

The Effect of Using Picture Cues Technique on Reading Comprehension Performance of Iraqi EFL Learners

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اثر تقنية الصور ذات الاشارات في تحسين مهاره الفهم القرائي

لدى الطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لغة اجنبية

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المخلص:

يعد الفهم القرائي احد المهارات المهمة الواجب تطويرها لما له من صلة وثيقة بتطوير القدرة اللغوية للمتعلمين في حياتهم المستقبلية، كما يمكن استخدام الفهم القرائي كوسيلة لتطوير المهارات في اللغة الاجنبية. نتيجة لما تشير اليه المعطيات التربوية، فان الكثير من الطلبة العراقيين لا يمتلكون المستويات الكافية من الفهم القرائي. هناك أيضا ضعف في القدرة على الفهم القرائي لدى متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية ويعود هذا الى ضعف الطرائق والاساليب التي يتبعونها في القراءة و كذلك الطرق المستخدمة من قبل التدريسين في تدريس هذه المهارة. ان تقنية الصور ذات الاشارات هي احدى الاساليب الحديثة التي تلعب دورا مهما في عملية التعلم والتعليم لأنها تمنح المتعلمين المتعة والمرح في الموقف التعليمي. تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى اثار استخدام تقنية الصور ذات الاشارات على تعزيز اداء الطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لغة اجنبية في مهارة الفهم القرائي. ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم فرض النظرية الصفرية التي تنص على انه ليس هناك فرق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات التلاميذ الذين يدرسون الفهم القرائي طبقا الى استخدام تقنية الصور ذات الاشارات ومتوسط درجات الذين يدرسون الفهم القرائي طبقا الى الطريقة المتبعة (الموصي بها بدليل المدرس) في تدريس الفهم القرائي. اختار الباحث شعبتان بطريقتين عشوائية من مدرسة متوسطة المرتضى للبنين وقد عينت المجموعتان الى ضابطة وتجريبية، المجموعة التجريبية تكونت من (٣٦) طالب والمجموعة الضابطة من (٣٦) طالب بعد ما تم استبعاد (٥) طلاب معيدين بنفس المرحلة من كلا المجموعتين.

وقد اوضحت النتائج ان اداء المجموعة التجريبية افضل من اداء المجموعة الضابطة وهذه النتيجة تكشف اثار استخدام تقنيه

الصور ذات الاشارات على تنميته مهارات الفهم القرائي.

ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension (henceforth RC) is considered one of the major goals in the language teaching programme because of its relevance to develop foreign language learners in their future life. English language learners in Iraq have an inadequate level of reading comprehension due to a number of factors such as the strategies and techniques they follow in their reading comprehension and the types of methods that the teachers use in teaching RC. Picture cues technique is one of the recent trends that plays an important role in teaching –learning process since it provides the learners with enjoyment and fun in the situation of language learning. The present study aims at investigating the effect of picture cues technique on enhancing EFL learners in reading comprehension. To fulfil the aim of the study, a null hypothesis is postulated stating that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the students of the experimental group who are taught reading

comprehension according to picture cues technique and that of the control group who are taught reading comprehension according to the prescribed method(as recommended in Teachers' guide) in RC. Two sections were randomly selected from AL-Murtatha intermediate school for boys. Students were assigned to the experimental and control groups, (36)students for experimental group and (36) students for control group after excluding five students from both groups, because they were repeaters in this grade.

The results indicated that the scores of experimental group outperformed the control group scores. Those results reflected the effect of using picture cues technique in enhancing the RC.

Key words: Picture Cues Technique, Reading Comprehension, Performance

1. Introduction

In Iraq, English is taught as a foreign language. It means that Iraqi people do not use English for daily communication. As a result, learning English is very difficult for the learners because there are so many things that are different from their native language .

Learning the four language skills ; namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing, enable people to interact successfully with native and non-native users of English in a variety of social and academic settings. In education, reading skill is of major importance for learners who are learning English as a second or a foreign language, since in most situations, it is the only readily available exposure to the target language which might not be speaking outside the classroom (kibui,2012:13).

Grellet (1981:8) states that the reading skill should not be separated from other skills. It means that everything that people talk or write is all about everything they have read. Reading relates to reading comprehension. When students are reading, they are thinking by comprehending all the words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in order to get the meaning of the text as a whole . In other words, reading is an interactive process in which a reader use his/her background knowledge to draw meaning out of a printed text in view of a reader's reason for reading.

Comprehension is the essence of reading. It is the thinking that readers do to interpret the meaning of the text and the reconstruction of the author's message(kibui,2012:15). Reading comprehension(henceforth RC) is a complex task which requires the orchestration of many different cognitive skills and abilities. In the simple view of reading, the variation in reading ability can be captured in two main components: word reading (the ability to read single words out of context) and language comprehension (the ability to understand words, sentences, and text) (Oakhill, et al.,2015:3).

The majority of Iraqi English language learners fail to use RC skills effectively ; they fail to relate their prior knowledge or recognize the author's ideas beyond the printed page. Moreover, they are described as word - by -word readers, they lack higher order thinking skills and knowledge of text organization which negatively affect their RC performance.In addition, they are unskilled readers (see Al-Saady,2000: 120 ;Al-Jaf, 2009:45; Munshid,2002:113 ; Al-Jubouri, 2003: 23; and Gatte,2004:32).

The dominance of conventional language instruction, a traditional style of language instruction prevails across schools in most EFL contexts throughout Iraq. Traditional EFL reading courses are typically taught in large classes by teacher-centered method, which mainly involves text explanation, vocabulary illustration, grammar instruction, and intensive drills on language forms. These traditional methods emphasize linguistic accuracy and rote learning. Teachers serve as the sole providers of language knowledge, and students are treated as passive recipients of teaching, rather than active learners, and exhibit limited autonomy. These methods have caused students to feel dull and disinterested in EFL classes .

To enhance RC performance and avoid the mentioned difficulties that Iraqi EFL students face in RC, new techniques for teaching RC should be experimented. The picture cue technique is suggested because picture is a teaching technique that supports both the affective and cognitive aspects of learning process .

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading is defined in several ways by researchers in the literature. According to Miller (2002:117-118), reading is a visual and cognitive process to extract meaning from writing by understanding the written text, processing information, and relating it to an existing experience.

Stated by Ward and Skailand (1983:9), reading involves two major components: (1) word recognition or the decoding of written symbols ; and (2) attachment of meaning to the written forms of language. The ability to read independently is not found exclusively on one or the other of these two components ; both are required.

Nuttall (1996:11) believes that the view of reading is fundamentally related to meaning particularly with the transfer of meaning from mind to mind i.e., the transfer of message from the writer to the reader.

The term "comprehension " can be defined as the ability to connect and interpret both oral and written language (Bell,1991:2).

According to Haboush (2010:22),reading is strongly connected with the term "comprehension" since the ultimate goal of all instructional readings, beyond academic achievement, is to create readers who are able to comprehend different sort of texts.

On the other hand, RC has multiple definition and explanations. Pardo (2004:272) states that RC is "a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relation to the text ". As concluded by Harvey and Goudvis (2008:1), true understanding happens when readers merge their thinking with the text, ask question, draw inferences, think about what is important, summarize and synthesize.

RC enables them to use their new understanding to ask further questions and guide new learning. This active, constructive, strategic thinking process entails far more than simply retelling.

3. Picture Cue Technique

Picture cue is one of the learning media to be used during the reading activity. It is focused on an action exercise where the students can involve and learn the content on the cues .

This kind of media is aimed at improving the students' intention to read in front of the classroom. It can be used in some different ways: individually, pair work, and group work. It can also be functioned as small pictures that have pictures or photos completed by words as the cues. It is supported by the experts' opinion about the cue of picture itself, it can be defined as the media that help the students when they deal with reading activities .

Visual aids are a situation where the learner can see what is named by word to be learned (Allen and Vallette.1999:33). Picture is drawing, photographs, posters, slides, cartoons, magazines advertisements, diagrams, graphs, and tables, maps, that can be valuable resource for teaching RC.(Raimes,1983:27),she further states that the teacher can find valuable resource in the pictures. Pictures provide a shared experience for the students in the class, a common base that leads to a variety of language activities.

In addition, she states that the picture can be the basis for not just one task but many, such as sequencing of sentences to the writing of original dialogues, letters, reports or essays. Furthermore, she states, because everybody likes to look at the picture, their use in the classroom provides a stimulating focus for students' attention. A picture brings the outside word into classroom in vividly concrete way .

Finally, a picture is a valuable resource as it provides a shared experience in the classroom, a need for common language forms to use in the classroom, a variety of tasks, and a focus of interest for students.

Wright (1989) says that pictures are not just an aspect of method but through their representation of places, objects, and people they are in essential part of the overall experiences, we must help our students to cope with .

White and Arndt (1997: 35) state that the picture is classified into visually representational materials. The picture has its own particular characteristic that will be appropriate to the kinds of use. Based on the use of the picture, it is divided into two kinds: single picture and picture sequences. First, using single picture is good as prompts for static or momentary descriptions, descriptions of spatial relationship, evoking and describing a mood or feeling, and conjecturing.

It might show either one main event or scene with a considerable amount of details, and perhaps a number of events taken place, as are commonly the case in a wall picture. In addition, single picture is usually named by situational picture. Situational pictures are those that show person doing something with object and show the relationship of the object with the person .

This type of the picture is appropriate for particular reading activities, for examples, to describe the picture, or to find the differences of two pictures like they are asked to find out some objects in a picture, which do not exist in another picture (Eldridge, 1987: 24).

Second, using picture sequences as Wright (1997:46) states that idea and vocabulary-generating device, pictures are enormously fruitful. A sequence of pictures, the content must be related to the interest, sophistication and linguistic level of the students. According to him, picture cues are pictures, which show some actions or events in chronological order. They tend to range from four to eight pictures. They usually tell some short of stories, but they may also be used to depict a process how to make something. In addition, (ibid 72-74) states that picture sequence can highlight certain language features and it can illustrate a story or a process .

4. The problem of the Study

Many researchers shed light on the role of picture in facilitating learning a foreign language and other fields. Pictures usually seek to explain the words in a basic vocabulary and words are normally grouped by topic or situation (Richard and Schmidt, 2010: 437).

Picture cues technique is very useful in assessing reading skills. Students are given a picture or photo and must describe what they see. Pictures can be as simple or as elaborate as you want or you can illustrate a story. The teacher should make sure to give students enough time to look at the picture before they start to read (Coombe, et al., 2007:119).

Understanding a text requires the reader to form a mental representation and structural analogy to the situation described Using picture cue technique is in harmony with the rapid word change. To the best researcher's knowledge, this topic has not been tackled in Iraq yet .

4.1 Aim of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the effect of picture cues technique on the RC performance of the Iraqi EFL learners.

4.2 The Hypothesis

To achieve the aim of this study, it is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the students of the experimental group who are taught reading comprehension according to picture cues technique and that of the control group who are taught reading comprehension according to the prescribed method in reading comprehension .

4.3 The Limits

The present study is limited to Iraqi EFL second grade learners at intermediate boys school in Babylon city during the academic year 2016-2017 / the second semester. The materials are taken from their textbook "English for Iraq, 2nd intermediate" .

4.4 The Procedures

In order to achieve the aim of the study and the verity of the hypothesis, the following procedures are adopted:

1. Selecting a representative sample from the population of the study and equalizing its subjects in several factors,
2. Dividing the selected sample of students into two groups (an experimental and control group),
3. Preparing a lesson plan to describe how to implement picture cue technique at classroom,

4. Choosing a suitable experimental design,
5. Constructing a pretest and posttest in reading comprehension and ensuring its validity and reliability,
6. Administering a pilot study,
7. Administering the pretest to the students to assess the level of the students in reading comprehension,
8. Teaching reading comprehension to the students of the experimental group by using picture cue technique and teaching reading comprehension to the students of control group by using traditional method,
9. Conducting the posttest to the students of both groups to find out whether the suggested technique has any effect on the subjects or not,
10. Setting an analytic scoring scheme to ensure the accuracy of scoring the test,
11. Analyzing the collected data to get results by using the suitable statistical tools, and finally,
12. Interpreting the obtained results to come up with conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

4.5 Significance of the study

- The need for such a study was highlighted during the course of the experiment with officials in government schools, headmasters and the supervisors. They all seemed to agree that there is a need to find out the perceptions of intermediate students regarding the nature of the problems that exist among them concerning learning and teaching English with particular reference to reading skills.
- The findings of this study will provide preliminary evidence on the 'underlying' rational concerning teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the issues which face them in teaching and learning English and reading in English in particular.
- The study offers evidence to suggest widening it to 'test' the results on a national level before reshaping a policy. It is hoped that officials will then be able to start working towards agreement on what would constitute acceptable and desirable programmes for developing learning and teaching English in government schools in future.
- Therefore, it is hoped that the study will provide information and insight useful to other researchers concerned with improving learning and teaching English, in general, and reading comprehension, in particular, for establishing school and family support.

4.6 Literature Review

Nurcholis (2007) aimed at improving the students' speaking performance by using pictures cue technique for the fourth semester students at English Department in Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, employed Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCAR). Both the researcher and his collaborator were involved together in planning, implementing, observing the action, and reflecting the data collected from the teaching and learning process and the students speaking product. For this purpose, the researcher took one class of the fourth semester students of English Department consisted of 18 students. In this case, the students were active in the teaching and learning process, well-motivated to speak English, and (83%) of the students are able to improve their confidence, fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary performance with an average grade about (3.41) .

Setyaningsih (2010) aimed at finding out whether "picture cue technique can improve the students' speaking ability at SMP Negeri 13 Malang. In this study, the researcher expected that at least (75%) of the students achieved (3) scores for fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The study was a collaborative classroom action research, which consisted of two cycles (78) students ; each cycle consisted of two meetings. The second cycle was done with some improvement on the activity. Each cycle consisted of three stages: pre-speaking, whilst-speaking, and post-speaking stage. The subject of the study was the students of VII C SMP Negeri 13 Malang". The result showed that the picture cue technique effectively improved the students' speaking ability, particularly in form of descriptive.

Moreover, most of them gave positive response towards the implementation of picture cue technique. They were excited in speaking activities. In addition, it was found that the students improved their fluency, accuracy, and confidence .

Kardiana (2011) investigated the use of pictures to improve the speaking ability of the first grade students in SMKN 1 Kediri in describing things and people. This study was divided into two cycles each cycle had got pre-test. In cycle one, (60.71%) of the students got poor score, (21.43%) of the students got very poor score, (40.62%) of the students got average score, and (3.12%) of the students got good score. In cycle two, (50%) of the students got average score, (28.12%) of the students got good score and (6.25%) of the students got very good score. And then, the researcher taught using pictures and the findings showed that using pictures in describing things and people were effective in improving the students' involvement in the teaching and learning process.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that using pictures in describing things and people can be used to improve both the students' speaking ability and students' involvement in the teaching and learning process .

Sam and Rajan (2012) conducted a study aimed at "using graphic organizers to improve reading comprehension skills for the middle school ESL students". This study also examined and proposed different forms of graphic organizers for achieving better understanding of texts. Differences in performance between the students who were exposed to the use of graphic organizers and the students who were not similarly exposed were analyzed in this article. The experimental and control groups of this research are middle school students in ESL classes. The whole participants were (70) divided into two groups. The result of the post-test suggested that the experimental group students have improved in all of the five types of reading questions compared to the controlled group students.

Puello and Galvis (2015) reported an action research on " the use of pictures series technique to develop EFL narrative writing among a group of 9 graders at Institution Educative Simon Araujo". "It involves Experimental(40) and Control groups(40).

During the implementation of the strategy the Experiment group was taught writing with picture series technique and the Process-based approach to determine whether the program of intervention achieved the intended results (cause and effect) concerning the research question to resolve the problem of investigation while the Control group was taught only with Process-based approach. The obtained results through descriptive statistics (Mean) indicated that there was a significant difference between the group which was taught through pictures series technique and process-based approach over the one which only received process-based instruction . The researchers concluded that the intervention with picture series technique improved the overall growth of writing skills, specific to the areas of transition or logical sequence and ideas exposure .

5. Methodology

5.1 Experimental Design

To achieve the aim of the present study, "the nonrandomized pre-test and post-test control group design" was used. This type is considered one of the most commonly adopted the "quasi-experimental design" in educational research because it is very hard to arrange a true experimental design, particularly in school classroom experimental research (Cohen, et al., 2011: 222).

The same concern, Best and Kahn (2006:183) and Gravetter and Forzano (2012:282) agree that this type of design is a strong one .

In the present study, the researcher utilized two intact classes and assigned them as the experimental group (henceforth EG) and control group (henceforth CG). Both groups were given the same pre-test, then, the result was statistically processed to confirm that they are equivalent on the dependent variable. The EG was treated according to the independent variable (i.e. picture cue) While CG was taught by the traditional method.

At the end of the experimental period, both groups were exposed to the post-test to find the effect of using the independent variable' Picture cue technique " on the student's performance in RC.

5.2 Population and Sample Selection

The choice of the population is a random one. It is based on the researcher's hypothesis and the aim of the study (Marczyk et al., 2005:18). The population of the present study consists of the second intermediate school for male students in the city of Babylon, specifically at AL-Madhatiya for the academic year (2016-2017) .

According to Kothari (2004:152), sampling is the process of obtaining information about an entire population by examining only a part of it. Al-Murtatha intermediate school for boys in Al-Madhatiya city which belongs to the Directorate General of Education/ Babylon, was selected. In this school, there were two section, A and B. Section A contained (39) students, and section B contained (38) students. The total number was (77) students. Randomly, section A was selected as the experimental group(hence forth EG)and section B as the control group(hence forth CG).

Three students from A and two from B were excluded from the experiment, because they were repeaters. The excluded subjects were kept in their classes during the period of the experiment.Thus, the final number of the sample subjects are (72) students (see Table 1) .

Table (1)The study sample

Group	Section	Number of subjects before exclusion	Number of subjects after exclusion
EG	A	39	36
CG	B	38	36
Total		77	72

5.3 Equivalence of the Sample of the Subjects

In order to ensure the best equivalence of the samples, the researcher tried his best to control some of the variables that may affect the results of the experiment.The participant of the two groups have been equated on the following variables: the subjects' age and the subjects' score in English in the pre-test.

- Subjects' Age (in Months).
- Subjects' Score in the Pre-test.
- Level of Parents' Education.
- Students' Achievement in English in the Mid–Year Examination.

5.4 The Experimental Group

The EG was taught through using picture cues technique in teaching reading comprehension as shown below:

a) Pre-Reading Activity

At the beginning, the teacher can spend a little time to introduce the topic that will be discussed before starting reading. The teacher helps the students to activate the schemata before getting into the passage so that the students have chances to predict what they learn and what they prepare for the lesson.

At this activity, the researcher presents the picture of the passage without any word and asks the students prediction questions about the topic, e.g. what they think about it and what they think will happen on the basis of the title, the picture in the passage in sequence way or the content of the passage, and as a result, they should answer the predication questions.

The purpose of such questions is to stimulate the students' interest in the topic to help them activate their prior knowledge about the passage or its vocabulary and prepare them for a new one.

b) While - Reading Activity

At this stage, the researcher presents the picture of the passage one by one with words while students watching carefully in order to pay attention to better understand the meaning or to link the wholly events of the passage. Then, the students are asked to read the passage silently in the class. The researcher asks the students to explain the main ideas and clarify the content of the passage, then he helps them to understand the unfamiliar words and expressions. While the students watch the picture cues again, the researcher asks the students a number of leading questions related to specific information in the passage that lead them to a point and conclusion. After that, the students answer

these questions while the researcher helps them to revise their predictions at the previous stage and sum up the new knowledge. He also gives them feedback about their learning by checking their answer. The purpose of this stage is to provide the students with a systematic training to develop RC skills by practicing them while examining the picture cues.

c) Post –Reading Activity

The researcher considered this stage as an important stage because it reflects the students' understanding.

To check the students' comprehension and to lead them to develop high levels of RC skills, the researcher encourage them to discuss the questions that are found in the activity book and additional related comprehension questions prepared by the researcher to give them the chance to talk about their opinions and thought about the theme of the passage, make questions to connect between what they have learnt and their own life, and summarize the main events or general ideas included in the passage, etc.

5.5 The Control Group

In the control group, the researcher himself has taught his students reading comprehension by following the conventional method. The researcher has followed the following steps. Firstly, he reads the passage orally, then he asks the students to read the passage silently, and he uses the explanation method in clarifying the difficult words, and finally the researcher asked the students to give a brief idea about the passage .

5.6 Final Administration of the Tests

5.6.1 The Pre-test

After ensuring the validity and the reliability of the pre-test, the researcher administered it to the already assigned sample of the study that consists of (72) students on the 19th February, 2017. After seating the students in two similar classrooms, and with the aid of the teacher of English in one school, the researcher explained the instructions to the students and told them that the time for conducting the test was limited to 45 minutes . The aim of the pre-test is to ensure better equivalence of the sample in RC skills .

5.6.2 The Post-test

After ascertaining the validity and the reliability of the post-test, it was administered on the 26th April, 2017. As in the pre-test the researcher seated the two groups (EG and CG)) in two similar classroom, and with the aid of the teacher of English in school, the researcher explained the instructions to the students and told that the time for conducting the test was limited to 45 minutes .

The aim of the post-test is to find out which of the two groups has performed better in RC skills and to see if there is an effect on (EG) enhancement.

5. 6.3 The Scoring Scheme

A scoring scheme is used as a tool to ensure the objectivity and reliability for the interpretation of the obtained results of the test. The researcher used the following scoring scheme to achieve this aim.

The pre-test consists of two passages where each one is followed by three questions. The first question (skimming) consists of three questions: one multiple choice item with one score, one completion item with one score pre correct item, three items of true /false items one score pre correct item and zero pre incorrect item the total scores of this question is (5). The second question(scanning) consists of nine multiple choice items one score pre correct item and zero score pre incorrect item, the total scores of this question is (9).

Finally, the third question (inference) consists of one multiple choice items one score pre correct item and zero score pre incorrect item the total score of this question is 1mark. The highest score for two passage of the test is (30) and the lowest is zero. The researcher himself scored the responses of the both groups.

The post-test includes also two passages, each passage includes three questions as the pre-test. The scoring scheme that the researcher adopted for them is as follows: The first question (skimming) consists of three questions: one multiple choice item with one score, one completion item with one score pre correct item, three items of true /false items one score pre correct item and zero pre incorrect item the total scores of this question is 5. The second question(scanning) consists of nine multiple choice items one score pre correct item and zero score pre incorrect item the total scores of this question is 9. Finally, the third question (inference) consists of one multiple choice item one score pre correct item and zero score pre incorrect item the total scores of this question is 1.The highest score for two passages of the test is 30 and the lowest is zero. The researcher himself scored the responses of the both groups.

5.6.4 Item Analysis

Morrow, et al. (2011:175) define items analysis as " the process of assessing and improving the quality of the test items based on statistical measures". According to Koul (2009:227), " item analysis procedures provide each item of the test of ability two indices: one of its difficulty and another of its power to discriminate between the good and the bad performers on the test".

After scoring the post –test papers, the researcher arranged the test scores in order, from the highest to the lowest, and then selected two groups including the top (27) scores and the lowest (8) scores. While constructing the test, the researcher must ensure the selection of items of suitable difficulty level. This means can it be achieved by measuring **item difficulty** (henceforth ID)

Erford (2013: 89)states that ID is "the degree an item is easy or difficult". According to Bloom et al. (1981:95), " the rang goes from 0.20 to 0.80, while McNamara (2000: 61) states that the accepted ID value ranges between 0.30 and 0.70.After applying the formula for the object items, it has been found that the difficulty level ranges between (0.77 - 0.36) percent which is considered a suitable difficulty level (see Table 3.9).

Discrimination power (henceforth DP) means " the degree at which the test discriminates between pupils and low achievement" (Gronlund and Linn, 1990:259). According to McDonald (2013:287), if the obtained DP is less than 0.30, the item is weak and need to be modified or changed. The range of DP of the posttest objective items is between (64) and (38) which is considered suitable.For more details see Table (3).

Concerning the item analysis of the pre-test, posttest objective questions (**multiple choice items, true /false items and completion item**), the ID formula and the DP formula for objective items have acceptable difficulty and discrimination power. For more details see tables (2 and 3).

Table (2)The Discrimination Power of Pre-Test for Objective Items

Item No.	Discrimination power	Item No.	Discrimination power
1	0.51	16	0.41
2	0.62	17	0.52
3	0.43	18	0.51
4	0.45	19	0.55
5	0.64	20	0.59
6	0.52	21	0.42
7	0.51	22	0.63
8	0.55	23	0.61
9	0.59	24	0.64
10	0.42	25	0.38
11	0.63	26	0.39
12	0.61	27	0.51
13	0.64	28	0.62
14	0.38	29	0.43
15	0.39	30	0.45

Table (3)The Item Difficulty of The Pre-Test for Objective Test

Item No.	Difficulty Level	Item No.	Difficulty Level
1	0.52	16	0.55
2	0.38	17	0.44
3	0.33	18	0.41
4	0.38	19	0.47
5	0.38	20	0.38
6	0.44	21	0.44
7	0.47	22	0.44
8	0.50	23	0.47
9	0.38	24	0.50
10	0.47	25	0.61
11	0.47	26	0.72
12	0.44	27	0.58
13	0.58	28	0.54
14	0.61	29	0.58
15	0.36	30	0.44

6. Results and Discussion

In order to attain the aim of this study, the data of the pre-test and post-test are statistically analyzed. It should be noted that this analysis is undertaken to decide whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test and post-test.

6.1 Comparison between the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post- test Scores

According to the results that obtained from the post-test on both groups show that the mean scores of EG (18.72) and that of the CG (10.88) are successful, which means that the scores of the EG are better than that of the CG in performance of RC skill.

By using the t-test formula for two independent samples is imperfect to see whether the difference between the two groups is significant or not. It is found that the computed t-value is (8.79), which is higher than the tabulated t-value (2.000) , at the 0,05 level of significance and (70) degrees of freedom(see table 4). This indicates that the null hypothesis of the study which states that " there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students who are taught RC using picture cues technique and those who are taught RC using the technique recommended by Teacher's Guide " is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table (4)The t-test Statistics for the Students' Score in the Post-Test

Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Tabulated	
EG	36	18.72	4.49	70	8.79	2.000	0.05
CG	36	10.88	2.88				

6.2 The Comparison between the Pre-test and the Post-test Scores

6.2.A Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the CG

With the regard to the CG, the mean scores of the pre-test is (10.88), while that of the post-test is (13.22). The one sample T-test formula is used to indicate that if there is any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores or not. The results show that the computed t-value is (2.001) whereas the tabulated t- value is (2.000). This means that there is a slight difference between them, i.e. the post-test is a little bit higher than the pre-test (see table 5).

Table(5)The t-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in Pre-test and Post-test for CG

CG	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Tabulated	
Pre –test	36	10.88	2.88	70	2.001	2.000	0.05
Post-test	36	12.52	3.96				

6.2.2 Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the EG

Concerning the EG, the mean scores of the pre-test is (12.16), while that of the post-test is (18.72). The one sample T-test formula is exploited again to determine whether or not that there is any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The results show that the computed t-value is (6.838) whereas the tabulated t- value is (2.000). This denoted that the pre-test and post-test are significantly different at(0.05) level of significant and under 70 degrees of freedom. Namely, the post-test of the EG is much better than the pre-test (see table 6).

Table (6)The t-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in Pre-test and Post-test for EG

EG	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Computed	Tabulated	
Pre –test	36	12.16	3. 58	70	6.838	2.000	0.05
Post-test	36	18.72	4.49				

In the light of the statistical manipulation of the data of the present study, the results show that the technique suggested and adopted by the researcher in his experiment has proved to be effective in improving the student's RC skills. The result agrees with those results of previous studies surveyed in Chapter Two with reference to the effectiveness of using picture cues technique in the process of teaching and learning the different aspects and skills of English as a foreign language.

The results of the present study due to the use of picture cues technique are as follows:

1. The researcher used new modern technology in presenting the material(LCD Projector, computer, picture cues, etc.). It is created a new environment for teaching and changed the traditional way from a boring to an interesting one. Thus, students acquired information easily through meaningful situations that pleased and satisfied them.
2. The researcher followed logical steps in the presenting lessons, starting with warming up to activate the students and to make a brainstorming of the previous information, the presentation of the passage's pictures by picture cues, and ending with practice of it in a real situation which reflects the learner's real life. These steps made the lesson clear, interesting, enjoyable, fun, and useful for the learners, so that they do not lose attention and concentration.In addition,picture cues affirmed events, actions and concepts in the students' mind; therefore,they remembered them easily because what is seen can never be forgotten.
3. Picture cues technique plays an important role as a means of developing RC skills, especially in supporting the matter of getting the gist of any reading material. Students can achieve understanding through constructing a full mental image of their reading. Picture cues connected events and concepts that help the students understand better and later recall information, so the students can get the gist.

7. Conclusions

In the light of the obtained result, some conclusions have been reached:

- 1.The picture cues technique has proved to be an effective technique for teaching RC in the Iraqi intermediate schools.
2. The picture cues technique plays a significant role in increasing enthusiasm in learning English because the students learn English in an enjoyable way.
3. The picture cues technique plays an important role in stimulating the basic senses (listening, speaking) and this makes learning more effective and creative. In addition, this can increase the students' knowledge of vocabulary effectively.

- 4.It helps the students to learn by real situations which reflect the learner's real life and contribute to develop their communication skills.
- 5.The use of picture cues technique can save more time and effort to practice and develop RC skills compared with prescribed technique.
6. The use of modern technology (picture cues) as a type of ML encourages the students to use other sources of technology to develop their skills in the English language.

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