigate in our current research.

1. Statement of the Problem

Reading is a significant tool that helps learners gain access to the foreign language. However, in contrast to teaching writing, reading has always been marginalized, more precisely; it has been ranked in an inferior position when designing Algerian university courses. Language, at the university level, has always been overwhelmingly dominated and taught through the remaining three skills; this results in students' reluctance to read, and reading comprehension breakdowns of the English texts. The importance of developing reading comprehension within English as a Second/Foreign language class is an important issue for pedagogy because one of the problems faced by students is their possible inadequate reading comprehension. They do not have the means to enhance their reading comprehension as they are not exposed to effective instructional reading methods that focus on the improvement of this skill. On the basis of these facts, the problem of this study revolves around students' inability to comprehend reading materials in the English language.

2. Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of providing oral presentation as a workable method to enable poor readers to overcome the problem of students reading comprehension and ultimately enhance their comprehension of the English reading materials. The present study, then, is designed to investigate if the application of oral presentations as reading assignments best facilitates and enhances students' reading comprehension.

3. Research Questions

The present study is designed to answer the following questions:

1/ Does oral presentation as a reading assignment improve reading comprehension of second year English as Foreign Language students at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center in Mila?

2/ Are Teachers at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center aware of the difficulties that their students face while reading and the causes behind them?

3/ Are oral presentation assignments utilized effectively by teachers of modules other than oral expression and TEFL?

4. Hypotheses

As the aim of the current study is to examine the effect of an output assignment in the form of oral presentations on the reading comprehension performance of EFL students, the following hypotheses are put forward:

On the one hand, the null hypothesis suggests that:

H0: There would be no significant difference in reading comprehension between students whose reading is followed by oral presentations and those whose reading is not.

On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis suggests that there is a strong relationship between reading comprehension improvement and oral presentations as reading assignments. So, the alternative hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: Students would improve their reading comprehension of the English texts if their reading is followed by oral presentations as reading assignments.

5. Means of Research

To achieve the aim of this study, we rely on an experimental design as the primary data-collection means; and as a secondary means aimed at answering the secondary research questions, we have employed a qualitative method in the form of an interview with teachers. The population of the quasi experiment was the second year students of EFL at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center (Mila) and the sample consisted of two groups out of five second year groups. First, the participants of both control and experimental group are pre-tested then given particular reading instructions for 12 weeks. By the end of this period, the control group is immediately post-tested. However, for the experimental group, reading was followed by a treatment phase of six weeks after which they were post-tested at the 18 week mark. The collected data of the pre-test and the posttest are compared via a t-test analysis.

6. Organization of the Dissertation

The present study is composed of two chapters. Chapter one (the theoretical part) is divided into two sections; in the first section, we provide a review of reading comprehension; its definitions, levels, established models of acquisition, and variables that effect it. Furthermore, different taxonomies of reading skills are discussed briefly in this section. Section two of chapter one covers oral presentations, the independent variable in our study. In this section we attempt a comprehensive review of oral presentation assignments including: types of oral presentations, characteristics of effective OPs, the established assessment

techniques, the advantages of OP for the EFL learner, as well as the reasons behind low performance of EFL learners in this type of assignments.

Chapter two is the core of this research. It covers our experimental study where the design followed in our field work is introduced. 57 second year students of EFL have been randomly selected to participate in this study; 29 constituted the experimental group (EP), while 28 were members of the control group (CG). To estimate their reading comprehension level and check homogeneity among the two groups, the students were pre-tested prior to the beginning of the experiment. The participants of the experimental group have received a six week treatment, in the form of oral presentation, while the control group members have not. At the end of the experiment, both groups have been post-tested immediately. In order to analyze the collected data, we have used a quantitative analysis relying on a *t*-test. The secondary means of research, the teachers' interview will also be discussed and the results of which will be interpreted in this chapter. Once data were fully analyzed and interpreted, pedagogical implications are presented in the form of recommendations for teachers, learners, and researchers.

Chapter One

The Theoretical Background

Section One: Reading Comprehension

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Section One: Reading Comprehension

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Introduction

Despite conflicting opinions among scholars regarding the nature of literacy, there seems to be no disagreement about the value of this skill in our educational, professional, and daily lives as a society. Perfecting the reading skill may be of even more profound value to the foreign/second language learner. As a cornerstone to L2 proficiency, any lacking in this department may hinder L2 learner's opportunities for professional success as well as personal fulfillment. Reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of any text-reader interaction. However; research findings concerning the processes by which we achieve such comprehension remain inconclusive, debatable, and sometimes even controversial. Long-standing debates among psychologists, reading experts, and educators have lasted more than half a century and have yet to reach consensus. As a complex cognitive and psycholinguistic activity, it is no wonder such a phenomenon has received attention from various fields among which is: cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, and education. The goal of this section is to review briefly what we know about the processes involved in the attainment of reading comprehension.

1. Defining Reading Comprehension

Despite being practiced for thousands of years, dating back to when civilizations used symbols and pictograms instead of letters and words, consensus regarding the nature of reading and reading comprehension has not been reached till date. The cause behind such lack of unanimity is the dynamic nature of the process which gives it different meanings across different contexts.

Alderson (2000) believes that it is impossible to find an all-encompassing overview of the nature of reading. Such lack of consensus led to the existence of countless reading

definitions in the literature. Such definitions can range from reading being simply a process of “making sense of print” (Smith, 2004, p. 3), to reading being a:

Complex activity that involves two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one’s spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. (Pang et al., 2003, p. 6)

Comprehension is the purpose of reading. It is the process by which we derive meaning from connected text (Pang et al., *ibid*). But how do we derive such meanings? Smith (2004) believes it is through incorporating what we perceive from the world around us, including reading material; to what knowledge, intentions, and expectations we already possess. Along similar lines, Snow (2002) believes comprehension to be a matter of not only extracting but also constructing meaning from written language. Thus, reading comprehension is no longer thought of as a matter of passive reception of information from written sources but an active construction and interpretation that is unique to each individual reader. According to Texas Reading Initiative (2002), reading comprehension is a process that is:

- Interactive: an interactive process that involves mutual influence among the reader, the text, and the context of reading.
- Strategic: it has been proven that readers are active constructors of meaning who use various skills and strategies while reading.
- Adaptable: readers adapt their use of strategies to fit the text at hand as well as their purpose behind reading it.

Despite controversy and disagreements among scholars regarding the definition of reading; most seem to agree that the reader brings just as much content to the reading situation as the text does. This is because the outcome of reading (comprehension) is dependent on the information in the text as much as the information possessed by the reader

and his/her personalized strategic processing.

2. Types of Reading

Reading as a task, varies considerably according to the reason which stands behind it. Some read for the sake of accomplishing a task, others may read just for pleasure, or to acquire knowledge. As a result, there exist different types of reading; namely extensive and intensive ways of reading.

2.1 Extensive Reading

On a practical level, extensive reading occupies a cardinal position for good readers. These readers tend to champion extensive reading and to devote a large amount of time to that kind of autonomous activity, over which students have control and monitor their language development.

In the case of extensive reading, readers seek for the global meaning. Palmer (1964) described extensive reading as a successive fast reading of books. He also contrasted it explicitly with intensive reading or taking a text and scanning it (cited in Day & Bamford, 1998). These definitions focus on quantity of materials read. Hedge (2003) believes that extensive reading varies according to learners' motivation and school resources. He also states that it enables them to achieve their independency by reading either in class or at home, through sustained silent reading (SSR). This type of reading is assumed to be of a great pedagogical value. Timothy (1998) illustrates the role of extensive reading and what it adds for readers in terms of aspects of language:

- Extensive reading can provide comprehensible input.
- It can enhance learner's general language competence.
- It can increase the students' exposure to the language.
- It can increase knowledge of vocabulary.
- It can lead to improvement in writing.

- It can motivate students to read.
- It can consolidate previously learned language.
- It helps to build confidence with extended texts.
- It encourages the exploitation of textual redundancy.
- It facilitates the development of prediction skills.

Therefore, through extensive reading, students have enough space and time to experience reading for pleasure which strengthens their language capacities, enhances their reading fluency, and increases their motivation.

2.2 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a teacher-centered method; the teacher monopolizes the session, selects the reading material, determines the time assigned for reading, and precises comprehension points that merit students' attention.

Readers may approach texts intensively. In doing so, they try to extract the exact meaning. Therefore, they focus on the very slight details in order to get a clear picture of the text at hand. Palmer (1921) states that the purpose behind intensive reading is to take a text and study it in a deep way by focusing on grammar, vocabulary and its expressions (cited in Day & Bamford, 1998). Intensive reading refers to the careful reading for maximum comprehension. Many assume that it is always classroom based, where teachers provide directions and help readers. Further they may check their understanding by giving them some assignments.

However, for Harmer (2007); to maximise reading benefits, there should be a balance between extensive and intensive reading. Anderson (1991, p. 59) states that:

It is my belief that good readers do more extensive reading than intensive reading. But what makes the good reader a good reader is that he/she has developed the strategies and skills through intensive reading that are transferred to extensive reading contexts.

This echoes the necessity of combining both types of reading; which would offer highly favourable circumstances for students reading practices, for developing their language, and helping them to be lifelong readers.

All in all, intensive reading is not the only alternative to teach reading. What is supposed is to make equilibrium between these two types and to raise learners’ awareness about their significance.

3. Components of Reading Comprehension

The view that reading is the product of word recognition and language comprehension is widely agreed upon by many researchers in the field of literacy. Among those supporters is Gaugh, who, in 1986, put forward a conceptual framework of reading known as The Simple View of Reading (SVR).

According to SVR, reading (R) is the process and the product of interaction and cooperation between two major components: decoding (D) and language comprehension (C). As figure 1 shows:

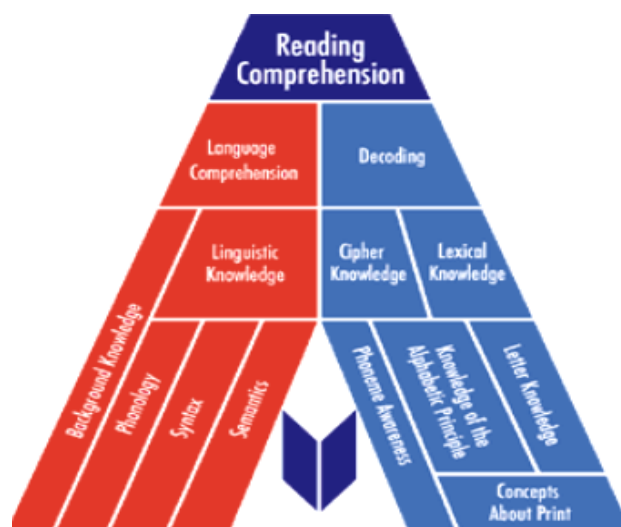


Figure 1: “The Simple View of Reading Figure 1: A Conceptualization”. Adopted from: Wesley, Hoover, and Gough (2000, p. 13)

Reading comprehension is supported by two equally important “legs”: decoding and language comprehension. The decoding “leg” is blue, the language comprehension “leg” is red, and the reading comprehension “apex” is purple: blue and red combined make purple.

Decoding is “the ability to recognize written representations of words” (Wesley et al., *ibid* p. 13). Successful decoding requires two domains of knowledge: cipher knowledge and lexical knowledge. Cipher knowledge has to do with knowledge of the relationships between units of written words (the letters of the alphabet) and their equivalent units in spoken form (phonemes). Lexical knowledge has to do with knowledge of the instances where the relationships between letters and phonemes are unique and do not follow a systematic pattern (the exception cases).

Language comprehension, represented by the red leg, in figure 1, is “the ability to construct meaning from spoken representations of Language” (Wesley et al., *ibid* p. 13). This ability subsumes two domains of knowledge: linguistic knowledge; including phonology, syntax, and semantics; and second, background knowledge that encompasses content and procedural knowledge of the world in the form of schemata. Possessing a combination of these two types of knowledge enables us to make inferences that go beyond the literal meaning of a text.

To demonstrate the equal importance of decoding and language comprehension, an equation was put forward by Gough (1986, as cited in Dombey, 2009). According to him, reading equates decoding multiplied by language comprehension: $R = D \times C$. Each variable (D and LC) ranges from 0 (nullity) to 1 (perfection). Consequently, if comprehension equals 0 then so does reading (if $R = D \times C$ and $C = 0$, then $R = 0$). Similarly, knowing a language does not make a person literate. Preschool children are a perfect proof that without decoding; linguistic comprehension, no matter how profound it is, does not alone make a person literate

(because if $R = D \times C$ and $D = 0$, then $R = 0$, whatever the value of LC) (Gough and Tunmer, 1986).

Thus, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is the result of employing and perfecting various skills and sub skills. All of the required sub skills are equally important. The absence of, or overreliance on, one or the other may result in faulty comprehension.

4. The Three Levels of Reading Comprehension

Comprehending written texts is a complex and multidimensional process of interaction between the text, the author, and the reader. It is not a simple case of decoding symbols and extracting data from connected text because meaning is said to exist on three different levels in text.

Gray (1960, as cited in Alderson, 2000) believes that in order to achieve an ultimate comprehension of a text, the readers must process the text on three levels. S/He must first read “the lines,” then, read “between the lines,” and finally, read “beyond the lines”. Akil (1994, as cited in Syatriana, 2012) agrees on the distinction between the three levels and entitles them: literal, interpretive, and applied levels of comprehension as figure 2 shows.

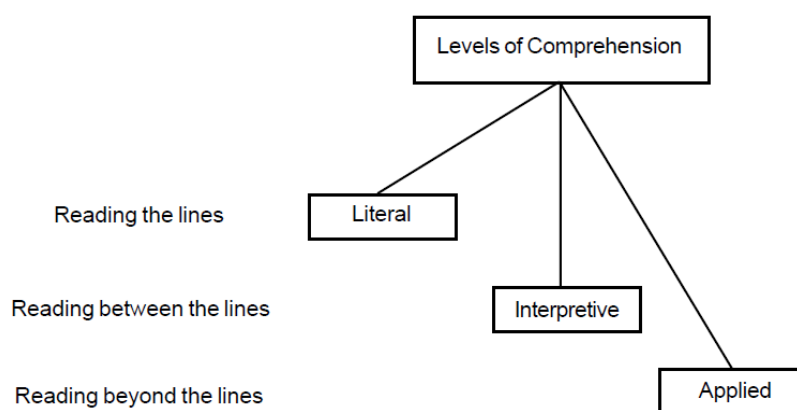


Figure 2: Levels of Comprehension. Adapted from content Area Reading: Literacy and learning across curriculum by Richard, T. and Joanne, L. Vacca cited in Syatriana, 2012

“Reading the lines” has to do with the literal understanding of ideas that are explicitly and directly stated in the text. This level is fundamental to the next two levels because the reader

must understand what the author said directly before s/he can attempt to draw inferences or make evaluations.

“Reading between the lines”, or interpretive comprehension, has to do with inference or what the author means. Alderson (2000, p. 9) defines inference as “The ability to answer a question related to meanings not directly stated in text”. At this level, comprehension is aided by the context of reading. Therefore, readers must employ various strategies to infer the unstated meanings through careful consideration of textual cues.

“Reading beyond the lines”, also referred to as explorative or applied level, has to do with critical understanding of the text. In order to achieve such understanding, one must grasp both explicit (literal) and implicit (referential) meanings of a text as well as be able to judge and evaluate what kind of generalizations can be made from the text to the real world.

Thus, it is quite clear that an ultimate comprehension of a text requires not only automatic decoding but also skilled inference and creative interpretation of what the author said, what he didn't say, and why he did or did not say it.

5. Models of Reading Comprehension

Different perspectives regarding the nature of reading have led to the emergence of several models over the last forty years. The said models attempt to explain, each in accordance with its perspective, the mechanism that supposedly results in text comprehension. The bottom-up model, the top-down model, the interactive model, and the interactive compensatory model are the most discussed models in the corresponding literature. These metaphorical models are mainly generalized assumptions about processes involved in reading comprehension. They are umbrella terms under which more elaborate theories are subsumed.

5.1 The Bottom –Up Model

The initial research on the reading process was vastly dominated by cognitive psychology; as a result, the information processing theory was used to explain many, if not all, aspects of the reading process. The information processing theory maintains that data is processed in a step-by-step manner with each stage transforming its input into a different representation which is then passed along, as input, for the next stage of processing. This sequence of processing was applied to the reading process in the bottom-up model.

The most famous bottom-up approach to reading was proposed by Gough (1972, as cited in Lieu, 2014). From a Bottom-up or serial stage perspective, the reading process proceeds in the following sequence: first the graphemic information (letters and words in their written form) are picked up by the visual system (the eye) and is transformed from letters to their equivalent phonemes, next, these phonemic representations of the letters are combined and transformed into a word. The words are then combined into sentences and meaning is then incorporated into the knowledge system. Consequently, through such a successive ascending order of processing, data is transformed from low-level sensory information (visual perception) to high-level meaning (Rayner, Pollatsek, & Schotter, 2012).

This model was heavily criticized on three main fronts: failure to account for the effect of higher-level processes on lower level ones (Stanovich, 1980), for presenting the reader as a passive receiver of data when “comprehension is not a passive process, but an active one. The reader actively engages with the text to construct meaning” (Pang, 2003, p. 14), and for its text-based orientation despite the fact that “letters play only a small, redundant, and often confusing part” (Smith, 2004, p. 5). But despite its many critics, this model still proves to be valid for the ESL reading research. In a review of recent studies, Pang (*op. cit* 2008) concluded that lower-level processing is essential for L2 reading comprehension even for

advanced readers and that the use of higher level reading processes like prediction and inference depend on the ESL readers' syntactic and lexical knowledge of the English language.

The heavy criticism delivered to the bottom-up models of reading comprehension was neither unfounded nor unpopular. Such shift of perspective left a gap in the literature that many have attempted to fill with their own theories. Among the alternative conceptualizations of successful text processing is the top-down model of reading.

5.2 The Top-down Model

From a chronological perspective, systemic analysis of the processes involved in reading comprehension was first introduced by Goodman in his widely cited, conceptually driven, top-down theory of reading. Generally speaking, top-down models of reading follow an opposite order of processing from that of the bottom-up approach.

Instead of the ascending order of processing (bottom-up) described above, top-down approaches suggest a descending order that moves from high level processing in the form of inferences derived from prior knowledge to low-level processing in the form of decoding letters and words to confirm or disconfirm previously made inferences. This psycholinguistic approach to reading argues that the comprehension process is directed by the reader's goals, expectations, and strategic processing (Grabe, 2009). Thus, the reader is considered as an active constructor of meaning rather than a passive recipient of it. As Grellet (2010, p. 7) puts it, "reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it".

The most widely cited top-down theory belongs to Goodman (1967) who described reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (p. 1). According to Goodman, the reader does

not process written material word for word in a linear form (bottom-up). Instead, “ a reader generates a set of expectations about the upcoming text, samples minimally from the text as needed, confirm expectations, and then generates new predictions” (Grabe, *op cit* p. 102). Goodman (*op cit*) asserts that readers are not passive or neutral receivers of written data; rather they are directed by their prior knowledge, their interpretive skills, and their employment of a set of cognitive and metacognitive strategies which have an impact on the speed and accuracy of decoding (lower level processing). Anderson et al (1985) agrees stating that “Reading is a process in which information from the text and the knowledge possessed by the reader act together to produce meaning. Good readers skillfully integrate information in the text with what they already know.” According to Goodman (*op cit*), the reading process progresses in a spiral as form summarized by Grellet (*op cit*) in the following diagram:

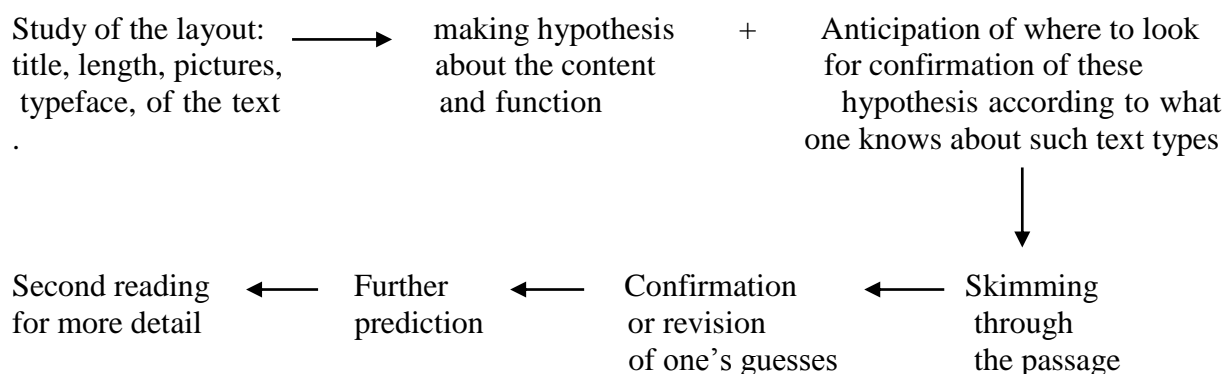


Figure 3: Grellet’s (2010, p. 7) Conceptualization of the Top-down Approach to Reading.

Thus, higher-level processes in the form of prior knowledge of the world (semantics) and language patterns (syntax) is said to directly affect the comprehension process (Stanovich, 1980). In contrast to the bottom-up models, top-down approaches were actually criticized for insufficient address of lower-level processes; for example, Treiman (2001, p. 4) states that “skilled readers fixate at least once on the majority of words in a text. They do not skip a large number of words, as the top-down view predicts, but instead process the letters and words

rather thoroughly". Above all, the perceptual and decoding dimensions still have a major role to play in fluent reading. Another criticism was the unclear portrayal of the mechanisms employed by the reader to generate appropriate inferences (Grabe, *op cit*).

For ESL or EFL reading, the top-down model seems to be more applicable to advanced students who possess higher proficiency in the target language. Because such learners seem to encounter little to no trouble decoding texts, they direct their attention to relating information, in the text to what prior knowledge they possess in their long-term memory (Widdowson, 1983, as cited in Lieu 2014).

Due to the heavy criticism delivered to both top-down and bottom-up models, it was quite obvious that focus on one end of the continuum, whether it is higher or lower-level processes, will never yield a comprehensive theory of reading. A compromise was then introduced in the form of an interactive model in which equal attention was paid to both types of processes responsible for text comprehension.

5.3 The Interactive Model

The interactive reading model recognizes the valid contributions of both top-down and bottom-up models and combines them into a more comprehensive model in which they are said to interact simultaneously all along the reading process. It is parallel rather than serial.

Interactive models have gained their label from their focus on two fundamental interactions that take place during the reading process. One form of these interactions lies between lower and higher level processing and the other form between the reader and the text. Rumelhart's (1984, as cited in Shuying, 2013) model is an example of an interactive approach to reading because it proposes that reading is the product of both perceptual and cognitive processing. Rumelhart suggests that readers alternate between primarily text-based (bottom-

up) processing to primarily reader-based processing (top-down). Based on this theory, the processing of a text is a cooperative feat that utilizes all available data sources. Higher level information (background knowledge) influences and is influenced by the analysis that occurs at lower stages of processing. Thus, readers process a text by accessing one or more of the possible information sources: semantic context, syntactic environment, or surrounding letters as clues to process meaning. But the initial trigger of high-order process seems to be the perception of textual data (bottom-up) which activate the appropriate schemata (top-down) against which the reader tries to give the text a coherent interpretation.

Thus, the interactive model represents the most comprehensive view of the reading process since it combines the valuable insights of both proceeding models.

5.4 The Interactive Compensatory Model

Interactive models of reading provide a conceptualization of reading that is more accurate than that suggested by strictly top-down or bottom-up models. These conceptualizations can be further improved when coupled with the assumption of compensatory processing.

The interactive compensatory model was first proposed by Stanovich in 1980. It embodies the assumption that an inadequacy in one of the sub skills of reading is likely to result in a “compensatory reliance on another skill that is present” (Hudson 2007, p. 46). The model is interactive due to the recognition of a co-reliance on both text-based decoding (bottom-up) and reader-based schemata (top-down) in text processing. And it is compensatory in that “processes at any level can compensate for deficiencies in any other level” (Stanovich, 1980, p. 23). In other words, if a reader’s decoding skills (lower-level processes) are proven inadequate at some point, he/she will rely on his/her own background knowledge to compensate for his lacking and vice versa.

L2 readers much like L1 readers read without exclusively resorting to one single model. Under certain conditions, readers may read from top-down or bottom-up. However, most of the time, reading is more of a multidimensional process in that many factors are simultaneously involved in the processing of textual data.

6. Variables Affecting Reading Comprehension

The process of reading comprehension can be influenced by the presence and /or the absence of several factors that function either by fostering or hindering the process of comprehension. These factors are mainly attributed to the reader himself, the text, the activity, or the context of instruction. Of course, none of the pre-stated variables operates independently (These factors are adapted from “RAND Reading Study Group Reading for Understanding”, 2002).

6.1 Variability in Readers

Avid readers tend to use their capacities, background knowledge, schemata, convictions, opinions, and their experiences toward a particular topic in order to make inference and to familiarize it. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002, p. 20) claims that:

The capabilities and dispositions the reader brings to the task of reading, his or her engagement in and responses to given texts, and the quality of the outcomes produced by the act of reading for some purpose are, themselves, shaped by cultural and sub-cultural influences, socioeconomic status, home and family background, peer influences, classroom culture, and instructional history.

Under the umbrella heading reader variables, there exist many subsumed intervening factors that impact reading comprehension. Among these factors, we have the socio-cultural influences, group differences, inter-individual differences, and intra-individual differences.

Each of these variables is likely to influence, if not determine, the reader's comprehension of a text.

6.1.1. Socio-Cultural Influences

Not all FL readers learn and acquire knowledge in the same way; such a fact represents a real issue for reading theorists. Culture is said to have a crucial impact on FL readers' comprehension of texts; mainly because each one of them has grown-up in a different community that has its own social practices, ways of life, customs, and cultural heritage. All of these influences form a specific and a unique view of the world for them. Edward Sapir (cited in Jourdan and Tuite, 2006, p .63) states that "The understanding of a simple poem...involves not merely an understanding of the single words...but a full comprehension of the whole life of the community as it is mirrored in the words, or as it is suggested by their overtones". Therefore, the target culture may stand as a barrier to comprehension. Foreign language readers may be able to reach high levels of L2 proficiency, but they rarely possess a clear and complete understanding of the foreign culture.

Consequently, difficulties in comprehension may arise due to this lack. What is agreed upon among scholars, in the field, is that socio-cultural factors have to be considered in explaining any act of comprehension.

6.1.2. Group Differences

In this variable, the link is made between reading comprehension and the social class or the ethnic group the reader belongs to with no reference to cultural factors. Learners from lower classes and upper classes or different ethnic groups don't have the same experiences, prior knowledge or view of the world. Therefore, they will never have the same comprehension of a text. Readers from different groups are in a need of an effective customised instruction based on a new research aimed at understanding the differences encountered by them during the comprehension process. Such research should also include

customised assessment techniques that attempt to better identify the capacities that learners own and to ultimately promote their reading ability and foster their comprehension.

6.1.3. Inter-Individual Differences

Inter-individual differences refer to the set of cognitive capacities used by readers while trying to make sense of their readings. Bearing in mind that they vary considerably across readers, these cognitive capacities influence reading comprehension in many ways. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002, p. 22) categorizes these differences as follows:

- Vocabulary and linguistic knowledge, including oral language skills and an awareness of language structures;
- Non-linguistic abilities and processes (attention, visualization, inferencing, reasoning, critical analysis, working memory, etc.);
- Engagement and motivation;
- An understanding of the purposes and goals of reading;
- Discourse knowledge;
- Domain knowledge;
- Cognitive and metacognitive strategy development.
- Still another important determinant of variability in reading comprehension is a reader's perception of how competent she or he is as a reader.

6.1.4. Intra-Individual Differences

In considering intra-individual differences, we are playing on students' motivational level and interests, to say it differently, how well learners are motivated, either intrinsically or extrinsically, to read and what ignites in them the need for reading.

On the one hand, if learners are given a text for which they lack vocabulary or have limited knowledge about the topic under discussion, they would face difficulty in comprehending it; thereby, their motivational level would decrease. On the other hand, if a

reader is highly interested to read a passage, he is likely to engage more actively with it until he comprehends it.

Generally speaking; when learners are interested in a text, they would reread it several times to get its general meaning. So, the reader's preferences and motivation are of a crucial importance in reading comprehension.

Widdowson (1978) argues that the readers usually attend to what is related to their likes and interests and that they do not worry about texts which do not raise their curiosity and motivation. Boredom and difficulty while reading may be reduced if the reader reads passages that correspond with his preferences. So, he asserts the view that interest and motivation are of great importance while reading. After all, it is quite apparent that when readers like the theme under discussion, they will be more likely to sink in the text details and there would be a successful engagement with it.

6.2 Variability in Texts

To figure out what variability in texts refers to, one needs to have a look over all the aspects of texts and the dimensions on which they vary. To start with, we need to know what the word text stands for. Davies (1995, p. 194) has provided a definition for the term. For him, a text is “a coherent piece of writing exhibiting both structure and texture, assignable to a single author or collaborating authors, with clearly defined boundaries making the beginning and end of the writing”. Obviously, the configuration of text structure helps the reader to identify the organisational features that frame the text and clarify the logical connection between ideas.

Another influential definition for the term ‘text’ is provided by Halliday and Hasan (1976, cited in Davies, 1995, pp. 1-2):

A text is a unit of language in use [...] and is not defined by its size... A text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning. A text has a

texture and that is what distinguishes it from something not a text. It derives this texture from the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to its environment.

Reading between the lines, we understand that a text maybe the product of a single writer or more, a paragraph or a set of paragraphs as it can be in the form of either prose or verse. Consequently, texts vary considerably in aspects such as: the topic under discussion, the type, the genre, the information contained, and even the linguistic variables (syntax, sentence structure, etc.). In fact, these text aspects might either facilitate the process of reading or make it more difficult. Thereby, they are considered as elements of a paramount importance when analysing the influence of text-related features on reading comprehension.

6.2.1 Text Topic and Content

It is very evident that the content will influence the way readers process the text. Common topics would be somehow easier for understanding because they seem readable and worthwhile. In opposition, texts that are full of vague ideas or negotiate unfamiliar topics are usually harder to process. Alderson and Urquhart (1985) assert this view by arguing that on relatively easy texts, linguistic proficiency might be sufficient to answer test questions adequately, whereas more difficult texts might require more subject matter knowledge or higher linguistic proficiency. In this case, the amount of world knowledge that the reader possesses could either facilitate comprehension or make it all the more difficult.

6.2.2 Text Type and Genre

Text type (or genre) is a determining factor of text readability. Texts are usually classified into narrative, descriptive, argumentative or expository types. Such classifications may refer primarily to the communicative goals of the writer but they also affect text complexity.

For example, expository texts are thought to be harder to process than narrative ones mainly due to the greater variety of relationships among text units. Furthermore, structures

associated with narrative texts are somehow simple; since they serve to facilitate comprehension by letting readers visualize the scene of the text in their minds.

Another factor that distinguishes one text type or genre from another is the text's organization, or the way paragraphs are related to each other. Meyer (1975, cited in Alderson, 2000) suggested that the organization of texts might make some texts easier to follow and more memorable than others, i.e., coherent texts are much easier to comprehend than the less coherent ones. That is to say, the connection between the text's sentences and paragraphs will help the reader to move from one idea to another with no gaps in understanding; by contrast, less coherent texts might turn reading into a difficult, complex, and tiring task.

Moreover, coherence is affected by cohesion. Davies (1995) explains that cohesion is crucial for establishing coherence. To say it differently, a text which lacks cohesion will not be coherent. Cohesion is best defined by Davies (*ibid*) who sees it as the different existing possibilities of relating sentences words to produce comprehensible structures well linked and well connected.

6.2.3 Traditional Linguistic Variables

It has been proven time and time again that linguistic aspects of the text affect the reader's comprehension of it. The most affective linguistic variable is said to be the text's syntactic complexity since it can hinder the reader's processing. Alderson (1993) supports this view; he produced evidence of a strong connection between grammar and ease of reading. He concluded that "it must be the case that, in some intuitive sense, a reader must process the grammar in a text in order to understand it", and that "the evidence certainly does not support any claim that one can successfully understand text without grammatical abilities" (p. 219). Consequently, readers need to master grammar rules in order to get a clear picture of the ideas that are expressed within the text.

In addition to syntax, vocabulary or lexis plays a crucial role in comprehending a text,

for both first and second language readers. Generally speaking, when FL readers read intensively they consult the dictionary at every moment they come across a new term. In opposition, they skip new terminologies in cases of extensive readings and they satisfy themselves by trying to guess the meanings from the context which may succeed or fail causing comprehension mistakes.

6.2.4 Typographical Features

Typographical features refer to the graphic elements inherent in the reading material. Examples may include characteristics such as font, graphics and layout. These factors are important in determining reading ease or difficulty, especially since they affect the speed of word recognition and meaning processing. The layout of print on the page, for instance, is important for beginners since it presents information in a suitable way in order not to overwhelm readers with too much information (Feng, 2011).

6.2.5 Other Text Variables

- **Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Information**

There are two types of data that we can find in a text: linguistic and non-linguistic data. The former presents information (content) in a written manner whereas the latter presents information in varied manners such as diagrams, tables, figures, maps, and illustrations (Kellner, 1998).

Non-linguistic data usually serve as a support for the linguistic data. However, it can transmit information (content) all by itself like the case of maps, where written texts would not be useful for transmitting the idea clearly to the readers. Mostly, readers need to read both the tables and the text in order to understand fully, especially in order to infer about the non-linguistic data.

- **The Medium of Presentation**

The way texts are presented might affect the process of reading comprehension. Many

readers feel demotivated when texts are presented on overhead slides, on TV or on computer screens, especially in distance learning contexts. Interestingly, they prefer to print the text and comprehend it at leisure. However, there are readers who prefer the digitalized format of texts rather than the paper format. For Wileman (1993), those people are equipped with the visual literacy which involves the ability to decode information from pictorial or graphic images. Whichever the preference of the reader, it will either affect positively or negatively their motivation for reading which, in and of its self, is a determining factor for reading comprehension.

6.3 Variability in Activities

The RAND Reading Study Group (2002, p. 26) believes that “a reading activity involves one or more purposes, some operations to process the text at hand, and the consequences of performing the activity”. Thus, there are at least three activity-related variables that may impact reading comprehension or cause variability among readers.

Starting by purposes, each reader has a reason behind his/ her readings. Learners may read either for pleasure, to accomplish a task, to know about something, or even to widen their knowledge in a certain field. Purposes that stand behind the task of reading are generally either teacher-imposed or self-generated ones which impact comprehension in different ways; especially since the purpose determines the type of reading (intensive or extensive) as well as the motivation behind it (intrinsic or extrinsic).

The operations that are mentioned above refer to cognitive processing and strategy use during the reading activity. Such abilities differ from one reader to another and from one task to another. In order to facilitate and trigger such cognitive operations, teachers tend to employ several instructional techniques in order to help learners activate their schemata, learn how to infer, how to analyze, restate information in the texts, or how to spot certain ideas and send them to long term memory.

Last but not least, the consequences of performing an activity or a task impact reading comprehension because it plays on the student's motivation. Such consequences can range from avoiding punishment (bad marks, for example) to getting a reward (good grades or even pleasure if the topic is interesting). Punishment and reward generate two types of motivations; intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. These two different motives affect the efforts that the students dedicate to processing and comprehending the text which, in and of its self, affects the level of text comprehension that they end up achieving.

6.4 Variability in Contexts

The context that is referred to here is the environment where the reading skill is taught or acquired. We have already established that the process of reading comprehension is largely affected by the sociocultural context, but the classroom context also has an impact on the learners' reading comprehension. Thus, the context we are referring to here encompasses both the immediate context (the EFL classroom) and the larger sociocultural context (ethnic groups, social classes, cultural background...etc).

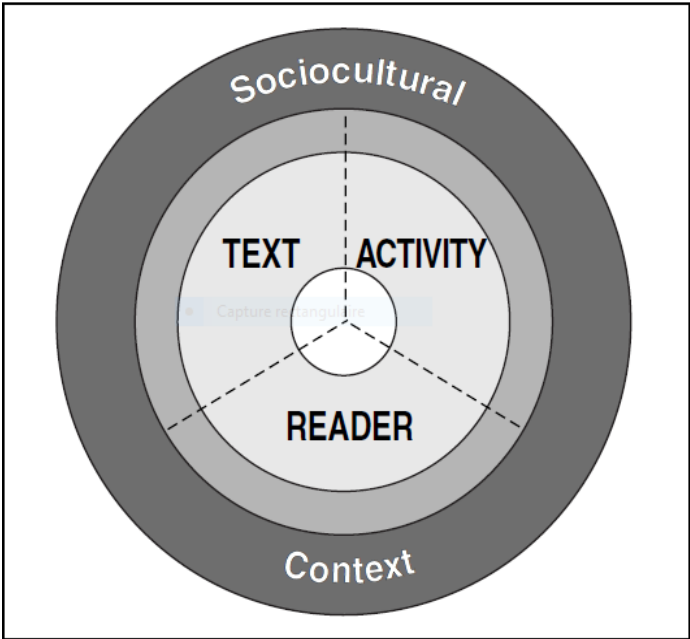


Figure 4: A Heuristic for Thinking about Reading Comprehension (Adapted from *RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 12*)

Figure 4 demonstrates that it is within the larger sociocultural context that the rest of the variables (reader variables, text variables, and activity variables) operate. It refers to the background within which reading comprehension occurs; including economic resources, native language, class membership, ethnicity, race, neighbourhood, and school culture. In fact, the sociocultural context also includes other factors such as the settings (noise, lighting, and even timing of the activity). (“RAND Reading Study Group”, 2002).

7. Reading Skills

The act of reading involves more than just recognizing words in an accurate and automatic way; it also encompasses the use of certain skills that are vital for achieving a comprehensive understanding of texts. Therefore, the ultimate goal of reading instruction should be to equip students with these necessary skills that aim to enhance their reading comprehension.

Reading skills are defined by Urquhart and Weir as "a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with a text" (1998, p. 88). Dubin et al. (1986, p. 193) argue that reading skills “include everything from rapid identification of vocabulary and syntactic structures, to the interpretation of larger discourse patterns, the making of inferences, etc”. This definition enlarges the meaning of the term skill to encompass all the processes required for the act of reading to take place. In fact, a large number of skills taxonomies exist. Urquhart and Weir (1998, p. 90) give a selection of popular taxonomies as follows:

- Davis (1968)

- Identifying word meaning.
- Drawing Inferences.
- Identifying writer's techniques and recognizing the mood of the passage.
- Finding answers to questions.

- Lunzer *et. al.* (1979)

- Word meaning.
- Words in context.
- Literal comprehension.
- Drawing inferences from single strings.
- Drawing inferences from multiple strings.
- Interpretation of metaphor.
- Finding salient or main ideas.
- Forming judgements.

- Munby (1987)

- Recognizing the script of a language.
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning.
- Understanding the communicative value of sentences.
- Understanding relations within the sentence.
- Understanding relations between parts of texts through lexical cohesion devices.
- Interpreting text by going outside it.
- Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- Identifying the main point of information in discourse.
- Distinguishing the main idea from detail.
- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea).
- Selective extraction of relevant points from text.
- Basic inference skills.
- Skimming.

- Scanning to locate specifically located information.
- Transcoding information in the diagrammatic display.

- Grabe (1991)

- Automatic recognition skills.
- Vocabulary and structural knowledge.
- Formal discourse structure knowledge.
- Content/world background knowledge.
- Synthesis and evaluation.
- Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.

In Davis' taxonomy, he emphasized the need for 'Finding the answers to questions' while Lunzer *et. al.*'s concluded that distinguishing between 'Drawing inferences from single strings' and 'Drawing inferences from multiple strings' seems to be useless. Munby's list, however, seems to relate more to the outstanding result, rather than how it is formulated and processed.

The pedagogical value of all these lists of skills is that they could offer a means of devising test tasks and items, and of isolating reading skills to be tested. In addition, they make it possible to diagnose the reader's problems and to attempt remediation (Alderson, 2000).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we recognize that reading is a very complex activity whose ultimate purpose is comprehension. In order to achieve a relatively comprehensive view of such a complex phenomenon, it is worth mentioning that teaching it requires teachers to be acquainted with its types, and the different metaphorical models of reading comprehension (the bottom-up, the top-down, the interactive model, and the interactive compensatory model). In addition, the issue of how to teach it has been an ongoing debate about the

variables affecting reading comprehension that may either hinder or assist the process, as well as the different taxonomies of skills that readers may apply while trying to make sense of written materials.

Section Two: Oral Presentation

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Introduction

The dawn of the era of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBL), and the Project-Based Approach (PBA) has revolutionized every aspect of EFL classroom practices. Lecture-based courses and lessons where students passively receive information have long been condemned and abandoned. Nowadays, EFL students are expected to be more active, engaged, and in-control of their language learning journey. The teachers are no longer expected to take the centre stage; but to encourage the students to take initiative, to think critically, and to use the L2 creatively and interactively in the classroom. One of the best ways to achieve such an aim is through oral presentations (OP). Due to this advantage and more, OPs have become central tasks and key requirements in every standard EFL classroom. In this section, we will attempt to provide some insight into the notion of oral presentations, their types, advantages, and characteristics. Furthermore, we will discuss the roles of the teacher in OP assignments as well as the reasons behind the students' low performance in this task.

1. The Notion of Oral Presentation

The concept of oral presentation (OP) refers to the act of delivering an address to a public audience; it is a brief discussion of a topic delivered to a public. The purpose of this practice is to communicate ideas, to impart knowledge, and to discuss concepts and topics.

Now more than ever, OPs are one of the distinct characteristics of modern education, typically used by EFL teachers due to their role in teaching the target language communicatively. Wallace (2004) elaborates that while in the past, most teaching at the university was limited to giving formal lectures; nowadays, teachers are less active and involved in the students' learning process. Oral presentations for learners symbolize another mode for communicating their ideas and an opportunity to further practice their speaking skills. Ming (2005, p. 118) defines an oral presentation as a “[...] partly spoken, partly visual

form of communication”, which is normally limited in time and occurs in organizational settings.

Generally speaking, oral presentations should be well-structured. In most cases, learners tend to support their talk with visual aids. Obviously, listeners cannot react to any language mistakes. In the end of an OP, the presenters give their audience the opportunity to ask them about things that were not clear to them. Many confuse between the notions of normal speech and oral presentation. The former is a type of speech, whereas the later occurs in a well organised setting and is restricted by time.

Finally, for a successful OP, learners need to know some skills specific to the topic and to the audience. OP is one way to enhance their public communication skills.

2. Types of Oral Presentation Projects in the EFL Classroom

Whether delivered individually, in pairs, or in groups, oral presentations can be classified into three categories: controlled, guided, and free OPs. The classification into each category depends on factors like the learners’ proficiency levels, the choice of the topic, time allocation for the presentation, the use of visual aids, as well as the level of grammar and vocabulary expected to be used by the students (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010).

2.1 Controlled Oral Presentations

This type of presentations is usually reserved for less advanced students whose proficiency level ranges from beginner to elementary. The topic of controlled OPs is restricted by the teacher to what he deems feasible at their level or to what the textbook suggests or contains. The presentations are usually short since less advanced students cannot be expected to present for long periods of time or to use advanced vocabulary, grammar, or even technological methods to deliver their content. The aim here is not a perfect presentation, but an opportunity for the students to practice their language and gain confidence in facing the classroom and taking the stage (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010).

2.2 Guided Oral Presentations

Guided oral presentations are suitable for students with lower-intermediate or intermediate levels of English proficiency. As such, the topic choice is guided and not imposed by the teacher who steers them to what suits their level. Time allocation should also be suitable; not too short but not too long either, since long periods of talking may result in numerous errors which may affect the learners' confidence. Furthermore, sophisticated structural and lexical items should not be expected from students of this level either. However, visual aids such as PowerPoint and Overhead Projectors (OHP) are encouraged since students are most likely more familiar with technology at this stage and age. If technology is not accessible, students can write down their headings, make copies, and distribute them among their classmates (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010).

2.3 Free Oral Presentation

This type of assignment is reserved for students who possess upper-intermediate to advanced levels of L2 proficiency. Since students at this level are usually older, they can have freedom to choose their topic, to plan it whenever they see fit, and to use language forms of any level. This assignment should only apply to students who have already experienced the first two stages (controlled and guided OPs). Since students are more advanced, they are allocated a longer presentation time and encouraged to use complex language forms whenever possible, and to collect data from varied sources. After presenting, the students answer the audience's (classmates) questions, a step that was eliminated in the previous two stages due to the fact that younger students possess less confidence and exposure to the L2 (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010).

3. Characteristics of Effective Oral Presentations

Effective oral presentations are the ones that promise new and useful information for the audience as well as be enjoyable for them. According to Chivers and Shoolbred (2007, p. 22), “Effective presentations achieve their objective and usually bring some benefit and learning to all the people involved in them, whether presenters, audience or tutors.” Besides that, it is claimed that new concepts learned in the traditional lecture-based methods are easily forgotten; by contrast, concepts learned through oral presentations are retained for long periods of time.

Chivers and Shoolbred (*ibid* pp. 21-22) claim that the following characteristics are crucial for preparing and delivering an effective OP:

- Careful planning and preparation.
- Good time management.
- Relevant and interesting content.
- Good communication skills.
- Appropriate use of technologies.
- Clear supporting documentation.
- Suitable audience participation.

Furthermore, according to Duddle, Evans and Maggie (1998, p. 112), an academic course should look at "Structuring, visuals, voice, and advance signalling as well as language" when evaluating an OP. All in all, in oral presentations, it is necessary for students to know how to prepare and structure their presentation as well as how to deliver it since delivery makes the content more and more effective.

3.1 Structuring an Oral Presentation

Structuring is considered to be one of the most important elements of preparing an oral presentation. It can be a deciding factor for the impact of the presentation. Since the audience are passive during the presentation, it is essential that they have a clearly defined structure as an outline to follow while listening. In addition, structuring is central to an OP since it informs students of what notes to be taken and what the most important points are. When structuring or delivering an oral presentation, certain established moves should be followed. An example of the moves that concern the introduction and the conclusion are listed in table 1.

Introduction	Conclusion
establish credentials	
state purpose and topic	summarise
indicate time	make recommendations
outline what is to come	call for action

**Table 1: Moves in the Introduction and the Conclusion in Oral Presentations
(Adapted from Duddley-Evans and Maggie, 1998, p. 112)**

Anderson, Juan, and Tony (2004, p. 39) argue that an ideal OP structure should contain the following:

- A welcoming and informative introduction.
- Chronological sequence of the main points.
- Order from most important to least important.
- General to particular.
- One point of view compared with another point of view.
- A lucid and purposeful conclusion.

Thus, we conclude that in order to get the audiences' attention to what will be presented, the presenter should start by a catchy introduction and end with a summative conclusion. In between the introduction and the conclusion, the presenters should be logical and chronological in their moves, they must be clear but not overly explanatory, and they should be time efficient.

3.1.1. Visuals

One aspect of the oral presentation that many students find beneficial is the integration of visual aids. Anderson et al. (2004) defines visuals as anything that can be seen and help listeners to follow and pay attention to the presentation. Visual aids are of a great importance since they provide support for both the speakers and listeners during the presentation, which can help to reduce stress, make the presentation more successful, and bring variety in the learning process (Lambert, 2008). Such aids can also be used to give more details about the topic and help the audience to understand what is being said. King (2002, p. 410) declares that "the basic rule is to use visual aids to support the presentation, not to dominate it".

The type of visual aids used can vary depending on the topic of the presentation. There are many types of visual aids; they may include the whiteboard, flip charts, tables, overhead projector (OHP), PowerPoint slides, diagrams, videos, etc.

In addition to providing support during the presentation, visual aids help in avoiding total dependence on notes, and providing a feeling of confidence to the presenter.

Duddley-Evans and Maggie (1998, p. 113) conclude that "Visuals are worth a thousand words".

3.1.2. Voice

The voice of the presenter is such a powerful tool that can alter the listeners' perception of the presenter as well as the presentation. Powell (2002, p. 6) claims that "as a presenter, the ability to pace your speech and use your voice to create impact is the single most important

skill you need. You will be more effective if you are in control of your voice by your use of stress, pausing, intonation, volume, and silence". However, Duddley-Evans and Maggie (*ibid.*) insisted that more attention should be paid to the important role played by "[...] phrasing, pausing, speed of delivery, volume, and tone variation" in OPs. Thereby, speakers need to be sure of their voice and to control it appropriately to fit the type of speech they are giving as well as the time in which it will be given.

3.2 Advanced Signalling

Advanced signalling or signposts such as first, next, etc., serve as transitions and demonstrate progress through linking the details and acknowledging where the speaker is. Kane (1988) claimed that signposts are of two types: intrinsic signposts that are actually a part of the speaker's text, or extrinsic signposts which clue the listener to the text organization. However, they stand outside the actual text, for instance, a table of contents. Advance signalling or signposts are considered as important features for successful OPs. They help the listener to follow the structure of the information.

3.3 Language

Successful presenters are the ones that use simple and comprehensible vocabulary that suits their entire audience. Of course, speakers need to vary their ways of speaking in order to meet different needs, and it would be much better if they include gestures, exemplifications, comparison and contrast to explain broadly. As Freeland (2008, p. 2) asserted, "[...] simple syntax and vocabulary rather than long, subordinated sentences and technical jargon also appeal more to listener's aural perception". Moreover, pauses are considered an integral part of language use since they help to gather thoughts and allow listeners to think about what the presenter is saying.

4. Advantages of Oral Presentations in the EFL Classroom

Girard, Pinar and Trapp (2011) claim that using OPs in the ESL/EFL classroom yielded more interaction, more participation, more interest in learning, and improvement of the learners' communicative skills. King (2002) adds that OPs bridge the gap between L2 study and L2 use, they integrate naturally the use of the four skills, and they encourage the students to be more active and autonomous. According to Brooks & Wilson (2014), there are five major benefits for using oral presentations in the classroom:

- Student-Centrism.
- Integration of the four skills.
- They provide students with realistic language tasks.
- They have value outside the language classroom.
- Improving students' motivation.

4.1 Student-Centrism

When students give oral presentations, they have full control of both the content and the process of learning. With little or no intervention from the teacher, students have full control over the flow of the project from choosing their topic and language items to be used to the manner in which the topic is to be explained and presented (Apple & Kikuchi, 2007).

“A properly scaffolded presentation can result in multiple opportunities for students to improve their English in a context in which the students themselves are acting as both teachers and learners” (Brooks & Willson, 2014, p. 203). Furthermore, an OP assignment provides opportunities for the whole class to practice their English, not just the presenters. Such opportunities can be expanded further by recommending that the students use English to

communicate their ideas during the process of planning and preparing their OP not just while presenting.

4.2 Integration of the Four Skills

An even more beneficial aspect of OP assignments is that they require the students to practice all of the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The speaking component is obvious in an OP. But in order to prepare a proper academic presentation, students must also research, plan, and organize their presentation. To achieve this behind the scenes requirements, students must employ their reading and writing abilities. Reading is an obvious prerequisite to researching, and writing is practiced while they prepare their PowerPoint or OHP slides or their written summary. They also practice listening, though not while presenting, while acting as the audience to the other groups' OPs. In the mean time, the audience are also practicing their four skills by reading the OHP slides, listening to the presenters, asking questions, and writing down their notes. As Harmer (2007) states, any of the four English language skills is rarely done in isolation, when people are engaged in a conversation, they are listening as well as speaking, in order to interact with the person they are talking to.

In other words, the four skills are inter-related and integrating them within OPs brings various advantages to the students. It can also be advantageous for the teachers who, through OP assignments, are able to track the students' progress in multiple skills at the same time.

4.3 Realistic Language Tasks

Simple speaking drills that have little-to-no relation to real-life language use are considered, by many, to be poor preparation for autonomy (Thornbury, 2005). OPs, on the other hand, require the student to research a topic in the L2, understand it, and then explain it

to others which is closer to real-life language use. Furthermore, an oral presentation assignment helps students develop their research skills, their critical thinking, and their communicative skills.

4.4. Value outside the Classroom

Taking the floor and speaking to an audience is a prerequisite of many jobs such as teaching, advertising, commerce, etc. Though oral presentations may seem challenging for students at first; once they have practiced it enough they gain confidence, courage, experience, autonomy, and initiative. Such qualities are valued by any employer and would no doubt be worthy of promotion. “Hence, presenting in the EFL classroom prepares students for the job market that they will enter when they leave school.” (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010, p 230)

4.5. Increasing Motivation

The change of roles that comes with OPs brings innovation and interest to the traditionally chalk-and-talk based classroom. Students get to experience the role of the teacher and are driven by the prospect of teaching their peers. They are in control of the class which comes with a sense of obligation that motivates them to work harder as well as a sense of fulfillment and self-efficacy when they see their ability to successfully teach their peers. Furthermore, according to Ochoa et al. (2016, p. 39), EFL students feel “highly motivated when participating in communicative activities because these enhance their fluency, pronunciation, and performance in the use of English in a realistic and enjoyable way”

5. The Role of the Teacher

Oral presentation assignments can be challenging, time consuming, and effort demanding for the teacher and the students alike. In order for students to take charge of their learning as recommended by the student-centrism movement, the teacher must not only adapt lesson plans and teaching strategies but also train and prepare the students for the feat of public speaking. Thus, the teacher's role shifts drastically from an authoritative expert to a guide, organizer, consultant, and facilitator of learning. King (2002) believes that in an oral presentation assignment, the teacher's roles include: preparing guidelines, organizing groups, guiding students in the topic selection process, helping them learn to use visual aids, holding question and answer sessions, and preparing evaluation sheets for assessment.

5.1. Providing Guidelines

Detailed guidelines regarding time allocation, grading criteria and instructional objectives will guide the students while structuring their OP to meet the teacher's expectations and the purpose of OPs (King, 2002).

5.2. Grouping and Scheduling

When assigning an OP to a large EFL class (50 students for example), the teacher should group his learners into groups of 3 to 5 members with one or two groups presenting each week. In doing so, the teacher will save time and the students will develop cooperative learning skills, as well as reduce the anxiety of presenting alone. Hooper (2003) confirmed that grouping the students will insure an increase in self-esteem and an improvement in the students' attitude toward school work and their peers.

5.3. Choosing Topics and Gathering Information

The choice of topic is bound to the type of presentation. In Free OPs, advanced students are given the freedom of which topic to tackle; in guided OPs, the teacher stirs them to what suits their level by showing them topics chosen by previous classes or providing a list of his own recommendations, while in controlled OPs, the teacher dictates the topic.

Once topics have been chosen, the teacher may help his/her students in the research process by informing them of data sources suitable to their topic. Relevant sources for extracting and obtaining data and information for presentation topics can be the Internet, various texts, books, newspapers and magazines, pictures, interviews, questionnaires, and observations (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010).

5.4. Handling Technical Problems

Technical problems may take away from valuable class time and affect the delivery of an oral presentation. In order to avoid such a problem, the teacher must familiarize his students with how to handle the necessary equipment in an efficient manner. Though older students may display more knowledge about these technologies, younger students who may lack exposure to it will definitely require a training session in which the teacher demonstrates how to work with the available technology, what problems may arise and how to fix them (King, 2002).

5.5. Holding Question and Answer Sessions

The Total Communicator (2005) claimed that audience questions are the interactive element of the presentation. They give the presenters a chance to respond to the concerns of the audience and an opportunity to support their arguments and reinforce their message. To

say it differently, question and answer sessions are a vital part of an oral presentation because they clarify possible ambiguities for the audience as well as reinforce the message of the presenter. The audience, the peers in this case, may feel reluctant to take initiative in asking the questions which requires the teacher to ask the first few questions so that the audience may feel more comfortable and know what type of questions to ask as well as how to demand clarification.

5.6. Preparing Evaluation Forms

Peer and teacher evaluation forms are premade check lists of criteria that are expected from the students to fulfill during an OP. Evaluation forms are important to the teacher as well as to the students. They provide the teacher with assessment guidelines and supply the students with necessary feedback that will serve to enhance their future performance. According to King (2002), the teacher evaluation form should be shown to students when OPs are assigned to serve as grading criteria to focus on by the presenters. Members of each group should also be graded and judged individually to reduce the possibility of peer reliance.

6. Oral Presentation Assessment

6.1 Teacher's Feedback

Feedback is characterized as one of the major influences on achievement and learning. Furthermore, the type of feedback given as well as when and how often it is given can have a varying effect on the desired behavior.

Type: Explicit and contextual feedback is a prerequisite to reflective learning which, in turn, is a condition for developing OP competence and thus is immensely encouraged.

Timing: Concerning the impact of timing, King et al. (2000, as cited in Ginkel et. al. ,2015) found that immediate feedback is better reserved for aspects of OPs that are

immediate (eye contact for example), while delayed feedback works better for other organizational aspects such as expanding or reducing the length of the introduction , etc.

Intensity: Though feedback of any intensity is better than no feedback, Smith and King (2004) have found that students' reaction to high or low intensity feedback varied according to their feedback sensitivity. Students with high sensitivity to feedback experienced improvement when feedback was informational, objective and positive (Smith & King, *ibid*). Students with low feedback sensitivity, on the other hand, seemed to be less effected by high intensity messages.

Ginkel et al. (2015, p. 72) conclude that feedback which the teacher provides on OPs should be “explicit, contextual, adequately timed and of suitable intensity in order to improve students’ oral presentation competence”. Furthermore, variables such as “reflective learning, sensitivity to context and feedback directed to specific aspects of oral presentation competence, emphasize the type of feedback essential for developing this competence.” (Ginkel et al., *ibid*)

6.2 Peer Assessment

Research has shown that involving peers in formative assessment results in “reflective, active and collaborative learning” (Ginkel et al., 2015, p. 72). It is argued that employing multiple feedback mechanisms from multiple sources, such as peers, self, and instructor, yields greater levels of reflective learning among the participants as well as the audience (Carroll 2006, as cited in Ginkel et al., *ibid* p. 72). Furthermore, peer assessment is a form of active, interactive, and collaborative learning that engages the students and increases their awareness about assessment criteria which serves to enhance their future OP performance.

6.3 Self-assessment

“Self-assessment is considered as a process by which students monitor and evaluate their own presentation performance” (Ginkel, et al., 2015, p. 73). Such reflection is useful to

the students because it aids them in finding strategies to improve their performance in the future and enhances their self-efficacy levels. Self-assessment may also improve the students' confidence when they reflect on past performances and realize their improvement. Such type of assessment can be facilitated through the use of video tapes.

7.Reasons behind Low Performance

A growing number of studies aimed at investigating the reasons behind students' low performance in OPs have, and generated a number of categories that may be considered as the culprit behind their low performance.

7.1. Personal Traits

Personality traits such as shyness and fear of facing the audience can cause anxiety and affect the students' ability to present well. Chen (2009) investigated Taiwanese graduate students' anxiety levels. He tried to identify the sources of anxiety in OPs. His research revealed that students were somehow anxious and that most of the difficulties reported were self-perceived personality issues.

Chuang (2010) conducted his research on sources anxiety while speaking English. Results showed that undergraduate students felt anxious even if they were prepared in advance; some felt that their classmates' L2 proficiency was higher than theirs which caused them embracement; others declared that they felt uncomfortable and shy when they had to speak in public, and were afraid that the teacher would pay attention to their language mistakes.

Anxiety might emerge from lack of self-confidence, which affects the students' achievement in OP. Self-confident students usually engage more comfortably and are risk takers. On the contrary, students with low self-confidence are hesitant, shy, and anxious.

7.2. Presentation Skills

Clearly the lack of presentation skills would result in poor performance. Chuang (2011) tried to find out college (non-English-major) students' preferences when it comes to presenting. Learners expressed a preference towards reading from notes rather than improvising; they preferred a lack of audience or teachers' participation (questions) and they resented imposed topics. Such preferences are a clear indication of their ignorance about presentation skills and their reluctance to develop them through practice.

7.3. Audience and Instructor

The audience and the instructor are believed to be the main reasons behind the students' reluctance to present orally (e.g., fear of negative evaluations, hard questions, humiliating feedback, etc.). While exploring college students' attitudes towards oral presentations, students reported audience reactions as an unpleasant experience in oral presentations. Another source of anxiety for many learners is the possibility of negative evaluation, criticism, and obviously interruptions of their presentations by their peers or even the teacher.

In an attempt to account for all the difficulties facing university English majors during OPs, Abu Al-Enein (2011) conducted a study of the perceptions of EFL teachers and learners. Results showed a number of difficulties like the students' lack of motivation to give presentations, lack of confidence in their abilities, anxiety and fear, lack of eye contact with the audience, focusing on accuracy more than fluency, incorrect pronunciation, lack of proper vocabulary, weak speaking skills, inability to use technology, poor time management, and inter-lingual mistakes while presenting.

As seen above, although there are different factors that affect students' OP, most of them stem from anxiety of speaking which can be provoked by various factors inherent within the context or within the students themselves. Knowing about the difficulties that students

face during oral presentations will help instructors to understand their students' needs and provide them with better opportunities to improve.

Conclusion

In fact, OPs are an essential instructional method for EFL learners. OPs help the students to create their own learning environment, to learn from their peer, and to minimize their dependence on the teacher. Furthermore, they foster confidence and intrinsic motivation in the students. Therefore, OPs should be a part of any foreign language classroom especially at the university level.

Chapter Two

The Field Work

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Introduction

The present study aims at investigating whether or not assigning oral presentation as a reading assignment improves students' reading comprehension ability as indicated by reading comprehension test scores. As part of this research, several questions will be inspected: Does OP as a reading assignment enhance reading comprehension? What are the teacher's perspectives on the causes behind RC difficulties among EFL students? Are OP assignments utilized enough by teachers of various modules? In order to assess if this type of assignment would yield significant results in terms of improving reading comprehension; an experimental study has been conducted throughout 18 weeks. The sample upon which the research was based has been selected from second year students of English at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center. Two groups out of five second year groups have been randomly selected and assigned as either the experimental group which will receive the treatment or the control group which will not. As a first step, all the participants in both groups are made to take a pretest in the form of a text followed by multiple choice questions. The results of the pretest were used to determine and compare the means of each group in order to establish homogeneity. The six week period of treatment is in effect once the pretest is taken. In this period, the experimental group students are asked to read short novels chosen by the researchers and to present what they have read to their classmates. The control group, on the other hand, is also assigned to read the same short novels, but not to present them. After three months of reading and six weeks of presenting, the students were post-tested following the same procedure as the pretest. The results of the post test were used to compare the means of the experimental and the control group then a t-test was used to establish whether or not the variation among the means is statistically significant. If it is significant, then the hypothesis is accepted; if it is not, then the hypothesis is rejected.

1. The Sample

1.1 The Students

This experimental study was conducted at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center on a sample of the population of 2nd year students of English. Out of the five groups of 2nd year students, two groups were randomly chosen to participate. One of the groups, comprised of 29 students, was haphazardly assigned as the experimental group. The second group, comprised of 28 students, was assigned to be the control group. The majority of the participants are females, their age range was between 20 and 24; and they have all studied English as a Foreign Language for at least 8 years: 4 years at elementary school, 3 years at secondary school, and 1 year at university. The reason second year students were chosen for this research is because unlike first year students, they are more comfortable using the language and more familiar with taking the stage and speaking to their peers as part of the student-centered approach.

1.2 The Teachers

We have interviewed four teachers currently teaching in the English department at Abdelhafid Boussouf University. The selection was based upon the availability of the teachers as well as on their years of experience teaching EFL learners. We have opted for teachers with at least 10 years of experience; this decision was made to ensure that they have been exposed to EFL learners enough to have valuable insight into their strengths and weaknesses.

2. Means of Data Collection

The nature of our quest has dictated the experiment as the best the choice for the primary tool of data collection. The secondary tool utilized, in this investigation, was a qualitative one in the form of an interview designed to answer the second and third research questions.

2.1. The Test

A reading comprehension test was the major instrument utilized in this study. It consisted of a text, comprising two paragraphs, followed by ten multiple choice questions testing reading comprehension (see appendix 1 for the full test). This test was chosen from a collection of TOEFL reading comprehension tests available online. The TOEFL tests are used for speakers of ESL/EFL who wish to study in the United States and Canada. TOEFL tests have high reliability and generalizability (Pierce, 1994, as cited in Alsamadani, 2009). The text of the test that we have opted for is of an informative nature; speaking about music and its impact on humans and animals alike. The ten questions that followed were scored two points for each correct answer resulting in a perfect score of 20 for 10 correct answers.

2.2. The Interview

The teachers' interview was the second procedure utilized in this study. It was administered with the helpful participation of three teachers currently teaching in the English department of Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center. The researcher opted for a structured interview comprised of 12 questions divided into three sections. The first section, entitled general information, aimed at collecting general data regarding the teachers' qualifications, modules that they are currently teaching, and years of experience. The second section, entitled reading comprehension, comprises five questions and is concerned with the teachers' awareness of the difficulties faced by EFL students while engaged in reading activities and the causes behind them. The third and last section, entitled oral presentation assignments, comprises five questions and aims to investigate the frequency of the teachers' use of oral presentations in the classroom. Each of the three interviews lasted 15 to 20 minutes and took place in various places within and outside the university depending on the teacher's preference and availability. The interviewee's answers were tape recorded then later transcribed (see appendix 3 for a sample of the transcription).

3. The Treatment

3.1. The Experimental Group (instruction for the experimental group)

After taking the pretest, the experimental group were paired into 14 pairs and assigned to read short novels chosen by the researchers for a period of three months. They were also asked to prepare a report (summary) about the novel to be presented orally. Once the three months are over, the treatment begins. Over the period of six weeks, two to three pairs of students will present their report in a session (90 minutes) while their peers listened and took notes. Once the presenters have finished (20 minutes average), the discussion begins with comprehension questions from the researchers to the presenters and then from the peers as well. However, the questions usually generate a discussion in which the whole class is involved. By the end of the six week period, the whole class has received the treatment and a post test is then administered using the same testing tool as the pretest.

3.2. The Control Group (instruction for the control group)

Once the pretest has been taken, the control group was instructed to pair themselves and read one of the same novels assigned to the experimental group. The time allocation for this task was three months (starting November and ending January) for reading. Once all the students have finished reading the novels, they were post-tested using the same reading comprehension test as the pretest.

4. Results of the Quasi-experimental Study

4.1. Analysis of the Results of the Pretest

4.1.1. The Experimental Group

The analysis of the results of the pretest for the experimental group shows that the students were not able to find correct answers for Q1, Q5, Q7, and Q8. Table 2 shows that only 140 out of 290 (48.27%) answers are correct for the experimental group and 150 out of

290 (51.72%) answers are incorrect. Therefore, incorrect answers are prevalent.

Questions	Correct Answers	Percentage	Incorrect answers	Percentage
Q1	00	00%	29	100%
Q2	29	100%	00	00%
Q3	29	100%	00	00%
Q4	29	100%	00	00%
Q5	00	00%	29	100%
Q6	07	24.13%	22	75.86%
Q7	00	00%	29	100%
Q8	00	00%	29	100%
Q9	18	62.06%	11	37.93%
Q10	28	96.55%	01	03.44%
Total	140	48.27%	150	51.72%

Table 2: The Experimental Group’s Correct and Incorrect Answers in the Pretest.

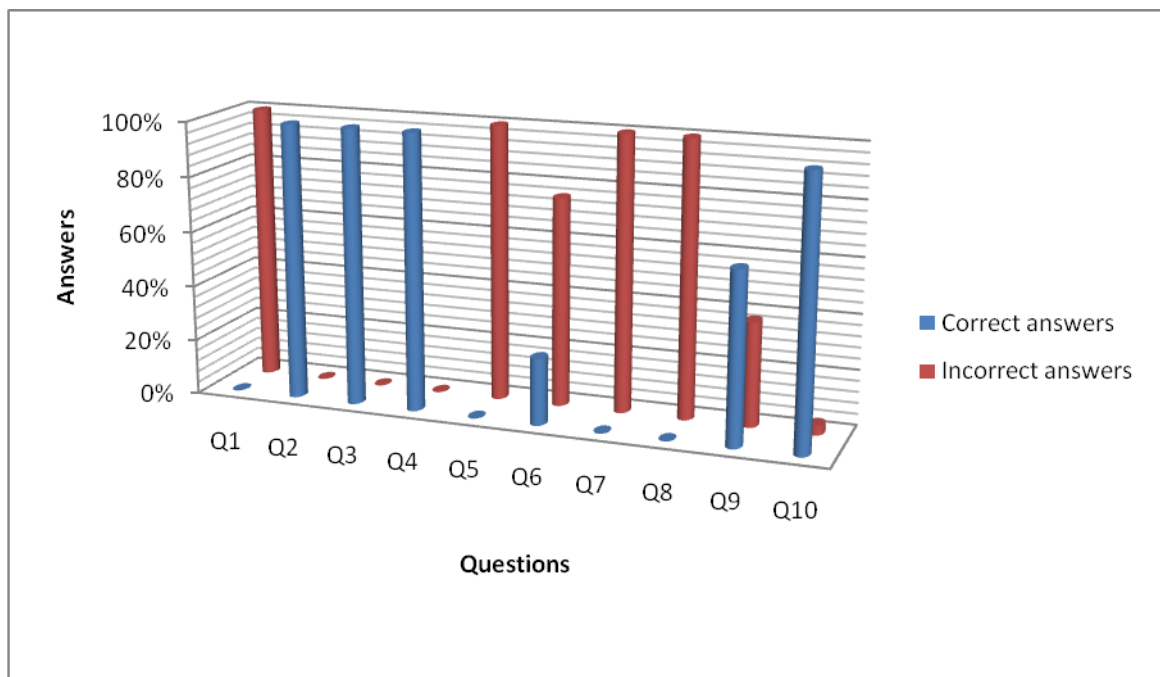


Figure 5: The Experimental Group’s Correct and Incorrect Answers in the Pretest.

According to table 2, 0% of the students provided correct answers for the first question. This might be attributed to the fact that all of the three options in the test as possible

answers for question one could have been applicable as a theme of the text (refer to appendix 1 to see the options provided).

Twenty-nine students have opted for the correct answer for question number two. This implies that they are able to deduce the meaning of words from their surrounded context to come to their exact meaning within the text.

Similar to question two, twenty nine students (100%) chose the correct answer for question three. Such numbers hint that the students are fully capable of tracing back and locating the antecedent that the anaphora refers to within a text.

However, none of the students have been successful in answering questions number five, seven, and eight. The students' inability to answer question 5 (a reference question) clashes with results obtained by previous questions of similar nature (Q2) indicating that the students' ability to trace back referenced words is not as good as we presumed but rather fluctuates from one question to another. Failure to answer question 7 is most likely because the options were musical jargon that students may not have been familiar with. Question 8 required the students to look beyond what is literally stated in the text to what is implied by it; their incorrect answers indicated a lacking in their ability to deduce implied meanings.

In addition, only 24.13% of the students have granted the correct answer to question six, the rest (75.86%) who were incorrect may not have noticed that the question asked: which of the following is not true about humpback whale music? And instead they listed what was true about humpback whales because the word "not" escaped their notice.

According to the results of table 2, the majority of the students (62.06%) have opted for correct answers for question nine; this is mainly due to the fact that it only required them to notice in which line the word "whale" was first mentioned in the passage. The students who answered wrong (37.93%) might have not counted the lines appropriately or failed to notice the first mention of the word.

Finally, most of the students (96.55 %) have given correct answers for question ten. This confirms the results of question two and indicates that students have little-to-no difficulty with inferring referenced words.

4.2. The Control Group

The results of the control group in the pre-test show that the students were not able to provide correct answers for questions one, seven and eight. Table 3 reveals that 132 out of 280 (47.14%) answers are correct and 120 answers out of 280 (42.85%) are incorrect for the control group.

	Correct Answers	Percentage	Incorrect Answers	Percentage
Q1	00	00%	28	100%
Q2	28	100%	00	00%
Q3	28	100%	00	00%
Q4	28	100%	00	00%
Q5	02	8%	26	92%
Q6	04	14.28%	24	85.71%
Q7	00	00%	28	100%
Q8	00	00%	28	100%
Q9	18	64.28%	10	35.71%
Q10	24	85.71%	04	14.28%
Total	132	47.14%	120	42.85%

Table 3: The Control Group’s Correct and Incorrect Answers in the Pretest.

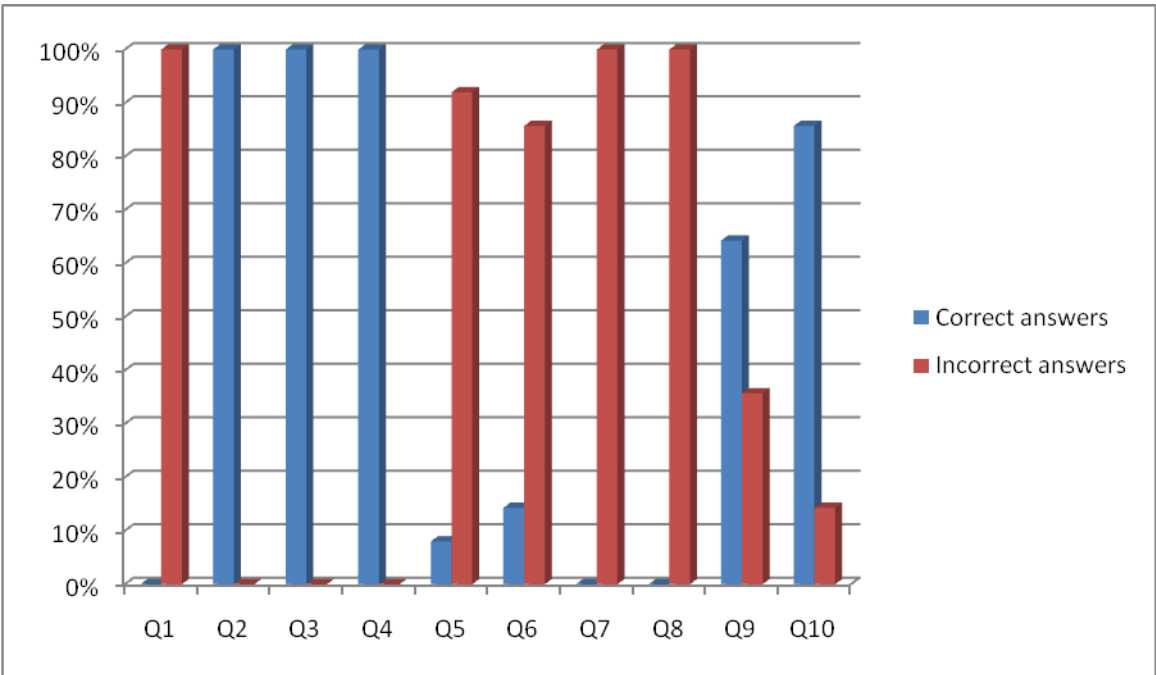


Figure 6: The Control Group’s Correct and Incorrect Answers in the Pretest.

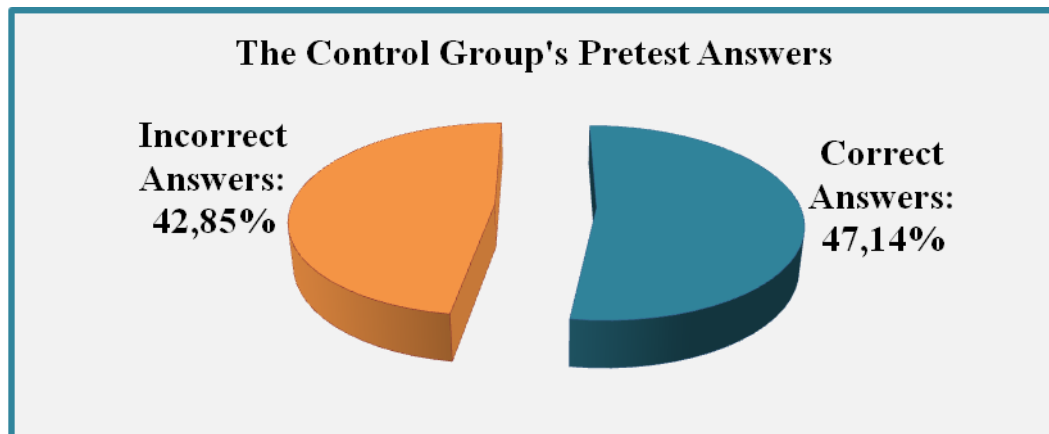


Figure 7: The Control Group's Pretest Answers

Table 3 displays that there were 00 % of the students who opted for correct answers for questions one, seven and eight. This result can be interpreted as follows: question one, asking what the passage is about, may have been tricky due to the fact that the options provided can all be applied to the text. Failure to answer question seven was most likely due to the fact that the options given are actually very close in meaning and students may not have been familiar enough with music jargon to know the difference between the meanings of the four options. However, incorrect answers to question eight indicate a severe lack in the students' abilities to infer the implied meanings of the text, i.e., they can read the lines but they have difficulty reading between and beyond the lines.

In addition, all the students have answered correctly the questions two, three and four. Question two had to do with the meaning of the word "sophisticated" within the context of the text and the 100% correct answers suggest that students had no difficulty inferring word meaning from the context of the text. Their correct answers for question three indicate that reference is not an issue for the students and they are able to easily deduce the referenced word. Furthermore, question four was answered correctly by all of the students probably because it had to do with locating a piece of information that was clearly stated in the text. Thus, literal understanding of the text was not an issue for the students.

Also, the table shows that only 2 students (8%) were able to realize the right answer for Q5 while the vast majority (92%) could not do so. This result is the opposite of what has been reported of question three in which all of the students were able to deduce the anaphoric reference. It seems their deduction abilities depend on the reference at hand.

Table 3 also shows that 18 students (64.28 %) have figured out the right answer for question nine (Q9). This is probably because the question merely required them to notice which line contained the first mention of whales which is an easy enough task when one is concentrating. The students who failed to answer this question have probably not been paying enough attention, and thus such a word might escape their notice when first mentioned.

Finally, the majority of the students (85.71%) have given right answers for question ten which was also about reference, thus proving their adequate skills in this department.

4.1.3. Control Group versus Experimental Group Scores in the Pretest

Table 4 displays that there is no significant difference between the experimental group ($\bar{x}_e = 09.65$), and the control group ($\bar{x}_c = 09.64$) in the pretest scores. This orientates us to say that the participants are approximately of the same level. The mean of the two groups before the experimentation reveals that the sample of the present study is almost homogenous, with a mean difference of $\bar{d} = 0.01$.

The table also shows that the two groups have a problem in reading comprehension since the two means are under the average.

Students	Experimental Group's Pretest Scores	Control Group's Pretest Scores
01	10.00	12.00
02	06.00	06.00
03	10.00	10.00
04	08.00	06.00
05	10.00	10.00
06	08.00	06.00
07	08.00	08.00
08	10.00	10.00
09	12.00	08.00
10	12.00	08.00
11	10.00	10.00
12	10.00	10.00
13	08.00	10.00
14	10.00	10.00
15	08.00	14.00
16	10.00	12.00
17	08.00	10.00
18	08.00	10.00
19	10.00	10.00
20	08.00	14.00
21	10.00	12.00
22	08.00	10.00
23	12.00	10.00
24	08.00	08.00
25	12.00	10.00
26	12.00	10.00
27	12.00	08.00
28	10.00	08.00
29	12.00	/
Means	$\bar{x}_e=09.65$	$\bar{x}_c =09.64$

Table 4: Control and Experimental Groups' Pretest Scores

From table 04 above, we may summarize the frequency of the 57 scores as follows.

a. Experimental Group

$$18 \geq 10 \quad \rightarrow \quad 62.06 \% \geq 10$$

$$11 < 10 \quad \rightarrow \quad 37.94 \% < 10$$

b. Control Group

$19 \geq 10 \rightarrow 65.51\% \geq 10$

$09 < 10 \rightarrow 34.49\% < 10$

4.2. Analysis of the Results of the Posttest in Comparison to the Pretest

Table 05 shows the following results for the control and the experimental group's pretest versus posttest scores.

Scores	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Pretest Frequency	Posttest Frequency	Pretest Frequency	Posttest Frequency
06	01	01	03	04
08	10	02	06	08
10	11	08	14	10
12	07	06	03	04
14	/	08	02	02
16	/	04	/	/

Table 5: Frequency of the Experimental and Control Group Scores in Reading Comprehension.

From table 05 above, the frequency of the 57 scores for the posttest is summarized as follows:

a. Experimental Group

$26 \geq 10 \rightarrow 89.65\% \geq 10$

$03 < 10 \rightarrow 10.35\% < 10$

b. Control Group

$16 \geq 10 \rightarrow 57.14\% \geq 10$

$12 < 10 \rightarrow 42.86\% < 10$

Comparing results from tables 5 and 6, helps us to notice that there is no difference between the posttest and the pretest scores for the control group. Table 4 shows that five students improved their reading comprehension, after reading the novels, without having any

output task which is oral presentation. On the other hand, 23 students did not display any amelioration in their reading comprehension. Out of the 23 students, 15 students retained the same scores and 8 students showed less performance. In other words, it is clear that these students were not able to increase their reading comprehension as their reading is not followed by any reading output.

Moreover, it is noticed that the control group recorded a pretest mean of $\bar{x} = 09.64$ and a posttest mean of $\bar{x} = 09.42$. Computing the difference between the two means results in $\bar{d} = -0.22$ which is not a significant one. This implies that students of the control group kept the same level. The following table clarifies the detailed results.

Students	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
01	12.00	14.00	+02
02	06.00	08.00	+02
03	10.00	10.00	+00
04	06.00	08.00	+02
05	10.00	08.00	-02
06	06.00	06.00	+00
07	08.00	06.00	-02
08	10.00	10.00	+00
09	08.00	08.00	+00
10	08.00	08.00	+00
11	10.00	12.00	+02
12	10.00	10.00	+00
13	10.00	12.00	+02
14	10.00	08.00	-02
15	14.00	12.00	-02
16	12.00	12.00	+00
17	10.00	08.00	-02
18	10.00	10.00	+00
19	10.00	10.00	+00
20	14.00	14.00	+00
21	12.00	10.00	-02
22	10.00	10.00	+00
23	10.00	10.00	+00
24	08.00	06.00	-02
25	10.00	10.00	+00
26	10.00	10.00	+00
27	08.00	08.00	+00
28	08.00	06.00	-02
Means	$\bar{x}_c = 09.64$	$\bar{x}_c = 09.42$	$\bar{d} = -0.22$

Table 6: The Control Group's Pretest, Posttest, and Differences in RC Scores.

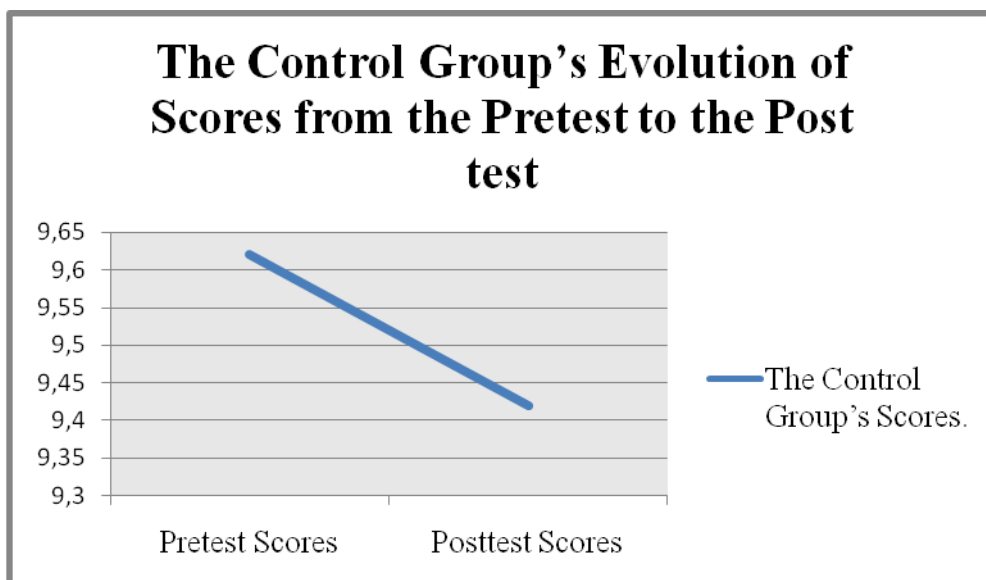


Figure 8: The Evolution of Reading Comprehension Scores of the Control Group

4.3. The Experimental Group's Pretest versus Posttest Scores in Reading

Comprehension

Table 07 shows the following results:

Students	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
01	10.00	14.00	+04
02	06.00	06.00	+00
03	10.00	14.00	+04
04	08.00	10.00	+02
05	10.00	10.00	-00
06	08.00	12.00	+04
07	08.00	10.00	+02
08	10.00	14.00	+04
09	12.00	16.00	+04
10	12.00	16.00	+04
11	10.00	10.00	+00
12	10.00	12.00	+02
13	08.00	08.00	+00
14	10.00	14.00	-04
15	08.00	10.00	+02
16	10.00	10.00	+00
17	08.00	12.00	+04
18	08.00	12.00	+04
19	10.00	12.00	+02
20	08.00	10.00	+02
21	10.00	14.00	+04
22	08.00	08.00	+00
23	12.00	16.00	+04

24	08.00	10.00	+02
25	12.00	14.00	+02
26	12.00	12.00	+00
27	12.00	16.00	+04
28	10.00	14.00	+04
29	12.00	14.00	+02
Means	$\bar{x}_e = 09.65$	$\bar{x}_e = 12.06$	$\bar{d} = 02.41$

Table 7: The Experimental Group's Pretest, Posttest, and Differences in Reading Comprehension Scores.

The frequency of the total 29 scores is as follows:

a. Pretest

$$18 \geq 10 \rightarrow 62.06 \% \geq 10$$

$$11 < 10 \rightarrow 37.94 \% < 10$$

b. Posttest

$$26 \geq 10 \rightarrow 89.65 \% \geq 10$$

$$03 < 10 \rightarrow 10.35 \% < 10$$

It is noticed that 18 students gained the average in the pretest. However, 26 students (89.65 %) obtained the average in the posttest. In addition, the posttest mean ($\bar{x} = 12.06$) is greater than the pretest mean ($\bar{x} = 09.65$). Consequently, the mean difference is significant ($\bar{d} = 02.41$). This alludes that the experimental group has performed better due to the treatment.

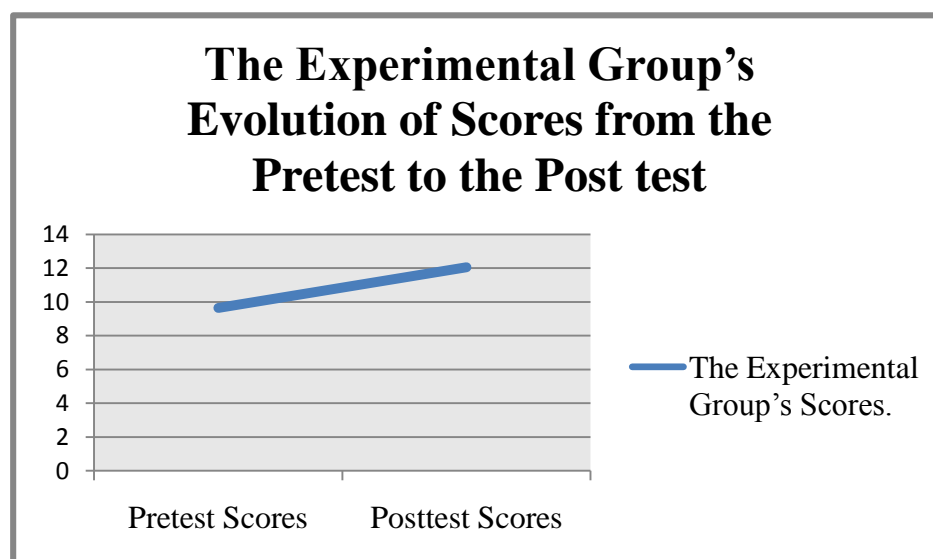


Figure 09: The Evolution of Reading Comprehension Scores of the Experimental Group

4.4. The Statistical Tools

4.4.1 Computation of the t value through the Paired- Samples t-test

The results for computing the t -value are grouped in table 8.

Difference (d)	Square Difference	The Mean Difference	The Standard Deviation of the Difference	The Standard Error of the Mean Difference	T-Value
70	244	$\bar{d}= 02.44$	$S_d=1.61$	$SE(d)=0.29$	$t_{28}=8.31$

Table 8: Summary of the Values Required for Counting the t-Value

For the sake of proving whether the noticed progress in students' reading comprehension is due to oral presentation as an output task or due to chance, the observed t-value and the critical t-value are compared. The t-value (8.31) exceeds the tabulated t-value (2.76). Therefore, the observed t-value is statistically significant.

Consequently, it can be said that the students of the experimental group have achieved better results in the posttest due to relying on oral presentation and not to chance.

4.4.2. Comparing Results of the Experimental and Control Groups

Table 9 reveals that the posttest mean of the experimental group is larger than the posttest mean of the control group ($\bar{x}_e = 12.06 > \bar{x}_c = 9.42$).

This proves that the experimental group outperformed the control group. To test the validity of the null hypothesis (H_0) which suggests that there would be no significant difference in reading comprehension between students whose reading is followed by oral presentation as an output task and those whose reading is not followed by any assignment.

4.4.3. Calculating the t-Value through the Independent Samples t-test

The t-value can be calculated through the independent-samples t-test on the basis of the following results, which are summarized in tables 09, and 10.

Students	Experimental Group's Scores x_e	Square Scores x_e^2	Control Group's Scores x_c	Square Scores x_c^2
01	14	196	14	196
02	06	36	08	64
03	14	196	10	100
04	10	100	08	64
05	10	100	08	64
06	12	144	06	36
07	10	100	06	36
08	14	196	10	100
09	16	256	08	64
10	16	256	08	64
11	10	100	12	144
12	12	144	10	100
13	08	64	12	144
14	14	196	08	64
15	10	100	12	144
16	10	100	12	144
17	12	144	08	64
18	12	144	10	100
19	12	144	10	100
20	10	100	14	196
21	14	196	10	100
22	08	64	10	100
23	16	256	10	100
24	10	100	06	6
25	14	196	10	100
26	12	144	10	100
27	16	256	08	64
28	14	196	06	36
29	14	196	/	/
	$\Sigma x_e=350$	$\Sigma x_e^2=4420$	$\Sigma x_c=264$	$\Sigma x_c^2=2624$

Table 9: The Experimental and Control Group's Posttest Square Scores.

\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	N_1	N_2	S^2_1	S^2_2
12.06	09.42	29	28	6.99	4.98

Table 10: Summary of the Values Required for Computing the t-Value.

The t-value can be computed as follows:

$$t_{N_1+N_2-2} = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2) \sqrt{(N_1+N_2-2)N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1S^2_1 + N_2S^2_2)(N_1+N_2)}}$$

$t_{55} = 3.99$

\bar{x}_1 = Mean of the first group

\bar{x}_2 = Mean of the second group

N_1 = Number of the participants in the first group

N_2 = Number of the participants in the second group

S_1 = Standard Deviation (Sample Variance) of the first group

S_2 = Standard Deviation (Sample Variance) of the second group

The Sample Variance is the average difference of scores from the mean.

On the basis of the mean of the experimental group ($\bar{x}_e = 12.06$) and the mean of the control group ($\bar{x}_c = 09.42$), the difference in mean is considerable and equals ($\bar{d} = 02.64$). As a result, the experimental group has demonstrated a significant improvement in their reading comprehension. These results can be confirmed by the t-value (03.99), which is extremely greater than the critical t-value (2.66).

Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is confirmed and the null hypothesis is rejected. The satisfactory improvement in the posttest scores of the experimental group is not due to chance, but is the result of oral presentation as a reading assignment.

Conclusion

This research study was carried out to answer the primary research question: would the use of oral presentations as reading assignments improve the EFL students' reading comprehension? The statistical analysis of the results obtained through the pretest and the posttest shows a significant improvement in the students' reading comprehension achievement after the treatment. The t-test analysis confirms that students' have benefited significantly from this method and thus our hypothesis is confirmed.

5. Analysis of the Results of the Interview

In order to generate the required data to answer the additional research questions, a structured interview was conducted with three teachers currently practising teaching in the English department at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center. The teachers' answers were recorded, transcribed, and will be analyzed in this section.

As stated previously, the first three questions were aimed at gathering general information about the teachers' qualifications, their years of experience, and the modules that they are currently teaching. The first question revealed that all of the three teachers are holders of the "Magister" degree currently preparing their doctorate dissertation. The second question was about their years of teaching experience. Teacher (A) and (B) had 11 years of experience and teacher (C) had impressive 17 years of experience. Furthermore, question three was aimed at finding out the modules that they are currently teaching. Teacher (A) is teaching discourse analysis and course design, teacher (B) is teaching linguistics and research techniques modules, and teacher (C) is teaching TEFL.

Teachers	(A)	(B)	(C)
Qualifications	MA	MA	MA
Years of Experience	11 years	11 years	17 years
Modules	-Discourse Analysis - Course Design	- Linguistics - Research Techniques	TEFL

Table 11: The Teachers' Profile.

As indicated by table 11, all of the three teachers interviewed are Magister holders who have over 10 years of experience ranging from 11 to 17.

Furthermore, the second section of the interview consists of five questions and is about the teachers' awareness of the difficulties that EFL students face while reading, the causes behind them, and their suggestions for improving the current situation.

Question 04: How valuable is developing the reading skill compared to the other three skills for an EFL learner?

When the three subjects were asked about the value of the reading skill among the four skills, they all agreed that reading is the Cinderella skill (something of high importance yet given little attention and credit). Teacher (A) expressed that developing the reading skill is of paramount importance. Teacher (B) ranked it the first among the four skills in terms of importance; since, according to her, students who do not read are usually poor writers and/or speakers. She believes that reading is the source and the basis upon which the three other skills are built. Teacher (C) was in agreement with teacher (B), stating that while the four skills are of equal importance, receptive skills (reading and listening) come first and the development of productive skills (writing and speaking) depends on them.

- **Question 5: Is the reading skill given sufficient attention in universities in general and ours specifically?**

Teacher (A) says that it was but now it is not (i.e., the classical system vs. the LMD system). He elaborates that normally, in our own university, it needs a module in its own right, in which reading techniques are taught and students are provided with the incentive to read (marks). Teacher (B) sees that reading is neglected among the four skills since all of them have a separate module, whereas for reading there is none in our curriculum. By contrast, teacher (C) believes that the insufficient address of the reading skill in our university is getting remedied by the incorporation of reading techniques and strategy instruction in the written expression module.

- **Question 6: What are the most common difficulties that EFL students face while reading?**

Teacher (A) believes that students have difficulty grasping complex meanings of the text

in general. They focus on the literal meaning and ignore the implied meanings. They also have problems synthesising the content of the different paragraphs to come up with the meaning of the whole. Other times, they do not monitor their understanding of one paragraph before moving on to the next. For teacher (B), the main difficulties lie in their lack of vocabulary as well as their disuse of strategies. Teacher (C) believes the students' problems lay in their failure to bridge the gap between their L2 and the far more advanced language used by authors of most literary books.

- **Question 7: What are the root causes behind such reading comprehension difficulties?**

Causes	Teacher (A)	Teacher (B)	Teacher (C)	Percentage
Lack of practice	X	X	X	100%
Lack of instruction	X	X		66.66%
Lack of strategy use	X	X	X	100%
Other			Lack of appropriate reading materials	33.33%

Table 12: The Causes behind EFL Students' Reading Difficulties According to the Teachers.

For teacher (A), the root cause behind these difficulties is the students' depreciation of extensive reading, their disuse of appropriate strategies, and lack of training in how and what to read. Teacher (B) states that students should not be blamed for their lacking since the cause behind it is the fact that they are not taught reading strategies and techniques. What they are to blame for is their lack of practice due to their ignorance of the importance of reading. Teacher (C) attributes the cause to the lack of appropriate materials in the form of graded readers which will guide the students to read the appropriate materials for their level as EFL learners.

- **Question 8: What are your suggestions for helping the students overcome such reading difficulties?**

Teacher (A) believes that since for university students, the most important incentive is success, if reading was valued in terms of marks, it will be a form of reward that would push the EFL learners to read. Teacher (B), on the other hand, believes that the first step to improvement is raising the learners' awareness about the importance of reading. The second step, in her opinion, is to provide guidance and training by including a module for reading comprehension and reading strategies. As for the learner's part, s/he should be willing to do what it takes to improve since without his efforts, no amount of teaching will remedy the problem. As for teacher (C), the answer lies in providing the students with appropriate practice materials, in the form of graded readers in different genres in order to suit different levels and different preferences. These materials should be provided by the university after consulting the teachers about what would benefit the students most. Once materials are provided, the teacher should motivate his/her students to learn by giving them concrete examples of what reading can do for them or what it has done for him, for example.

Part 2: Oral presentation

- **Question 9: How often do you assign OPs to your students?**

Teacher (A) admits that he almost never uses this type of assignment because he believes certain modules benefit more from it than others (mainly the oral expression module) and also because students see them as a burden and react negatively to them. Teacher (B) also expressed that she rarely assigns OPs to her students. She justifies her choice by stating that her first year students are not yet familiarized enough with the university atmosphere and the foreign language to be able to take the stage and present to peers. As for her second and third year students, she expresses that due to the nature of her modules (linguistics and research techniques), she tends to focus more on written forms of assessment like research papers and

such. Teacher (C), by contrast, expressed that he attempts to incorporate this type of assignment as often as possible. As a teacher of TEFL, he believes students should take the stage as part of the student-centrism approach especially third year and master students.

OP assignments	Teacher (A)	Teacher (B)	Teacher (C)	Percentage
Often			X	33.33%
Rarely		X		33.33%
Never	X			33.33%

Table 13: The Frequency of the Teachers' Use of OP Assignments.

- **Question 10: What are the variables that you take into consideration before assigning an OP?**

Teacher (A) declares students proficiency as the determining factor for him, and timing (beginning vs. end of the year, before vs. after exams, etc). Teacher (B) stated the students' level as a crucial variable (1st year vs. second and third years) as well as the nature of the module (oral expression vs. research techniques). Teacher (C) also declared level and time as determining factors but not the nature of the module.

- **Question 11: What are the most common difficulties that EFL students face during an OP?**

According to the teachers' answers, most of the difficulties that the students face during an OP have to do with psychological factors that can be summed in anxiety and low self confidence due to low L2 proficiency.

- **Question 12: What are the advantages of using OP assignments in the EFL classroom?**

Teacher (A) believes that building L2 proficiency through practice is the major advantage

of OP assignments. For teacher (B), OPs are useful and fruitful, but for certain modules not all of them (mainly oral expression and TEFL). For such modules, OP assignments can teach students how to interact with an audience and how to use the language for authentic purposes. Interaction is the purpose of using the language both in written and oral forms. Thus, learners should learn how to interact with the audience with no obstacles and barriers. Teacher (C) believes an OP assignment is a good chance for students to practise their English and to get the necessary feedback on their performance. Beyond their academic life, teacher (C) adds, the students' future carriers can also benefit from the practice that they get in university since most of them end up teachers.

- **Question 13: What are your assessment criteria for an OP assignment?**

Teacher (A) listed the content and organization of the presentation as the first criterion, the second being their ability to get their points across (explain their subject) and then, of course, their language proficiency. Teacher (B) said that she would assess based on their fluency and accuracy as well as general behaviour during the presentation like eye contact with the audience and absence of hesitation. As for teacher (C), assessment criteria for an OP include:

- Eye contact with the audience and the teacher,
- Accent and pronunciation: a good native-like accent coupled with accurate pronunciation is deeply appreciated.
- General comfort while taking the stage (absence of signs of anxiety and hesitation).
- Fluency and accuracy (L2 proficiency).

- **Question 14: What do you believe is the role of the teacher in an OP assignment?**

Teachers (A, B, and C) summed the roles of the teacher into that of a guide and a facilitator in case students experience any type of difficulties. In addition to guiding the students, the teacher should set a favourable atmosphere in order to lower the student's anxiety and raise their confidence. Prior to the presentation, the teacher's guidance comes in

the form of general instructions about how to prepare and deliver oral presentations.

6. Interpretation of the Results of the Interview

The second research instrument employed in this investigation was an interview with teachers aimed at answering the second and third research questions. The general questions by which we opened the interview show that all of the interviewees were full time teachers with considerable years of experience. This means that they are by no means new to their job and would have valuable input to contribute to our study.

The second section of the interview (questions 4 to 8) was about reading difficulties and their causes among EFL learners. Answers to question four indicate that there is high awareness among EFL teachers about the importance of reading for EFL learners. There is also a general agreement that students are ignorant to the value of such a skill and that they do not read enough either inside or outside of the classroom. In addition, from their answers to question five, it seems that the teachers are in accord that the reading skill is not given its due attention in our university by either the learners or the curriculum. It is neither practical nor wise that such a skill is not given its own module while the three other skills are (listening, writing, and speaking), especially with the deficiencies that learners have and with their reluctance to practise alone outside of the classroom.

Questions 6 and seven revealed high awareness of the various difficulties faced by EFL learners while reading as well as the causes behind such difficulties. There is an agreement among teachers that difficulties lie in both comprehension and decoding. The causes behind such difficulties, as question 7 revealed, are various. Apparently the blame is on all parties involved; learners are to blame for their lack of practice, teachers are to blame for not motivating their students to read, and the curriculum is to blame for not allocating enough time for instruction. Concerning question 8, the teachers' suggestions for future improvement, various solutions have been listed by each teacher. From motivating the students with marks

(an external incentive to build extrinsic motivation) to raising their awareness of the importance of developing the reading skill (to build their intrinsic motivation), it seems that motivation is the first key to solving this issue. The second key is to incorporate a module for reading techniques in the curriculum or at least to allocate enough time for it as part of the writing module if not all other modules. The third key has to do with providing the proper graded readers to help EFL students build their abilities gradually.

The third section of our interview (questions 9 to 14) has to do with the use of oral presentation in the EFL classroom and the teachers guidelines of how and when it should be used. Question 9 revealed that OP assignments are underused by teachers in our university due to a believe, on the part of the teachers, that not all modules benefit equally from OP assignments and that their use should be restricted to TEFL and Oral Expression modules. From question 10, we deduce that the variables that should be taken into account before assigning an oral presentation are the learners' language proficiency, the time available in class and outside it, as well as the students' attitudes towards the assignment. Thus, students who possess low proficiency in the foreign language (1st years for example) should not be burdened with more than they can handle; neither should students who have a negative attitude towards this type of assignment. In addition, OPs should not be assigned close to exams so as not to occupy the students' revision time.

Question 11 unveils that most of the difficulties that students face during an OP have to do with psychological issues. Anxiety that students experience when taking the stage and facing the audience makes them reluctant to accept OP assignments and/or to be motivated to do them. However, this should not deter the teachers from using such a valuable tool, especially that it is well known that only with constant practice that students can overcome such psychological barriers. The second problem that students have is their lack of fluency and proficiency while using the foreign language. Such a problem, in and of itself, can only be

solved by more practice, i.e., more OPs.

From question 12 contradictions arise. While teachers are firm believers that among the major advantages of OPs is building L2 proficiency as well as preparing students for carrier life, they do not use it for modules that are not concerned with oral presentation. Aside from L2 proficiency, OPs require students to understand their subject matter in a way that passive reception of information never could. The fact that students have to grasp a subject from all angles to be able to explain it to peers guarantees long term retention and deeper learning of any subject matter in any module. Such an advantage was overlooked by some of the teachers.

Regarding their assessment criterion for an OP assignment, discussed in question 13, it seems that language proficiency takes the lion's share; including aspects of fluency, accuracy, accent, and pronunciation. Content and organisation of the presentation come as a second assessment criterion, this is due to the fact that the learners are EFL students and mastering the foreign language is the number one goal.

Question 14 exposed that the subjects are unaware of some of the various roles that teachers are supposed to assume before, during, and after an OP assignment. This might be due to their lack of training in the implementation of contemporary approaches to teaching, or due to transferring the traditional lecture-based approaches by which they were taught in their time as students. Regardless of the cause, such ignorance may be the real cause behind their reluctance to incorporate OP assignments in their modules.

Conclusion

We have noticed that teachers are aware of the difficulties that EFL students face while reading as well as the causes behind them. In addition, they recommend the incorporation of a reading module into the curriculum seeing the lack of instruction as one of the causes behind the learners' difficulties. Furthermore, the teachers have been found not to use oral presentation assignments for various modules due to a belief that the main advantage

of OPs is building L2 proficiency, and therefore, the use of such assignments should be restricted to modules such as TEFL and oral expression. Moreover, it has been noted that the teachers are unaware of all the roles that they are supposed to assume during, prior to, and after an OP task.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The results obtained from this study have multiple implications for improving EFL reading instruction. These implications were drawn from the analysis of the results yielded by two research tools; experimental design and teacher interviews. The major implications of this investigation are translated by the researchers into recommendations for the teachers, the university, as well as the learners.

- **Recommendations for Teachers**

1. The fact that the participants of the control group (who were not assigned an output task) had lower scores in the reading comprehension posttest reflects the effect of having a purpose for reading on reading comprehension performance. The implication of such an outcome is that reading should not be used without a follow-up output task. Simply put, EFL learners should not be asked to read just for the sake of reading; they should be given a purpose for the task in the form of an output task to ensure that they have a sense of purpose for reading.

2. The improvement in scores that the experimental group experienced after completing oral expression assignments shows the effectiveness of the treatment (oral presentation) for improving the learners' reading comprehension abilities. These results are similar to another study conducted by Schisler (2008) in which oral retelling was found superior to written retelling in terms of improving the students' reading comprehension performance.

3. The instructional techniques used in this study can be incorporated into the new module for reading which we suggest as part of our recommendations for the university.

4. Teachers should try to motivate their students to read by providing incentives in the form of marks or verbal encouragement.

5. Results obtained from the teachers' interview show that oral presentation assignments are underused and should be assigned more often by teachers of modules other than oral expression and TEFL.

6. Teachers should be aware that the benefits of OP assignments exceed building L2 proficiency and is a way to achieve deeper learning, long term retention, and autonomy in learners. For these reasons, OPs should no longer be restricted to modules that aim at building L2 proficiency.

7. EFL university teachers should be trained on the effective use of oral presentation in various different modules to maximize the benefits of using such a versatile task.

- **Recommendations for the University**

1. The results of this study show that the deficiency in the students' reading comprehension performance may be due to a lack in reading instruction that should be remedied by adding a module for reading techniques and strategy instruction or by allocating time for such instruction within the written expression module.

2. The university should also provide graded readers for the foreign language learners as well as consult the teachers as to what the library may be lacking and what materials would be most beneficial for the learners.

- **Recommendations for Learners**

1. Students should value the reading skill more and not neglect one of the four pillars that build L2 proficiency.

2. EFL learners should engage more often in extensive reading outside the classroom since in reading, like any skill, practice makes perfect.

3. Students should be aware that they are just as responsible for their learning as the teacher. They should be more autonomous and compensate the lack of reading instruction by educating themselves on the various strategies and techniques that they are supposed to apply while reading.

4. EFL learners should not fear oral presentations especially if they aspire to be future teachers. They should be aware that only through practice they can lose their fear and build their competence.

General Conclusion

This study is concerned with the effect of oral presentation as a reading assignment on reading comprehension as represented by test scores. Based on statistical analysis, the results obtained in this study show a significant positive effect. Such results have led us to conclude that this instructional method improves the students' reading comprehension abilities as shown by the improvement in the reading comprehension scores of the experiment from the pretest to the posttest (the t value in the paired samples t test equals 8.31, moreover, the t value in the independent samples t test equals 3.99). Consequently, the alternative hypothesis which states that oral presentation assignments, as output tasks for reading, lead to improvement in the students' reading comprehension performance was confirmed. Data obtained from the second means of research, the interview, confirmed that this type of assignment is severely underused by teachers in various modules. It was also confirmed that the difficulties that EFL students face while reading are due, in part, to the lack of appropriate instruction, and in another part, to the lack of practice. Such problems can be solved by the incorporation of a reading module in which this type of assignment, along with other scientifically proven ones, is employed. In doing so, various problems can be solved; the lack of appropriate reading instruction, underuse of OP assignments as well as the need to improve reading comprehension performance among the EFL learners. We also advise that appropriate reading materials in the form of graded readers be made available to the students by the university. As for foreign language researchers, they should provide us with similar researches exploring different instructional methods and their impact on reading performance so that they may be incorporated by EFL teachers in reading instruction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

(The Reading Comprehension Test)

Text

Music can bring us to tears or to our feet, drive us into battle or lull us to sleep. Music is indeed remarkable in its power over all humankind, and perhaps for that very reason, no human culture on earth has ever lived without it. From discoveries made in France and Slovenia even Neanderthal man, as long as 53,000 years ago, had developed surprisingly sophisticated, sweet-sounding flutes carved from animal bones. It is perhaps then, no accident that music should strike such a chord with the limbic system – an ancient part of our brain, evolutionarily speaking, and one that we share with much of the animal kingdom. Some researchers even propose that music came into this world long before the human race ever did. For example, the fact that whale and human music have so much in common even though our evolutionary paths have not intersected for nearly 60 million years suggests that music may predate humans. They assert that rather than being the inventors of music, we are latecomers to the musical scene.

Humpback whale composers employ many of the same tricks that human songwriters do. In addition to using similar rhythms, humpbacks keep musical phrases to a few seconds, creating themes out of several phrases before singing the next one. Whale songs in general are no longer than symphony movements, perhaps because they have a similar attention span. Even though they can sing over a range of seven octaves, the whales typically sing in key, spreading adjacent notes no farther apart than a scale. They mix percussive and pure tones in pretty much the

same ratios as human composers – and follow their ABA form, in which a theme is presented, elaborated on and then revisited in a slightly modified form. Perhaps most amazing, humpback whale songs include repeating refrains that rhyme. It has been suggested that whales might use rhymes for exactly the same reasons that we do: as devices to help them remember. Whale songs can also be rather catchy. When a few humpbacks from the Indian Ocean strayed into the Pacific, some of the whales they met there quickly changed their tunes – singing the new whales’ songs within three short years. Some scientists are even tempted to speculate that a universal music awaits discovery.

Questions:

01. Why did the author write the passage?

- (A) To describe the music for some animals, including humans
- (B) To illustrate the importance of music to whales
- (C) To show that music is not a human or even modern invention
- (D) To suggest that music is independent of life forms that use it

02. The word “sophisticated” in line 5 is closest in meaning to

- (A) complex (B) intricate (C) well-developed (D) entangled

03. The word “one” in line 7 can be replaced by

- (A) the chord (B) the left brain (C) the right brain (D) the limbic system

04. According to the passage, which of the following is true of humpback whales?

- (A) their tunes are distinctively different from human tunes
- (B) they can sing over a range of seven octaves
- (C) they do not use rhyme, unlike humans
- (D) whale songs of a particular group cannot be learned by other whales

- 05.** The word “they” in line 18 refers to
- (A) human composers (B) whole songs
 - (C) octaves (D) whales
- 06.** Which of the following is not true about humpback whale music?
- (A) It uses similar patterns to human songs
 - (B) It’s comparative in length to symphony movements
 - (C) It’s easy to learn by other whales
 - (D) It’s in a form of creating a theme, elaborating and revisiting in rhyming refrains
- 07.** The word “refrains” in line 22 is closest in meaning to
- (A) tunes (B) notes (C) musical phrases (D) sounds
- 08.** Which of the following can be inferred from the passage?
- (A) The earliest human beings came from France and Slovenia
 - (B) Music helped to shape the whale brain
 - (C) Humpback whales imitate the way human composers so in creating their own music
 - (D) The research of musical brain will lead to a discovery of a universal music
- 09.** Where in the passage does the author first mention whales?
- (A) Lines 5-9 (B) Lines 10-14
 - (C) Lines 15-19 (D) Lines 20-24
- 10.** The word ‘their’ in line 25 refers to
- (A) Indian Ocean humpbacks (B) Pacific Ocean humpbacks
 - (C) All whales (D) whale songs

Appendix 2

(Transcription of an Interview)

- **Part One: General Questions:**

Q1: what Degree do you currently hold; your qualifications, I mean?

A : I have a Magister degree and I am currently preparing my doctorate.

Q2: How many years have you been teaching EFL students at university?

A: I believe I started 11 years ago.

Q3: What are the modules that you are currently teaching (this year specifically)?

A: This year, I am teaching Linguistics to 1st year students and techniques of research to 3rd year students

- **Part Two: Reading Comprehension**

Q4: How valuable would you rank the reading skill among the four skills or in general?

A: “I think the first one. I have always told my students and encouraged them to read. I said if you do not read believe me you will not be able to write and to speak, even you will not have enough ideas. So reading, for me, comes in the first place; and then I focus also on writing; I am very allergic to writing mistakes and I also pay attention to the students’ English. When correcting, I always give a mark for English. So reading is the first for me. I consider it as the source and the basis and then writing and then, of course, speaking and listening are important also. In fact, I do believe that the three skills depend on reading.”

Q 5: Is the reading skill given its due attention at the university level?

A: “well, the lack of a reading module suggests otherwise. I believe reading is not allocated enough time or at least as much time as the three other skills.”

Q 6: What do you believe are the main reading comprehension difficulties that EFL students

face?

A: “Lack of proficiency, and lack of vocabulary, also strategies. But concerning them, students should not be blamed for this lack because they are not taught reading strategies. They should be guided and taught how to use strategies. In fact, I see that reading is much neglected among the four skills since all of them have a separate module, whereas for reading there is none in our curriculum.”

Q 7: What do you think is the root cause behind the difficulties that they face?

A: “Lack of reading, they do not read and they do not know the importance of reading I said some of them do not know how to read, and what to read, and how to benefit more.

You may find a student; he says I have read a novel but I did not catch anything from it. So, this is a problem. Also lack of training and lack of the use of the most appropriate strategies are major problems. There are many problems in fact.”

Q 8: What are your suggestions for improving the EFL students Reading Comprehension skill?

A: “First and most important is to raise their awareness towards the importance of reading, this is the first step and they need guidance of teachers each time and they have the opportunity to do that each time. And I suggest including reading as a reading comprehension module and reading strategies and, of course, some efforts on the part of the students because after all it is the student who is going to read, so he should do some efforts, and teaching alone is not enough.”

Follow-up Question: How do you motivate them to read?

A: “I have always tried to motivate my students to read. I just tell them that reading is important and if you do not read, you will not be able to write or to speak. The problem is that it was in vain, they were not motivated, and I think that technology is a barrier and marks are extrinsic motivators; and I want them to be intrinsically motivated besides I generally don't

give extra marks. Generally speaking, I suggest allocating time for reading in classes, or much better having reading as a separate module.”

- **Part Three: Oral Presentations**

Q 9: How often do you use oral presentation assignments in your classes?

A: “I rarely use Oral Presentations.”

Q: why not?

A: “You know, concerning 1st year students, I think in my opinion, you cannot start an OP with them because they have just started. Most of them are not yet familiar with the university itself, with the colleagues, the classmates, the teachers. For them, it is a new experience, the first time for them to study in a place like this. So first of all, we give them the chance to know all what is surrounding them, and to know what they are going to study first I mean the English language. Being specialized in it for the first time is not something easy. They have primarily to get acquainted with the language... etc. So with first year students, it is impossible to start an oral presentation. I speak they listen and interact but OPs directly no. They neither have enough input nor enough output for them. With 3rd year students I also rarely use OPs. I, personally as a teacher, focus more on what is written. The nature of the module “techniques of research” they primarily have to learn how to write reports to do researches instead of presentations, i.e., reports in a written version.”

Q 10: what are the variables that you take into consideration before assigning an OP?

A: “well, the most obvious one is time; class time. The second most important variable is the students’ level and their familiarity with using the L2; first year students’ as I said earlier, should not be given OP assignments. The third thing to consider is whether or not your module is going to benefit from such an assignment or just consumes your class time.”

Q 11: what are the difficulties that you think students face while presenting orally?

A: “In fact, the biggest issue is that they are not proficient enough orally to be comfortable

speaking the L2. This is because they don't practise speaking the foreign language as much as they practise writing it. The second problem is that they are self-conscious and anxious when facing their classmates which results in hesitation and even more mistakes."

Q 12: What do you think would be the main advantages of using OPs for EFL students?

A: "Oral presentations are useful and fruitful but in some modules only, I think in Oral Expressions only OPs would have some advantages. For example, they would learn how to interact with the audience with no obstacles and barriers. Interaction is a key element in language learning without interaction what you are going to do with the language. In speaking, you are going to interact, in writing also you are going to interact with an unknown audience. So interaction is a basic element in EFL. You cannot teach without interacting. It is impossible."

Q 13: What do you believe should be the assessment criteria for an OP assignment, if you give it how would you assess it?

A : "Their English, their fluency, I mean when they start presenting look at the way they behave (do they look at the audience with no problems, do they avoid looking at you, for example ,eye to eye ,do they hesitate?) many elements are take into consideration.

So, first of all fluency, then content, and maybe mistakes, as well as their confidence while facing peers and talking to people with no problems."

Q 14: What should be the teachers' role in an OP assignment?

A: "Just a guide and facilitator in case they stop without being able to carry on, he may encourage them or guide them. In the beginning the teacher should guide them and give general instructions about how to prepare this presentation. Concerning the topic, it depends, he may suggest topics or he can ask them to bring topics and during the presentation itself I think he should sit somewhere and observe."

Appendix 3:

(List of Novels Given to Students to Read)

- “The Fifth Child” by: Doriss Lessing.
- “The Old Man and the Sea” by: Ernest Hemingway
- “The Time Machine” by: H. G. Wells
- “The Body” by: Stephen King.
- “Djouda Akbar” by: Akta Kapoor.
- “Homeless Birds” by: Gloria Whelan.
- “Hamlet” (the modern version) by: William Shakespear.
- “The Picture of Dorian Grey” by: Oscar Wilde
- “And then there Were None” by: Agatha Christi.
- “Oliver Twist (the modern version) by: Charles Dickens.
- “Post Office” by: Charles Bukowski
- “The Boogeyman” by: Stephen King.
- “Emma” (the modern version) by: Jane Austen.
- “Pride and Prejudice” by: Jane Austen.