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The Effect of the CAFE Framework on Reading Comprehension Skills among EFL Sixth Grade Students in Saudi Arabia^(*)

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أثر CAFE على تنمية مهارات الفهم القرائي لدى طالبات الصف السادس المتعلمين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية السعودية

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى الكشف عن أثر استخدام استراتيجية قائمة على CAFE framework (الفهم، والدقة، والطلاقة، وتوسيع المفردات) في تطوير مهارات فهم المقروء لدى طالبات الصف السادس الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية السعودية، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، وتم اختيار فصلين (ن = 60) من مدرسة متوسطة بالمنطقة الجنوبية، حيث مثل أحد الفصول المجموعة التجريبية التي تم تدريسها باستخدام CAFE، بينما شكل الفصل الآخر المجموعة الضابطة، تم إعطاء كلتا المجموعتين اختبارًا قبليًا في البداية؛ ثم بعد التجربة تم إعطاء الطلاب اختبار بعدي مشابه للقبلي لتقييم مهارات الطلاب في فهم المقروء، وكشفت النتائج أن المجموعة التجريبية قد أظهرت زيادة كبيرة في مستوى فهم القراءة مقارنةً بالمجموعة الضابطة، وتشير النتائج المذكورة أعلاه إلى أن CAFE يمكن أن يحسن مهارات الفهم بشكل كبير، وبالتالي يوصى المعلمين باستخدام CAFE في تدريسهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: CAFE، فهم المقروء، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.



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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the effects of the CAFÉ framework (comprehension, accuracy, fluency, expanding vocabulary), strategy-based instructional model on developing reading comprehension skills for 6th grade students learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this goal, two classes (n = 60) of an intermediate school in the south region of SA were chosen. One class represented the experimental group who was taught using the CAFE framework, whereas the other one formed the control group. Both groups were given pre-test at the very beginning; the closing of the intervention was accompanied by a parallel post-test that would evaluate the increase in comprehension capabilities. Results revealed that the experimental group has shown a significant increase in the level of reading comprehension compared to the control. The above results indicated that the CAFÉ framework can significantly improve the comprehension skills. Thus, it is recommended that teachers are encouraged to use CAFE into their teaching.

Keywords: CAFÉ, Reading comprehension, EFL.

Introduction:

The foundation of academic success and a skill that lifelong learning demands is reading comprehension. The significance of instruction of explicit reading strategies rooted in empirical data gathered over the decades of research with literacy is notable because they aimed at developing the students' ability to extract meaning out of the excerpts. It helps in combining the new information with the previously acquired knowledge, and critically analyzing the written material (National Reading Panel, 2000). More specifically, in the context of language acquisition (especially in the case of second or foreign language acquisition), strategy instruction has increased importance. The English as Foreign Language (EFL) students are often faced with not only linguistic but also other cognitive challenges, including the need to figure out new orthographical rules and cope with the limited vocabulary, respectively, which hinder understanding (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). In the absence of a systematic program or framework to develop metacognitive and cognitive reading strategies, most EFL learners engage in superficial reading practices other than word-for-word translation or repetition use of a dictionary that do not, in fact, promote deep processing of text (Alqahtani, 2015).

Learning English in Saudi Arabia begins at a young age, in the primary schools, and the purpose of this is to prepare learners, who have to learn the English language at such a tender age, to study and work in the more globalized world. Although the levels of curricular innovations and massive investments in EFL teaching have been recorded in the country, official measurements and classroom research have shown that a considerable percentage of Saudi EFL students have a hard time achieving satisfactory rates of reading proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2019; International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, n.d.). A large number of students can even perform well in simple decoding and memorizing vocabulary but collapse when called upon to draw conclusions, key morals, and critically analyze texts, which are requirements essential to doing well all through the curriculum (Alrabai, 2014). In fact, Alqahtani's (2015) study of intermediate-level learners in Riyadh established a trustworthy fact that in the case of reading, students tend to treat this skill as a task that is tied to the individual words' recognition or the heavy use of bilingual dictionaries instead of covering higher-order topics like predicting,

questioning, or visualizing. The diagnostic insight uncovers a perennial discrepancy in strategy-directed teaching in the Saudi EFL classrooms.

The CAFÉ framework is one of the educational innovations that has attracted the attention of the larger community of literacy education. The CAFE framework was developed by Boushey and Moser (2006) incorporates four interrelated sections-comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary-in a consistent model of instruction. The framework promoted individualized reading goals, regular self-objective checking, strategy lessons, and accountability conferences with the teacher. Research at the first-grade level has reported huge improvements in reading performance among elementary students in cases where the CAFÉ strategies were used in conjunction with the Daily 5 workshop framework (Cater, 2016; Duty, 2016).

As an illustration, Duty (2016) has noted that low-reading-achievement students in the fourth grade had taken part in an eight-week Daily 5/CAFE part of a study in one school in the United States. Thus, there were significant improvements in reading achievement scores as well as observable positivity in the students with increased self-belief, motivation, and use of strategies.

Although these and other studies have portrayed positive effects of the CAFE framework in the English native-speaking environment, there is a little research on its application in an EFL context. Cognitive and linguistic difficulties experienced by EFL readers are of a different caliber compared to those of the L1 readers. For example, EFL students encounter a double difficulty captured during the decoding process and cultural anchoring of the text (Bernhardt, 2011). Consequently, one cannot think that a strategy framework that was developed in L1 classrooms would necessarily work in EFL settings without adjustments. Further, the Saudi educational environment has special sociocultural settings like parental attitudes towards English, exam-oriented pedagogies, and crowded classes that can issue in the viability and powerfulness of strategy-based interventions (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2006).

However, there is precedence regarding the fact that explicit strategy teaching proves to be effective in Saudi EFL students. Alshammari (2017) used a quasi-experimental research to study a schema-focused reading

program compared to traditional standard instruction and noted that the schema-treated group displayed huge improvement on main ideas recognition and inferences tests compared to the control group. In a similar fashion, Alasmari (2021) used internet-based reciprocal teaching instruction that included summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting strategies and documented considerable pre-test to post-test improvement in reading comprehension of Saudi university students. All these investigations prove the fact that properly tutored cognitive and metacognitive strategies training may bring real changes in the comprehension results of EFL learners, not only in instructor-centered classrooms but also in the rest of them.

Significance of the study:

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to addressing the persistent challenges Saudi EFL learners face in reading comprehension by introducing the CAFE framework, a strategy-based instructional model originally designed for native English contexts. It provides empirical evidence that CAFE can be effectively adapted to Saudi classrooms, offering a practical alternative to traditional grammar-translation and rote memorization methods that have yielded limited result. Further, this study helps in keeping up with recent trends calling for the integration of modern strategies such as CAFE into the educational process. In addition, this study provides teachers with a guide for implementing the CAFE framework, a strategy-based instructional model that helps them diversify teaching methods and make learning more interesting.

Statement of the Problem:

Following the increased performance in the area of English language teaching, such as establishing the communicative language teaching system, the Saudi EFL school children show unsatisfactory results in the reading comprehension field (Alrabai, 2014). For instance, in the PIRLS test in 2011 and 2016, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was ranked at the low international level with an average performance score of 430 points (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, n.d.). This score increased in 2021, reaching 464 points, but it is still below average. One possible reason for this persistent gap could be that classroom instructions in most of the schools in Saudi Arabia continues to emphasize grammar-translation techniques, rote-based vocabulary learning, and

reading tasks, which have been justified to yield minimal improvements in advanced comprehension skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). According to Alqahtani (2015), Saudi readers actively use passive reading behaviors such as text copying with no active vocabulary learning and consultation of a bilingual dictionary in case of unfamiliar words without utilization of inference or prediction tasks as a mean of finding no meaningful interactions with the reading text, even in cases where no clear strategy training has been provided.

A review of reading research studies in the United States by the National Reading Panel (2000) reached an unquestionable conclusion that direct teaching of cognitive and metacognitive skills (comprising summarizing, questioning, and monitoring comprehension) is the main part and parcel of developing better reading performance. Later meta-analyses confirmed the same results when applied in varied education settings (Garcichenano-Cain & Cain, 2014). Considering this evidence, researchers like Alqahtani (2015) and Alshammari (2017) have supported the idea of applying some kind of systematic strategy models in the Saudi EFL classrooms to diminish the recorded comprehension gaps. But in spite of such appeals, no systematic or evidence-based implementation of such frameworks (CAFÉ) has been done.

The CAFE framework, characterized by the element of personalized and clear goal-setting, explicit strategy lessons, and continuous formative assessment, is a thorough model in teaching strategies (Boushey & Moser 2009). Nonetheless, there has been a lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of the CAFE framework and its use in the EFL setting and especially in the special sociocultural context of the Saudi Arabian schools. In order to address this gap, the current study seeks to answer the research question: What is the impact of applying CAFÉ strategies on developing EFL reading comprehension skills?

Questions of the Study:

- 1- What is the effects of the CAFÉ framework (comprehension, accuracy, fluency, expanding vocabulary) on developing reading comprehension skills for 6th grade students learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia?
- 2- Are there statistically significant differences in reading comprehension achievement between students taught using the CAFE framework (experimental group) and those taught using traditional methods (control group)?

Objectives of the study:

- 1- Investigating the effects of the CAFÉ framework (comprehension, accuracy, fluency, expanding vocabulary) on developing reading comprehension skills for 6th grade students learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia.
- 2- Determining whether there are statistically significant differences in reading comprehension achievement between students taught using the CAFE framework (experimental group) and those taught using traditional methods (control group).

Research hypothesis:

- 1- There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between students' reading comprehension skills of the experimental group and the traditional group in the posttest.
- 2- There are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average scores of the experimental group students in reading comprehension in the pre-test and post-test.

Terminology of the Study:

The CAFÉ framework is a structured system for reading comprehension that has four mutually connected components. Comprehension strategies (e.g., questioning, summarizing), accuracy strategies (e.g., decoding unknown words, self-correction), fluency strategies (e.g., repeated reading, phrased reading), and expanding vocabulary strategies (e.g., using context clues, word maps). CAFE is carried out by teachers in the form of mini-lessons, guided practices, and individual conferences in which students develop the personal objectives and track their progress on their own (Boushey & Moser, 2006). **The classroom implementation unfolded as follows:**

- 1- **Modeling.** The teacher demonstrated each strategy with our target text.
- 2- **Mini-Lesson:** Teacher models some strategies.
- 3- **Guided Practice:** Students practice with support choral reading, echo reading, group discussions.
- 4- **Independent Application:** Students work in pairs or journals to apply the strategy to the text and reflect.

CAFE Framework:

The CAFE Framework is an instructional model for developing students' reading skills, developed by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser, with the goal of helping teachers provide targeted, personalized instruction that supports learners' needs in four key areas: comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary (Boushey & Moser, 2009). This framework is distinguished by its focus on individualized instruction, whereby the teacher assesses each student's level in the four skills and then sets learning goals and appropriate support plans. The framework integrates and focuses on guided reading strategies, classroom discussions, and collaborative work, promoting active learning and effective student engagement (Boushey & Moser, 2012).

The CAFE framework also allows students to take an active role in their learning by setting personal goals and tracking their progress through visual dashboards in class, which contributes to increasing learners' self-responsibility. The framework relies on continuous monitoring and immediate feedback, allowing strategies to be adjusted to suit the student's needs. The CAFE framework is consistent with constructivist principles and sociocultural theory, providing a learning environment based on collaboration and co-construction of knowledge, and giving the teacher the role of facilitator who provides support in accordance with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as referred to by Vygotsky (1978).

Theoretical framework:

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that learning occurs in a social context, where knowledge is formed through interaction and communication between individuals (Vygotsky, 1978; Horowitz et al., 2005). This concept aligns with the CAFE framework, which focuses on developing comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary expansion through an interactive classroom environment. This framework provides opportunities for students to learn collaboratively, while the teacher acts as a supporter and facilitator. This aligns with the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) outlined by Vygotsky, where the learner receives the necessary support until he or she reaches mastery. The allocation of educational objectives in CAFE and the monitoring of each student's progress reflect the idea that knowledge construction is an individual

process influenced by the learner's experiences (Vygotsky, 1986), while cooperative activities and the exchange of experiences between peers contribute to enhancing the joint construction of knowledge, which is consistent with constructivist principles that place importance on the social climate of learning.

Previous studies:

The act of reading was always a long-known multidimensional mental process that includes the workings of decoding and inferring interpretations or high-level reasoning and critical evaluation. Foundational research earlier conducted by the U.S. National Reading Panel (2000) summarized numerous studies to conclude that explicit teaching of cognitive strategies involving reading and summarizing content, being able to make a prediction, picturing content, and answering one's own questions makes an enormous difference in understanding outcomes. The meta-analysis conducted by the panel indicated the existence of the direct influence of such instruction methods, especially when teaching strategy through a real-life reading activity rather than providing discrete teaching about it (National Reading Panel, 2000). Such results highlight the necessity to help students not only learn how to recognize but also know how to implement effective reading strategies in a conscious way so that students could observe their mental processes and watch and control them to read.

These conclusions have been confirmed and developed by later studies. As Al-Ahdal (2023) stressed, reading strategies are cognitive tools that help to process texts, and it is a known fact that the learners who have already mastered the methods of using a set of strategies are more likely to improve their understanding of the knowledge and remember it. In fact, strategy instruction is metacognitively guiding, enabling students to assess the effectiveness of their comprehension ventures and changing their way of comprehending comprehension breakdown. Theoretically, this is consistent with the notion of Flavell (1979), where he conceptualized the notion of metacognition, where the capacity to monitor and control the cognitive processes is considered highly important to learn in any field. When introduced to the reading situation, pre-reading strategies like pre-planning strategies in how to read a text, tracking oneself in how he or she has understood things, and comparing the strategies employed have been found

to be related to better performance in comprehension (Garner, 1987; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

These general principles of strategy teaching gain special importance within the narrow scope of a particular pedagogical approach to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). EFL readers are faced with not one but two challenges related to language foreignness, not to mention often a lack of access to authentic English texts beyond the classroom setting. The studies of the wide range of EFL environments have strongly revealed that the teaching of strategies will mitigate part of these obstacles by providing learners with more conscious strategies to interpret, discover, and assimilate the new lexical and grammatical constructions (Anderson, 2008). A proverbial example would be the landmark volume on cognitive academic language learning strategies (CALLA) by Chamot and O'Malley (1994), which proved that once EFL learners were trained in using such strategies as summarizing, inferencing, and elaborating, their achievements in reading went up more quickly compared to their counterparts with no emphasis on strategies. In addition, instruction in predicting word meaning based on context (lexical inferencing) has also been found to lessen word-by-word translation routines and thereby lead to a more fluent and contextualized pattern of reading (Nation & Coady, 1988).

Considering the situation in Saudi Arabia in particular, in the EFL contexts specifically, there has been an increasing corpus of studies that have attempted to describe where students are in terms of the skill and application of reading strategies and also to assess the impact of any interventions that have focused on increasing the application of strategies. Alenezi (2021) polled 203 Saudi students enrolled at the university level and determined that although most students had a developed sense of pre-reading skills (reading of the headlines and preparation of background knowledge), during-reading skills (underlining of the main points), and post-reading skills (the summarization of the key points), there was a disjunction between reported use of the strategies and actual use of these strategies, which tended to be shallow. Of the same kind, Al-Roomy and Alhawsawi (2019) examined the strategy use of Saudi secondary school learners and classified the participants as high strategy users depending on their involvement in predicting, skimming, re-reading, and summarizing.

The same study, however, reported a mismatch between recognition of strategies and efficient use: the students often said that they applied strategies without measurable improvement in accuracy of understanding. These results imply that although Saudi learners might be cognitively prepared to possess a mental inventory of learning strategies, they still need step-by-step education and training to utilize these strategies and eventually achieve better results in reading as well.

The possibilities of using strategy-based interventions to boost the results in EFL reading have been proved further by evidence given during empirical intervention studies conducted in Saudi Arabia. Alshammari (2017) conducted a quasi-experimental inquiry in which the schema-based reading program was implemented in a secondary school among first-year students, which implied prior-knowledge activation, structuring the text contents in the graphic organizers, and asking students to brainstorm on issues in the form of thematic questions before reading. Post-test results represented statistically significant greater retrieval of the main ideas and drawing of inferences between and among the schema-intervention and control groups taught using conventional approaches, showing statistically significant differences. It was observed that the effect size in the study was large (Cohen's $d > 0.80$), which implied that a rather short (six-week) schematic training may bring about significant improvements in EFL reading comprehension under such circumstances.

The study by Alasmari (2021) also proved the feasibility of technology-based strategic education. In the current study, students in Saudi universities were involved in an online form of reciprocal teaching program, which involved cooperative summarizing, generating questions, explaining vocabulary, and predicting part of the text in the online discussion forums. When compared to the control group provided with the standard reading instruction, the reciprocal teaching participants have shown significant pre-to-post gains in the comprehension test scores and high reports of self-perceived confidence and motivation in qualitative feedback. The blended design of the intervention that combines face-to-face workshops and asynchronous online applications implied a flexible framework that has the potential of being scaled and adjusted to bigger classrooms.

In spite of these positive results, the conventional teaching and learning practices continue to be used in most of the Saudi EFL classrooms, with a focus on grammar-translation and rote learning. Alqahtani (2015) stated that in the absence of instructions about how to instruct the students on strategy, learners would rely on the literalization of texts, word-by-word decoding, and accessing bilingual dictionaries, leaving higher-order strategies for inferential and critical comprehension aside. He further asserted that these methods do not achieve a profound understanding because learners regularly go through the decoding process without really thinking and will barely acquire synergistic capacities; moreover, skills will not, or seldom, generalize what they have learned to accomplishments in other subjects. To Alqahtani, the ultimate answer to reading challenges in Saudi learners is the empowerment of students by means of planned and staged strategy interventions, and this position could be justified by the fact that international sources encourage balanced literacy strategy instruction that incorporates phonics, strategy teaching, and exposure to rich materials (International Literacy Association, 2018).

A fairly well-known specific structured strategy-teaching model once popular in L1 settings is called Daily 5/CAFE. The CAFE system was devised by Boushey and Moser (2006) and represents four reading objectives of comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary that are placed in the larger workshop model called Daily 5. Practically, teachers carry out short, intensive mini-lessons on particular strategies and the following independent or cooperative reading where students have to use the strategy and evaluate their advances independently. Strategy conferences with a one-to-one setup can give personalized feedback and set goals. Shooting way past drilling, CAFE and its successors have focused on effective readers who can be strategic, reflective, and recognize their own areas of development and measure their personal strategic use over time.

There are positive findings regarding CAFE when using empirical evaluations in L1 classrooms. The case study presented by Duty (2016) about a fourth-grade classroom in the United States revealed that following an eight-week implementation of Daily 5/CAFE teachings, the struggling readers showed considerable growth in comprehension test results, fluency running records, and self-efficacy ratings. Students had shown enhanced

interest and participation, and most stated that they felt more in charge of their reading progress. Likewise, Cater (2016) recorded significant improvement in reading comprehension and fluency among the students of fifth grade when integrating CAFE and the Daily 5 model and attributed success to the strategy of prioritizing explicit strategy modeling and purposeful, deliberate practice provided by the framework. Similarly, Jakubowski (2011) study indicated the positive impact of CAFÉ strategy on reading comprehension skills for second graders, and become self-aware readers and more confident.

Nevertheless, though these L1-context findings are quite promising, they cannot be directly transferred to the EFL setting, especially in Saudi Arabia. EFL students also have other linguistic and cultural barriers to tackle, and small-group strategy conferences may have restrictions in application scale because of high numbers in lessons and few hours of teacher time, as is common in Saudi schools. Additionally, the self-regulated learning elements of CAFE will challenge the students to maintain an independent and metacognitive ability that many EFL learners have not yet achieved without significant instructions. To date, there is no published research that has demonstrated the CAFE framework on EFL (and any other Arab learners) in Saudi Arabia. It is a major gap in the comparative literature in the field of literacy or the localized literature on the pedagogy of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia.

Methodology:

Research Design:

This study utilized a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent group, pre-test/post-test approach to evaluate the effects of the CAFE reading strategy on the reading comprehension skills of sixth grade students who are learning the English language in Saudi Arabia. The quasi-experimental designs are almost always applied in the field of educational research when the usage of true randomization cannot be considered practicable due to the need to maintain intact classes (Creswell, 2012). Two sixth grade classes (in the same primary school) have been chosen: one of them was randomly chosen to form the experimental group, in which the CAFE framework was explicitly taught, and another one was the control group, implementing the usual reading teaching methods. The two groups took the same reading

comprehension tests prior to the intervention period and after the entire intervention period. The design allowed drawing robust conclusions about the causal influence of the CAFE strategy by contrasting within-group gains and between-group differences in the post-test, simultaneously controlling common threats to the internal validity.

Participants:

Sixty female students -who were between the ages of eleven and twelve-year-old native speakers of the Arabic language- were used to form the research participants. They were studying in two classes in sixth grade of an elementary public school in the south region of Saudi Arabia. One of the classes was randomly chosen to form the experimental group and the other one to be the control group. Before the intervention, Group equivalence was tested by comparing mean pretest of the comprehension scores (t-test, $p > .05$).

Involvement in the study was semi-voluntary: a written consent of each student's parent or guardian was taken, and the student gave his or her assent in accordance with the provisions of the ethical committee acting both at the university research and the school administration level.

Instruments:

A researcher-generated parallel form of the comprehension test to be used to measure the reading comprehension; individual forms of the comprehension test contained a short expository passage and ten evaluation questions to assess the comprehension. The questions incorporated a variety of multiple-choice items that covered literal interpretation of key concepts and information, comprehension of passages requiring inferential skills, and vocabulary-in-context items designed to assess how the students can grasp the meaning of words used in the passage. This test was administered using Form A as a pretest and Form B, which also has a different but similar passage and similar questions to be used as a post-test. The content validity was determined by evaluating the contents by two practical EFL teachers and a 7-curriculum specialist to be in line with the national English curriculum and developmentally appropriate to the sixth-grade learners, and tests were modified based on their suggestions.

In a pilot study on another cohort group of twenty students, the Cronbach alpha coefficients of Form A and Form B were 0.82 and 0.85, respectively;

hence, high internal consistency. Since it is important to note the instructional fidelity, a structured observation checklist was conducted with trained and certified observers who ensured that the control group teacher was not presenting similar instruction on strategies as the experimental one was conducting the CAFE strategy lessons according to the planned schedule.

Procedure:

The research has been carried out in 5 weeks, during which the preparatory stage preceded the actual implementation of the intervention and was followed by post-intervention evaluation. At the beginning, the teacher was trained on how to apply the strategies within the CAFE framework. At this stage of preparations, the lesson materials were created, and the research tools were concluded based on the feedback given by the pilot test. Then, in the first week both groups took the pre-test in standardized exam conditions. Every group had two lessons of forty-minute reading in a week, during which they met eight times in total. Every session of the experiment was standardized, as in the experimental group, the teacher raised one or two CAFE strategies (such as visualizing to improve comprehension and chunking to develop and improve accuracy), demonstrated their use on the texts of the grade level, and offered guided practice, including instructions or individual/small group conferences to offer individual/small grade coaching.

*Table (1)
Mapping CAFE to “A Strange Car Accident”*

CAFE Strand	Teacher Modeling (I do)	Guided Practice (We do)	Independent Practice (You do)
Comprehension (making meaning)	-Think-aloud: “I notice Dad doesn’t hear Alex’s warning-why might that be?” -Show how you visualize Dad rolling into the flowers and predict what happens next.	-Ask literal questions: - “What toy were Alex and Lisa playing with?” - “Where did Dad land?” Then inferential: -“Why do you think Dad laughed at the end?”	-In your journal, answer one “right-there” question (e.g., “What did Lisa bring Dad?”) and one “think-and-search” question (e.g., “How did the accident change what Dad said?”). -Illustrate the accident sequence in three panels and write one sentence per panel.

CAFE Strand	Teacher Modeling (I do)	Guided Practice (We do)	Independent Practice (You do)
Accuracy (word solving)	-Model breaking apart “remote-controlled” into syllables: re-mote/ con-trolled, then blend.	-Echo-read the sentence “He was rolling all over the yard,” focusing on each syllable in “rolling” and “yard.” -Spot and correct a misread word in a partner’s sentence.	-Choose three multisyllabic words (e.g., accident, flowers, actually) from the story, mark syllable breaks, and practice reading them aloud correctly.
Fluency (expression & pacing)	-Read the dialogue with proper phrasing and emotion: “Oh, no!” cried Lisa. (show surprise)	-Choral read the two-speaker lines: -“Dad, watch out!” cried Alex. -“Ow! I hurt my foot. I must get an X-ray,” said Dad.	-Partner-read the text by paragraph, focusing on smooth pace and expression. Give each other one “glow” (what sounded good) and one “grow” (what to improve).
Expand Vocabulary (word meaning)	-Demonstrate using context to define “mustn’t”: look at Alex’s warning tone and the“- ”before it.	-In small groups, pick two new words (e.g., ice, injury). Use the surrounding sentences to guess their meanings, then check with a dictionary.	-Create a mini-glossary: write each new word, a kid-friendly definition, and an original sentence that shows its meaning (e.g., “I mustn’t run in the hallway.”).

On the contrary, the teaching of the control group followed the traditional reading strategies that was based on guided reading with attention to vocabulary translation and comprehension questions but with no strategies training tasks and no goal setting. As it was done in the pre-test, both groups were provided with parallel-form post-tests after the intervention under the same conditions.

Data Analysis:

SPSS Statistics was used to analyze data. The pre- and post-test data of all sixty students were keyed in and checked for completeness and outliers; no missing values. Further, in order to answer the main research question,

an independent-sample t-test was used to compare post-test results of the experimental and the control groups. Further, paired sample - t test was used to compare the results of the experimental group in reading comprehension in the pre-test and post-test.

Results:

This study aimed to investigate the impact of using CAFÉ framework on improving reading comprehension skills for Saudi EFL 6th graders. To achieve this goal, the researcher analyzed the results of the pre-test for both groups to assure the equivalency between them.

*Table (2)
Equivalence between both groups in the pretest.*

groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	upper
control group	30	7.90	3.90	0.55	58	0.58		
experimental group	30	8.40	3.07				-2.31581	1.31581

It is clear from the results presented in Table (2) that there were no statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the pretests, which implies the equivalence of both groups in the pretests ($t = 0.55, p > .05$). Thus, the results should be highly correlated with the use of the CAFÉ framework.

Results of research hypotheses1:

The first hypotheses states that: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between students’ reading comprehension skills in the experimental group and the traditional group in the posttest. To test the validity of this hypothesis, an independent sample - t test was used, the results of which are shown in Table 3.

*Table (3)
Independent T-test for differences between the experimental and traditional groups in the post-test*

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							lower	upper
control group	30	10.6	4.15	2.69	58	0.01		
Experimental group	30	13.07	2.82				-4.30161	-.63173

It is clear from the results presented in Table (3) that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the reading comprehension posttests between the mean scores of the experimental group ($M = 13.07$, $SD = 2.82$) and the control group ($M = 10.6$, $SD = 4.15$) and ($t = 2.69$, $p < .05$). The experimental group outperformed the control group. This result means that applying CAFÉ strategies in teaching EFL reading comprehension skills is positively effective.

Results of research hypotheses2:

The second hypotheses states that: There are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average scores of the experimental group in reading comprehension in the pre-test and post-test. To test the validity of this hypothesis, a paired sample - t test was used, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table (4)

paired sample - t test for the differences between pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Size of effect	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								lower	upper
Pre-test	30	8.40	3.07	13.08	29	0.01	2.39		
post-test	30	13.07	2.82					-5.39611	-3.93722

It is clear from the results presented in Table (4) that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the average scores of the experimental group in reading comprehension in the pre-test ($M = 8.40$, $SD = 3.07$) and post-test ($M = 13.07$, $SD = 2.82$) and ($t = 13.08$, $p < .05$). The differences were toward the post-test (The larger mean). This means that there is a statistically significant increase in reading comprehension for the experimental group in the posttest compared to the pre-test.

This result means that applying CAFÉ strategies have a positive effect on developing reading comprehension skills for EFL learners. To identify the significant differences, the effect size of the t-test was calculated using Cohen's. Cohen's equation for calculating the effect size for related samples where: $Effect\ size = t / \sqrt{n}$ or $Effect\ size = M1 - M2 / SD$. Thus, by applying Cohen's equation, the effect size value reached 2.39, which indicates a large effect size of CAFE strategy on developing EFL reading comprehension skills.

Discussion:

It is stated that the overall findings were positive in relation to the effects of strategies based on the CAFE framework on reading comprehension skills of EFL Saudi sixth graders. The control group did not improve as well as the experimental group, which underwent a CAFE-based strategy teaching. In the post-test, the experimental group had a mean score higher than the control group. Practically, this indicates that the CAFE intervention has significantly achieved good results in increasing students' reading comprehension. Further, when comparing the scores of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group to find out the effect size, it shows that a mean score of the post test was higher than the pretest. The differences were significant, and the effect size value was high.

These results coincide with the previous studies of strategy teaching in such-like environments. Similar to Alshammari (2017), who noted that post-test gains were significant after a schema-based reading program, the current experiment indicates that it is possible to promote the learning of EFL students by teaching them some cognitive reading strategies. On the same note, the findings also resonate with Alasmari (2021), in which a reciprocal teaching intervention demonstrated better results in terms of comprehension. In the two cases, Saudi learners were introduced to structured strategy training. The present study is a continuation of these findings because it shows that a more general, total literacy approach (CAFE) would also work with young EFL learners.

The results of the current study support the previous studies that assured the effectiveness of the CAFÉ strategies on improving reading comprehension (Duty, 2016; Cater, 2016). For example, Duty, (2016) proves that intervention as Daily 5/CAFE has a beneficial effect on the performance of struggling readers. In addition, Cater (2016) study proved that applying Daily 5 and CAFÉ in teaching English helped improve fifth grade reading skills. Our context is not the same (EFL as opposed to L1), but the parallel would be the idea that focused strategy coaching helps promote reading in any setting.

The improvement in the control group suggests some gain of knowledge by either ordinary instruction or taking practice tests, but the improvement in this category fell nearly half of what was attained by the experimental

group. This highlights the fact that frequent instruction could result in growth, but not as much as strategy-based tuition. These findings corroborate with Alqahtani (2015) to the verdict that the drill-based reading program is not sufficient and strategy drift is one of the 'remedies' that the Saudi students have for a reading disability.

One probable reason why the CAFE strategy has proved to be a success could be that it targets more than one aspect of reading. Explicative teaching of skills to be used in the process of comprehension, accuracy in decoding, fluency, and learning vocabulary makes students more versed in processing texts. This extensive measure probably led to metacognitive awareness learning and self-regulated learning. Also, goal-setting and personalized feedback are elements of the CAFE framework that could have raised the level of student motivation and engagement, both of which are associated with increased learning outcomes.

Conclusion:

This quasi-experimental research concludes that EFL female learners in KSA at sixth grade who were taught with reading strategies based on the CAFE concept demonstrated significantly more improvement in their reading comprehension skills as compared to their traditional method learning-instructed counterparts. It was shown that the scores of the experimental group on the post-test were higher than that of the control group by a statistically significant amount ($p < .01$) and with a meaningful effect size. The present findings show that systematic strategy teaching, in this case, the CAFE framework, has the potential to raise the level of reading in young EFL students. The CAFE strategy seems to be an effective implementation approach to pursuing the English classes at the Saudi school level, and the result contributes towards the growing body of evidence on strategy-based reading pedagogy.

Recommendations:

- 1- Future research needs to be pursued looking at the longer-term impact of the use of CAFÉ on reading comprehension skills. In addition, studies should be conducted on the effectiveness of CAFÉ across other settings and different school levels. Further, more studies should be conducted on the use of CAFÉ on reading comprehension skills for different students' gender.

- 2- There are practical implications of the study. Saudi Arabia EFL advocates are recommended to reconsider the adoption of the principles of the CAFE approach or other strategic methods in the process of teaching reading. Reproduction of these gains could be done through professional training on how to teach using such strategies. Moreover, this positive finding implies that curriculum designers should include units in the middle-school English course that is based on the CAFÉ, or add activities based on it.

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