

Developing Reading Skill among Iraqi ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE learners: A Sociocultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

The main thrust of the present study was to improve English as foreign language in the Iraqi academic context. To this end, 30 ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE learners were selected as the participants of the study. All participants took the pretest followed by 25 ninety-minute sessions in which the learners presented their lectures (totally 9 lectures) followed by the challenging questions that they had to answer and the correction feedback in terms of vocabulary, structure, collocation, etc. Moreover, every three lectures followed by taking a progressive test, the posttest and the delayed posttest. Having followed the repeated measure ANOVA, the researcher put the data into SPSS 22 and analyzed it in terms of both descriptive and inferential statistics. It was found that teaching Reading through the tenets of sociocultural theory is influential and equally effective for all participants irrespective to their level or age. The results of the study indicated that presenting lecture improves the learners' Reading development, consciousness-raring regarding learning processes and learning linguistic items, collaboration, autonomy and motivation. It was also pointed out that learning is not a straightforward transmission of knowledge provided by the teacher but a transformative and complex process for which learner's agency, engagement and their co-construction of knowledge are crucial.

Keywords: co-construction of knowledge, agency, transformative process, scaffolding, mediated instruction, guided participatory, adaptive expert

1. Introduction

Reading is a complex and challenging skill, which demands a dialectical interaction among a number of variables among which cognitive processes, thoughts, pronunciation, grammatical structures, lexical structures and affects are worth mentioning. Considering the

world as a global village demands Reading in an international language such as English a main priority for language learners even those who are learning English as a foreign language (ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE). In addition, Reading ability in English may be a manifestation of English proficiency represented in different sections of the English as foreign language textbooks. Yet, a number of methods have been suggested to deal with Reading with their emphasis on communication and strategies (Richards, 1990).

Having a complex nature, Reading in a foreign language such as English involves conjoined phrases and clauses, planned and unplanned speech, vague and generic vocabularies, fixed phrases, fillers or hesitation markers, slips and errors, etc. (Luoma, 2004). Meanwhile, sociocultural theory, as the recent theory in the field of teaching English including Reading skill, emphasizes that language-related experiences, background knowledge, as well as social and cultural issues brought by the ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE learners are pervasive. It means that teaching ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE Reading needs to be approached individually in terms of ZPD based on the background knowledge learners bring with themselves, and it what stressed by sociocultural theory.

In effect, sociocultural perspective views language learning as a dynamic social activity which is distributed across persons, tools and activities (Burns, & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, & Golombek, 2011; Richards, J., & Farrel, 2005). Such a perspective emphasizes the human agency and individual make-meaning formed in physical and social context (Burns, & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, & Golombek, 2011; Richards, J., & Farrel, 2005).

Likewise, language learning should be considered as a progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal meditational context by such a process the self and activity are transformed (Burns, & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, & Golombek, 2011; Richards, J., & Farrel, 2005). Sociocultural perspective also regards language as a psychological tool for making sense and a cultural tool for sharing experience (Burns, & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, & Golombek, 2011; Richards, J., & Farrel, 2005).

A sociocultural perspective, in effect, underscores the agency of the learners in the process of learning a foreign or second language. Here, Reading is not excepted. It demands following a shift from positivism prevalent in the method erato the constructivism mainly advocated by post-method era. Yet, encouraging English as foreign

language students to speak can be demanding and even daunting in an English as foreign language context such as Iran where English is mainly acquired and utilized in the formal classes. Nevertheless, Iraqi English as foreign language learners prefer to shift to their native language as soon as they face with a word they do not know its English equivalent. Moreover, it is observed that they avoid Reading in English in pair works or group works. The learners' interest and insistence on learning Reading have complicated the situation even more.

It is important to realize that teaching discrete skills and sub skills along with their knowledge seems not to be effective in enabling the English as foreign language learners to speak. Nevertheless, the English as foreign language learners are at the center of learning language in general and Reading skill in particular wherein we need to regard the learner's identity, their background knowledge, their prior learning experiences, as well as the cognitive processes they go through and even their affects. Such variables, namely, situational context, prior learning history, background knowledge, cognitive processes and affects are being emphasizes by the sociocultural theory (Beijaard et al, 2004)

Henceforth, we can assume Reading development as an on-going and progressive process mediated by both external and internal factors. Indeed, learner's features such as their identity, cognitive structures, culture, background knowledge and the social, physical and cultural situation wherein language learning is situated seem to be crucial. In fact, Reading improvement is not a straightforward activity. Instead, it demands a dialectical relationship between cognitive processes and performance changes influenced by a vast variety of variables among which situational context, prior learning history, background knowledge, cognitive processes are worth mentioning.

Meanwhile, one manifestation of sociocultural theory is the inquiry-based approach which refers to "one means of fostering meaningful professional development for teachers" which tries to discover, develop, or monitor "changes in classroom practice through interrogating one's own and others' practices and assumptions" (Atay, 2007, p.140). Inquiry-based approach is, in effect, "a practitioner-driven, self-directed, and often collaborative with the purpose of answering questions posited by teachers themselves, improving practice, and reshaping their understanding of their professional lives" (Tasker, Johnson & Davis, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Having considered the aforementioned arguments and given that few research studies, if any, have been conducted to investigate improving the English as foreign language Reading skill among Iraqi

english as foreign language learners, the researcher endeavored to do such a study. Particularly, the following questions were addressed:

1. Do presenting lectures and taking progressive tests improve the Reading skill of Iraqi ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE learners?
2. Do age and proficiency level influence the extent of the improvement of Reading skill?

Conducting such a study may equip the ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE learners with the strategies and processes to improve their Reading skills. Such a study may also highlight the role played by the teachers themselves in order to deploy their innovation and to engage in the learning processes of the learners. Moreover, the results of the study may indicate the discovery, knowledge construction, collaboration, and skill development's roles that may be performed by the ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE teachers. Local changes and collaboration seem to be fundamental for such a study where teaching Reading is followed as personalized, contextualized and collaborative processes.

2. Review of Literature

Learning any language including English as a foreign language traditionally demands learning the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, Reading seems to be more challenging due to its nature. In fact, Reading is more than expressing a particular sequence of words with their specific pronunciation and stress. Instead, it demands delivering an idea in a comprehensible way. In the simplest form, Reading involves the five variables of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

In this regard, Jeremy Harmer (2003) considers language features and mental and social processing as the crucial elements of any type of speaking. Language features highlight the connected speech (sound assimilation, elision or linkage), expressive devices (changing in stress, pitch, volume, or speed), lexis and grammar (form and function choices), and negotiation (clarification request, confirmation check, etc.). Mental/social processing, on the other hand, deals with the language processing (retrieval of words, structure, form or function from the mental grammar), interpersonal interaction (making comprehensible utterances) and information processing. Hence, Reading cannot be dealt with in the vacuum.

In other words, Reading should be regarded in terms of communication which involves both comprehensible speech and comprehension. Reading is emphasized for language development among students due to rehearsal, feedback and engagement (Harmer, 2003). Reading is investigated through different points of view by different researchers. Merrifield (2000), in particular, points out four

purposes for learning English in general and Reading in particular, namely, access, voice, action and bridge to the future (cited in Bailey, 2006). Access, in effect, enables the English as foreign language/English second language learners in order “to gain access to information and resources (and) can orient themselves in the world (cited in Bailey, 2006, p. 117). Voice, on the other hand, enables the learners to express their ideas and perspectives and take responsibility and express their agency (Bailey, 2006). Action, as it is stated by Bailey (2006, p. 118), enables the learners “to solve problems and make decisions without having to rely on others to mediate the world for them”. Bridge to the future, as the last purpose, equips the learners with the required strategies, abilities, and knowledge to be adaptive with the changes they face with in the external world (cited in Bailey, 2006).

Nunan (1999), on the other hand, considers five principles for teaching speaking, namely, the situational context wherein teaching or learning is situated, appropriate context for developing both fluency and accuracy, pair and group work activities for improving speaking, negotiation of meaning and finally implementing both transactional and interactional Reading tasks. Nunan (1999, p. 226) argues that “one needs to know how to articulate sounds in a comprehensible manner, adequate vocabulary and mastery of syntax”. It means that the learners, not only, need linguistic competence, but also “a range of sociolinguistic and conversational skills that enable the speakers to know how to say what to whom, when” (Nunan, 1999, p. 226). Nunan (1999) also reminds five concepts and issues to be considered in teaching speaking, i.e. the unique nature of speaking, the individuals’ background knowledge such as prior learning experiences or motivation, the assigned Reading task, objectives of teaching speaking, and the nature of the pedagogical speaking-focused tasks.

Having grounded in in educational psycholinguistics or in cognitive and social psychology, optimal conditions are being followed for ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE/ESL Reading mainly through empirical research (Burns, 1998). Such studies are being conducted through a variety of perspectives such as Canale and Swain’s (1980) communicative competence, Krashen’s (1985) comprehensive input, Ellis’ (1990) negotiated interaction, VanPatten and Cadierno’s (1993) input processing, Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann’s (1981) developmental sequences, and Faerch and Kasper’s (1983) communication strategies. The aforementioned perspectives, according to Burns (1998), are among the theoretical backgrounds that any teacher education program follows and they are claimed to be related to oral skills including speaking.

Two dominant appearances for teaching Reading are accuracy-based and fluency-based ones in which the accuracy-based approach underscore accuracy linguistic uses such as correct pronunciation, stress, appropriate grammatical and lexical choices, and the fluency-based one emphasizes on fluency on speech (Burns, 1998). Moreover, approaches to teach speaking may be divided as the direct or controlled and indirect or transferred approaches (Burns, 1998). The direct one is mainly forms-focused and is working through consciousness raising and has composed of three types of skill-getting (Rivers & Temperley, 1978), pedagogic (Nunan, 1989), pre-communicative (Littlewood, 1981), and part-skill practice (Littlewood, 1992). The indirect one, on the other hand, underscores the autonomy of the learners as well as on the communicative and authentic use of language (Burns, 1998). In other words, the indirect or transformative one considers the role of language as mediational and negotiating and is formed resorting to skill-using (Rivers and Temperley, 1978), real-life (Nunan, 1989), communicative (Littlewood, 1981), and whole-task (Littlewood, 1992). Hence, the two approaches, in effect, comprise two dimensions or extremes of the same entity. It seems that the second approach, namely fluency-focused, beroughly in line with the tenets of sociocultural theory for which autonomy of the learners, transformational and mediational roles played by teachers, other learners, or language are crucial.

Among different strategies and techniques for improving Reading especially in terms of its fluency, discussion and talking circles in which the learners can talk about their personal experiences, attitudes, ideas, etc. are worth mentioning (Ur, 1981; Ernst 1994).

Sociocultural theory which was introduced by Vygotsky seems to be influential for the purpose of language teaching including Reading in english as foreign language. Such as theory emphasizes mainly on the contextual factors and the dialectical relationship between the environment and mind in the process of language learning. This theory is based on some crucial notions, i.e. ZPD (which refers to the distance between the actual development wherein an individual is capable to do a task independently and the potential development wherein the individual is capable of doing a task with the cooperation of others), scaffolding (which refers to the support and collaboration provided for an individual), mediation (which refers to the psychological or symbolic tools and especially language by which the development occurs) (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Williams & Burden, 1997).

SCT, in effect, presents a social approach for which social processes and sociocultural setting are fundamental (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Williams & Burden,

1997). In fact, SCT underscores the dialectical relation between mind and environment wherein the psychological and genetic elements which are in-born in human being influence and are influenced by the social environment in which an individual lives and interacts. SCT was initially applied in the instructional environment for children and L1 which later was extended to second and foreign language instructional environment (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Meanwhile, SCT tries to consider different dimensions of the same entity in a theory in which different dimensions are in a dialectical relationship wherein the existence of one is in relation to others. It means that talking about a dimension for instance of mind without considering the other dimension, i.e. environment is completely nonsense. In terms of its strengths, SCT emphasizes on the social context and especially sociocultural factors whose impact cannot be ignored. Its main application for instructional setting and even L2 instruction also adds to its strengths. Considering different theories which consider one dimension highlights the strength of SCT due to its considering of different dimensions of the same entity through a dialectical relationship instead of a dualistic relation.

Having followed the perspectives of sociocultural theory, Bryant (2005, p. 108) underscores the significance role of Latino children engagement “in literature circle discussions using culturally appropriate, meaningful, and relevant children's literature in classrooms in the United States”. In conducting the study, the researcher tried to encourage the teachers “to be English as Foreign Language effective practitioners” and consider the role played by the children families by which the Latino children succeeded at schools (Bryant, 2005, p. 108). Bryant (2005) numerates some potential issues crucial for the success of language learning courses, namely, different paths to learning, community strengths, home and school partnerships, the importance of family, classroom conversations, etc. it means that teachers need to be more innovative and approach the teaching practicum through its appropriate lens based on the situations, context, setting, course objectives, etc.

Perry (2012), in a similar vein, argues that there are a number of theories which discuss various ways for using literacy in different situations and contexts. Having argued that different theories are not necessarily applicable for literacy purposes, the researcher synthesizes and critically presents an overview of three different perspectives to sociocultural theory. Perry (2012), in effect, sheds light on the three perspectives of literacy as social practice, multiliteracies, and critical literacy. Such a perspective English as Foreign Language effects literacy to be associated with social factors intertwined with ideological and

cultural models as well as power's effects. As the previous research, the study conducted by Perry (2012) deals with literacy skills through the theoretical foundation of sociocultural theory.

Lynch (2007) refers to the main role played by family in improving literacy skills among young children. Referring to Pianta (2004, p. 175), Lynch (2007) reminds that adult-children conversation comprises “the primary medium by which literacy is acquired”. He also argued that general conversation about past event seems to be crucial for improving children's literacy skills. The researcher concludes that “differences between the home and school environment may be responsible for the degree of risk associated with literacy development” (Lynch, 2007, p. 7).

Having conducted a classroom-based action research for improving conversation skills among English as foreign language Japanese speakers, Taland and Stout (2014, p. 2) developed a syllabus featured by “personalized topics, direct instruction of pragmatics, more L1 support, and frequent oral assessment”. Their findings indicated the efficacy of the interactive English syllabus in improving Reading skills of the learners. They also showed that such a syllabus transformed the demotivating teaching situation into an interesting one in which even the reluctant learners are proceeded in terms of their Reading proficiency. Furthermore, they concluded that an inquiry-based approach leads to English as Foreign Language ective teachers who are guided by multiple and alternative perspectives in teaching.

Unfortunately, there are few studies in which sociocultural theory was applied for classroom-based approaches. In fact, most studies are theoretical-based in which the tenets, principles and different perspectives of sociocultural theory are presented and discussed (e.g. Bryant, 2005; Perry, 2012). It is worth mentioning that the present study may be categorized under the inquiry-based approach to teacher education wherein cooperative development, action research and continuous professional development are apparently intertwined and involve two subthemes of theoretical and practical knowledge. Having followed a classroom-based ELT perspective, the researcher tried to make some changes in the behavior of the students, i.e. to improve the students' oral proficiency.

3. Methodology

Participants

Two groups of female students with two different proficiency levels and age were selected as the participants of the study in order to investigate the influence of proficiency level and age and also because the researcher had access to two intact classes. The following table sheds light on the selected participants.

Table 1 *Participants of the Study*

	Group 1	Group 2	Gender	Native language	Total
Number	16	14	Female	Arabic	30
Ages	12-16	9-11	Female	Arabic	10-16
Levels	Pre-intermediate	Elementary			

Instruments

Three instruments were utilized in the present study. The first instrument was *Oral Placement Test* (Question Bank 1) designed and developed by Cambridge University Press (2013) which composed of 36 questions based on six levels of Starter, Elementary, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate and Advanced. In fact, the *Oral Placement Test* was utilized as pre-test, post-test and delayed posttest. The second utilized instrument was *Beginner Tests: Language in Use* authored by Doff and Jones (2000) published by Cambridge University Press. *Beginner Tests: Language in Use*, in effect, was composed of five tests in which each test includes eight sections A-H. The following table illustrates the characteristics of each test in terms of each section.

Table 2 *Characteristics of the five tests in the Beginner Tests: Language in Use*

Sections	Number of questions	Characteristics
A	10	Multiple-choice questions
B	5	Matching questions
C	5	Multiple-choice questions (conversation)
D	6	Matching questions
E	7	Multiple-choice cloze questions
F	8	Reading-based multiple-choice questions
G	11	Cloze multiple-choice questions
H	3	Writing tasks (descriptive writing)
Total	55	

The third instrument was the preplanned tasks which were some topics on which the learners have to present a short lecture. For other tests, the rubric is presented by the publisher of the tests for which some of the questions have only one correct answer and some other such as writing tasks and Reading tasks are evaluated holistically by the teacher.

The justification for utilizing the first instrument is that it was appropriate and was capable for tabbing the learners capabilities in dealing with the primary conversational questions. The second test, on

the other hand, was utilized to raise the consciousness of the learners in dealing with linguistic structures and forms. In addition, the second test gave the teacher where the learners needed support and scaffolding based on which the teacher provided appropriate feedback. Finally, the third instrument gave the learner the background knowledge they needed including the appropriate vocabulary, structure, ideas, etc.

Procedures

In gathering the data, first all learners took the pretest followed by 25 ninety-minute sessions in which the learners presented their lectures (totally 9 lectures) followed by the challenging questions that they have to answer and the correction feedback in terms of vocabulary, structure, collocation, etc. Moreover, every three lectures followed by taking a progressive test—the second instrument was administered in order to raise the consciousness of the learners to improve their use of language. Finally, the learners took the posttest and the delayed posttest. Pretest, posttest and delayed posttest were, in fact, interview conducted and evaluated based on the *Elementary Reading Rubric* by the researcher. Totally, nine lectures, three written progressive tests and a pretest, a posttest and a delayed posttest were given to any learner. The average of each three lectures and each progressive test was calculated and put into SPSS. It means that each learner had six scores. Having followed the repeated measure ANOVA, the researcher put the data into SPSS 22 and analyzed it in terms of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The whole project was conducted within four months and the interval between the posttest and the delayed posttest was 3 weeks. The following table shows the different time points in conducting the present study.

Table 3: *Different time points in gathering the data*

Time	Tests	Dates
Time 1	Pretest	October, 8, 2017
Time 2	Progressive test 1 (4 th week)	November, 5, 2017
Time 3	Progressive test 2 (8 th week)	December, 17, 2017
Time 4	Progressive test 3 (12 th week)	January, 14, 2018
Time 5	Posttest (13 th week)	January, 21, 2018
Time 6	Delayed posttest (16 th week)	February, 10, 2018

4. Discussion of the Results

Descriptive Statistics

Having conducted the study, the researcher came up with six scores of pretest, progressive test 1, progressive test 2, progressive test 3, posttest and delayed posttest. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics in terms of proficiency level and age for each group.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the two groups in terms of the six Tests in six different points of time

Descriptive Statistics					
	level	age	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
pretest	=elementary	=9-11	15.4375	3.11916	16
		Total	15.4375	3.11916	16
	=lower intermediate	=12-16	16.7143	3.07417	14
		Total	16.7143	3.07417	14
	Total	=9-11	15.4375	3.11916	16
		=12-16	16.7143	3.07417	14
Total			16.0333	3.11264	30
test1	=elementary	=9-11	25.5625	8.02470	16
		Total	25.5625	8.02470	16
	=lower intermediate	=12-16	22.1429	6.56163	14
		Total	22.1429	6.56163	14
	Total	=9-11	25.5625	8.02470	16
		=12-16	22.1429	6.56163	14
Total			23.9667	7.45785	30
test2	=elementary	=9-11	30.1250	7.42855	16
		Total	30.1250	7.42855	16
	=lower intermediate	=12-16	34.8571	6.56163	14
		Total	34.8571	6.56163	14
	Total	=9-11	30.1250	7.42855	16
		=12-16	34.8571	6.56163	14
Total			32.3333	7.32183	30
test3	=elementary	=9-11	39.8125	9.96138	16
		Total	39.8125	9.96138	16
	=lower intermediate	=9-16	36.0000	11.17690	14
		Total	36.0000	11.17690	14
	Total	=10-11	39.8125	9.96138	16
		=9-16	36.0000	11.17690	14
Total			38.0333	10.53887	30
posttest	=elementary	=9-11	22.6250	3.59398	16
		Total	22.6250	3.59398	16

	=lower intermediate	=12-16	24.8571	3.95858	14
		Total	24.8571	3.95858	14
	Total	=10-11	22.6250	3.59398	16
		=12-16	24.8571	3.95858	14
		Total	23.6667	3.87150	30
Delayed posttest	=elementary	=9-11	24.1875	3.10309	16
		Total	24.1875	3.10309	16
	=lower intermediate	=12-16	26.0000	4.00000	14
		Total	26.0000	4.00000	14
	Total	=9-11	24.1875	3.10309	16
		=12-16	26.0000	4.00000	14
		Total	25.0333	3.60539	30

As the table shows, there were two groups of learners with elementary and lower intermediate levels whose age are apparently similar but were also differentiated in terms of two age groups of 9-11 and 12-16. The learners with elementary English proficiency (group 1) was found to have the mean score of 15.43 in the pre-test and the learners with pre-intermediate level (group 2) showed the mean score of 16.71 in the pretest. The results of the first progressive test which was the mean of three lectures and one written test showed the mean scores of 25.56 and 22.14 for group 1 and group 2, respectively. The second progressive test, on the other hand, showed the mean score of 30.12 for the group 1 and 34.85 for the group 2. The third progressive test resulted into the mean scores of 39.81 and 36 for the group 1 and group 2, respectively. The posttest and delayed posttest showed the mean scores of 22.62 and 24.18 for the group 1, respectively. Finally, the group 2 showed the mean score of 24.85 in the posttest and 26 in the delayed posttest.

Inferential Statistics

In order to verify the circular or spherical form of the variance-covariance matrix of the dependent variables, we resort to Mauchly's test provided by mixed ANOVA test. As table 5 shows the significance value is .000, which is less than 0.01. Hence, we need to adjust the degrees of freedom of the univariate tests in order to account for violation observed, i.e. epsilon for which there are three possible values, namely, the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon, the Huynh-Feldt epsilon, and the Huynh-Feldt epsilon. For the purpose of the study, we

resort to the Greenhouse-Geisserepsilon, which is 0.560, and quite above the normal correction of 0.05.

Table 5: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

Measure: Reading							
Within Subject s Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx . Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon ^b		
					Greenhouse -Geisser	Huynh -Feldt	Lower - bound
time	.044	81.625	14	.000	.560	.651	.200

Table 6, in effect, demonstrates univariate tests for the within-subjects variables and interaction terms. As the table shows there was a significant main effect of time $F(2.802, 78.457)=47.295, p < 0.001$. This tells us that the learners' performance on different times has changed significantly due to the given instruction through lecture presentation, feedback and consciousness raising achieved mainly through the progressive written tests. The table also shows that there is differences between at least five time points.

Table 6: Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: Reading							
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Sphericity Assumed
							time
	8698.688	2.802	3104.436	47.295	.000	.628	Huynh-Feldt
	8698.688	3.257	2671.068	47.295	.000	.628	Lower-bound
Error(time)	5149.845	140	36.785				Greenhouse-Geisser
	5149.845	78.457	65.639				Huynh-Feldt
	5149.845	91.186	56.476				Lower-bound
	5149.845	28.000	183.923				

In a farther step, test of Between-Subjects Effects was run in order to determine whether the two experimental groups had significant differences because of their level or age. Table 7, in effect, sheds light on Tests of Between-Subjects Effects. As the table shows, there was not any significant differences between the two groups in terms of their performance because of their ages or level.

Table 7: *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Measure: Reading						
Transformed Variable: Average						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	126097.729	1	126097.729	1863.771	.000	.985
level	.000	0	.	.	.	.000
age	.000	0	.	.	.	.000
level * age	.000	0	.	.	.	.000
Error	1894.405	28	67.657			

If we look at the pairwise comparison table, we observe that there was non-significant differences between the two groups either in terms of level or in terms of their age. Table 8, in effect, shows that Bonferroni correction was conducted in order to keep the Type I error at 5% overall

Table 8: *Pairwise Comparisons (Level & Age)*

Measure: Reading						
(I) level	(J) level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^c	99% Confidence Interval for Difference ^c	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
=elementary	=lower intermediate	-.470 ^{a,b}	1.229	.705	-3.866	2.926
=lower intermediate	=elementary	.470 ^{a,b}	1.229	.705	-2.926	3.866
(I) age	(J) age					
		-.470 ^{a,b}	1.229	.705	-3.866	2.926
=12-16	=9-11	.470 ^{a,b}	1.229	.705	-2.926	3.866

Based on estimated marginal means

- An estimate of the modified population marginal mean (I).
- An estimate of the modified population marginal mean (J).
- Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Table 9 sheds light on the differences observed during the six time points. As the table shows, there were significant differences from time 1 in which pretest was conducted and other times in which instruction had been giving to the participants. Such an issue is especially evident between the pretest and the posttest as well the delayed posttest. It is worth mentioning, that the Readingimprovement found to not be critically changed even after 3 weeks without any instruction when the delayed posttest was administered.

Table 9: Pairwise Comparisons (Time)

Measure: Reading						
(I) time	(J) time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	99% Confidence Interval for Differencce	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-7.777*,b	1.481	.000	-13.443	-2.110
	3	-16.415*,b	1.206	.000	-21.032	-11.798
	4	-21.830*,b	2.052	.000	-29.683	-13.978
	5	-7.665*,b	.836	.000	-10.864	-4.467
	6	-9.018*,b	.772	.000	-11.971	-6.065
	1	7.777*,b	1.481	.000	2.110	13.443
	3	-8.638*,b	1.790	.001	-15.491	-1.786
	4	-14.054*,b	2.171	.000	-22.361	-5.746
	5	.112b	1.361	1.000	-5.098	5.322
	6	-1.241b	1.407	1.000	-6.626	4.144
3	1	16.415*,b	1.206	.000	11.798	21.032
	2	8.638*,b	1.790	.001	1.786	15.491
	4	-5.415b	2.317	.402	-14.282	3.452
	5	8.750*,b	1.353	.000	3.573	13.927
	6	7.397*,b	1.293	.000	2.448	12.347
4	1	21.830*,b	2.052	.000	13.978	29.683
	2	14.054*,b	2.171	.000	5.746	22.361
	3	5.415b	2.317	.402	-3.452	14.282
	5	14.165*,b	1.821	.000	7.195	21.136
	6	12.812*,b	1.924	.000	5.449	20.176
5	1	7.665*,b	.836	.000	4.467	10.864
	2	-.112b	1.361	1.000	-5.322	5.098
	3	-8.750*,b	1.353	.000	-13.927	-3.573
	4	-14.165*,b	1.821	.000	-21.136	-7.195
	6	-1.353b	.397	.030	-2.871	.166
6	1	9.018*,b	.772	.000	6.065	11.971
	2	1.241b	1.407	1.000	-4.144	6.626
	3	-7.397*,b	1.293	.000	-12.347	-2.448
	4	-12.812*,b	1.924	.000	-20.176	-5.449
	5	1.353b	.397	.030	-.166	2.871

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the, 01 level.

b. Based on modified population marginal mean.

c. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Figure 1 shows the performances of the two groups during the six time points clearly. As the figure shows the two groups had a similar performance for different test. The first groups whose proficiency level was lower outperformed the group 2 in the last three time points. It is through that the differences between the groups were not significant but group 1 whose age and proficiency level were lower had a bit more improvement on the posttest and delayed posttest.

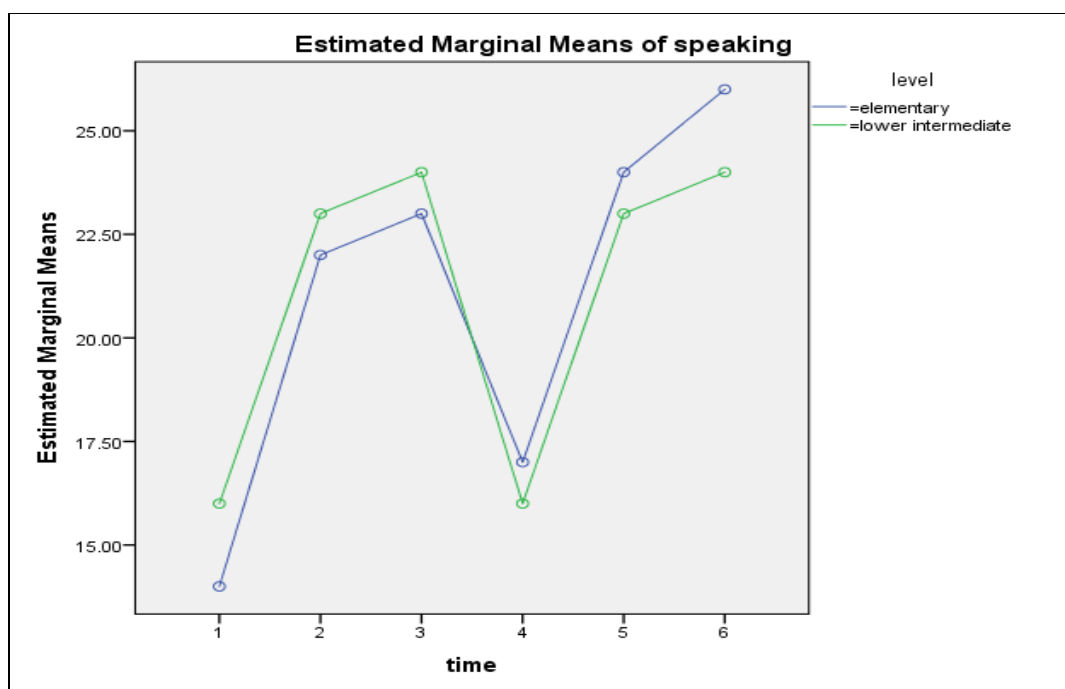


Figure 1: profile plot on the six time points: group 1 vs. group 2

5. Conclusion

Conducting the present study showed that presenting lecture, following the form-focused instruction by giving appropriate feedback in its required context and raising consciousness through the given tests improve oral skills of the Iraqi English as foreign language learners. Moreover, the results of the study indicate that age and level are not the critical variables. In other words, teaching Reading through the tenets of sociocultural theory was found to be influential and equally effective for all participants irrespective to their level or age. In effect, all participants experienced the following issues based on their needs, situation, and the ideas they provided:

- presenting lectures by all participants followed by the challenging questions raised by the teacher based on their lecture and the feedback provided by the teacher which was individualized and suited to the individual's needs,
- Taking progressive written test in which structure, vocabulary and even reading and writing were tested.

The interesting point is that such activities led to the enhancement of learners' motivation. They were excited that they were presenting lecture and they had some idea to transmit. It was also observed that they asked many questions regarding the appropriate vocabulary or pronunciation they were supposed to use in their presentation. In addition, when a learner was presenting her lecture, other students were listening carefully and even after her lecture, they raised some questions regarding the presented lecture. Hence, Reading as a manifestation of language can be considered as a psychological tool for making sense and a cultural tool for sharing experience (Burns, & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, & Golombek, 2011; Richards, J., & Farrel, 2005) by which the Iraqi English as foreign language learners could present their lecture and deal with challenges that face during their presentation.

It is evident that the teacher tried to facilitate the process of Reading skill for the learners. In fact, mediated interventions provided by the teacher enhanced the process of Reading development situated in the classroom context. Moreover, such an improvement happened through the guided participatory in which the learners were involved and here their agency was at the center. Such a result is in line with apprenticeship tool which according to Rogoff (1990) "occurs through guided participation in social activity with companions who support and stretch children's understanding of and skill in using the tools of the culture" (vii). Another important issue is related to the social interaction which is an essential component of any classroom which led to peer learning and mediated instructions when the classmates raised their questions about a resent lecture and the presented had to answer or when the presenter had to deal with the challenging questions raised by the teacher.

Having considered transforming appropriation, the teacher tried to be adaptive expert and went to the ZPD of the students through raising appropriate challenging questions and providing required corrective feedback. In this regard, John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) referred to knowledge co-construction in the classrooms which is "based on the concept that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development" (191). It should not be ignored that there is not any unique path of learning or the same learning rate as it is warned by Gass, Behney and Plonsky (2013). It means that learners transform the knowledge instructed by the teacher and internalize a transformed version of the instructed materials which is mainly influenced psychologically,

cognitive, and social tools they had inside and face in the social milieu such as classrooms.

The aforementioned issues are also in line with Williams and Burden's (2004) argument which referring to sociocultural theory points out that teaching and education are more than instruction theories "but with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person". Because the learners were supposed to present lecture on the assigned topics, they were looking for the linguistic items they needed in order to present their lecture and they were motivated because it was their lecture and they had some idea to share with their classmates. Hence, learning was meaningful to them and in its turn, their Reading improved.

Having attempted to instruct Reading through sociocultural theory, the researcher revealed that conscientious-raising, transformation, knowledge construction and engagement are crucial for Reading enhancement. The results of the study indicated that presenting lecture improves the learners' Reading development, consciousness-raising regarding learning processes, and learning linguistic items, collaboration, autonomy and motivation. It was also pointed out that learning is not a straightforward transmission of knowledge provided by the teacher but a transformative and complex process for which learner's agency, engagement and their co-construction of knowledge are crucial.

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