

The Impact of Divergent and Convergent Tasks on Iraqi EFL Students' Reading Comprehension Success

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Abstract

This research attempted to explore the effects of divergent and convergent tasks on the successful reading of EFL students at the preparatory stage. The null hypothesis was established that states, "There are no differences of statistical significance at the level of (0,05) among the mean of scores of the experimental group. Who studies according to divergent and convergent task technique and the mean scores of the control group who study according to the standard method". The experimental approach is used by designing two equivalent experimental groups of 32 students studying the technique proposed and an 8-week (2019-2020) control group of 32 students, three classes each week using the Google Classroom Platform and Telegram. The present study utilized the platform Google Classroom (GC) and Telegram as an educational platform to assist students during their course learning process. The writing skills test was administered after checking with the experts. The results show statistical differences at level (0,05) between the average of the experimental and control groups' reading skills and those of the experimental group. This difference is because the experimental group uses divergent and convergent tasks.

Keywords: convergent task, divergent task, EFL learners, reading comprehension

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INTRODUCTION

Many EFL students suffer from a lack of communication tools to understand a written text effectively. Studies do not connect or organize the writer's ideas because they lack high-quality thinking and text organization, affecting their reading understanding (Zahraa et al., 2019). As most English students are well-known, they are unqualified readers and frequently do not understand what they read.

The current study aimed to seek the effectiveness of education through diverging and convergent tasks regarding the understanding of reading by Iraqi EFL students; and attempted to examine whether divergent or convergent tasks could improve reading understanding for EFL students.

Convergent tasks are described as tasks that are genuinely justified, knowledge, abstract concepts, and active experiments. They enable cooperation in negotiating where It is required to have a single goal; it is, therefore, necessary to collaborate (Chilap et al., 2020). "Only one correct reply, make certain tasks Working with short responses that are not very cognitively required, no reference is necessary "(Astika, 2004, p30). Convergent tasks encourage apprentices to agree to a reasonable solution (Wegerif, Mercer, & Dawes, 1999 .)Students also have to interact and communicate interdependently in a way that will require further negotiations and interaction (Cropley, 2006). Unlike converging tasks.

Divergent tasks require new and significant knowledge and possibly different outcomes with more than one objective (Hommel, 2011). This kind of task allows independent work which can be performed differently by individuals according to their cognitive styles and which can lead to different results "(Swan, 2005, p. 382). Different tasks allow students to ask questions with more than one correct answer. No correct answer can be found in such a case, as the potential answers depend on one's viewpoint or experience (Nielsen, Bayard, Pickett, & Simonton, 2008). Duff (1986) said that pairs of learners are asked to solve a particular problem together in convergent tasks to agree on a justifiable solution to that problem.

This study investigates the Impact of using Divergent and Convergent Tasks on developing Iraqi EFL Students' Reading Comprehension Success. While tasks differ in status, a wide range of subjects and operations is being called upon by pairs of students, and different opinions on the matter are assigned. The position is being defended, and their partners are being refuted with as many arguments as possible.

By verifying the following hypothesis, the objective of this study will be achieved:

It is assumed that the mean values of the EC trained in divergent and convergent works are not statistically significantly distinguished at the level of meaning (0,05) by that of the CG, who will be taught using the method suggested in the Teachers' Guide.

This research is restricted to:

1. Iraqi EFL 5th grade Students in the preparatory school.
2. A sample in Najaf Governorate has been selected.
3. The academic year 2019-2020.
4. Diverge and converge tasks.
5. The material is taken from the 'English for Iraq' textbook.

The present study may be beneficial to:

1. EFL teachers have to consider students ' ability to learn best when actively participating and focusing on their input, and working in a safe social environment in the form and meaning of specific language structures.
2. As part of their preparation, EFL students will assist Iraqi teachers by providing them with knowledge and meaning, which will enable the latter to overcome the difficulties they face when learning and teaching a foreign language.
3. EFL Preparatory students, which will enable them to address difficulties.
4. Curricula designers and textbook writers can use this model to ensure that the materials and activities to develop students' understanding skills are flexible in advance.
5. Assist teachers in appreciating the particular methodologies used for teaching Iraqi EFL students (Kareem:2019).

METHOD

For the aim of the study, the following procedures have been used:

1. Choosing a sample of students from EFL 5. Preparatory school,
2. Dividing the selected student sample into two groups (experimental and control groups)
3. Constructing a pre-test and post-test for reading comprehension and ensuring its validity and reliability;
4. Teaching writing skills to the subjects of the experimental group by using Divergent and Convergent tasks.
5. Conducting a post-test on the subjects of both groups to determine whether or not the suggested technique has any effect on the subjects;
6. Using the Google Classroom platform to teach the two samples of the study,
7. Choosing a sample of students from EFL 5th. Preparatory school,
8. Dividing the selected student sample into two groups (experimental and control groups).

Experimental Design

According to Gacula et al. (2009:16), experimental design is a complete sequence of steps taken ahead of time to ensure that the appropriate data will be obtained in a way that permits an objective analysis leading to valid inferences for the stated problem. As a first step, this experiment is created using an "Experimental Control Group" design. It presents two options at random and asks the user to choose one of them. Pre- and post-tests are conducted on both groups (experimental and control), and then the independent variable is administered solely to the experimental group. The two groups' post-test scores on the dependent variable are compared to see a significant difference (Hammad,2018). An experimental group is a group taught through the technique of divergent and converging questions. The Control Group is taught by the traditional method. The design is called "pre-post test design."

Population and Sample:

In the academic year 2018-19, the student population is in the fifth year of the Preparatory School in the governorate of Baghdad. The study includes (64) Asmaa Preparatory School students. Prepared by The choice was made deliberately in cooperation with the Director of the Center for Education. The experimental class (A) consists of the experimental group (32) students and (D) the control group (32 students). Then the experiment is chosen from two groups of three, randomly, to implement the experiment.

Equivalency of the Two Groups

Although the two sample groups are randomly selected from a social, cultural, and economically homogeneous community, non-equivalence between the students is likely. Researchers are therefore working on control variables that can affect the two dependent variables such as age and earlier performance shown in the table below:

Table 1: Some variables of the equivalency of the two groups

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard deviation	Freedom degree	T-test		Significance
					Calculated	Tabular	
Age by month	Experimental 32	20.83	3.030	62	0.576	2	Insignificant
	Control 32	21.33	3.661				
1st-semester English achievement	Experimental 32	75.258	11.754	62	0.008	2	Insignificant
	Control 32	75.233	11.802				

The researchers have checked that the two groups are equivalent to significant variables (age and performance), and the processing of the experiment is expected to influence it. The effect of certain variables introduced is avoided (experimental depreciation, physical condition, maturity factor, the confidentiality of the analysis, date of experimentation, distribution of rations, etc.) (Hussam:2018 & Ali,2019).

Validity of the Tests

According to Shipley and McAfee, test validity means that a test genuinely tests and examines what it is meant to assess (2008:6). EFL experts have proposed several validity types, including face validity, content validity, and building validity, among others. A panel of experts was convened to review the validity and content of the tests, and they reached their conclusions. As a result of this evaluation, jury members provided their thoughts on the test items, including whether or not they were sufficiently tricky and whether or not they were directly related to the goal of the test: assessing reading comprehension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data for pre-test and post-test are statistically analyzed at the end of the experiment and to achieve the study's objective and to test its null hypothesis. It should be remembered that this study is carried out to assess if the two groups vary substantially in the pre-test and post-test.

As a result, the experimental group's mean score was 74.7188, while the control group's score was 40.3750. Result of the findings, Tablet-value (3) at 0,05 and below 60 degrees of freedom is greater than the calculated t-a value of 10,494. This study has an essential difference between the statistically significant community that teaches English in line with the recommended results and the community that uses Divergent and Convergent tasks.

Table 2. The difference of the two groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	32	40.3750	2.63659	.46609
Experimental	32	74.7188	10.75605	1.90142

CONCLUSION

Finally, all experimental and control groups participants participated in the last stage of data collection in a reading comprehension post-test. After statistical analysis, significant differences in EFL learner performance could be observed, and those with different and convergent tasks could better understand their reading than the other group.

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