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Prediction as a Reading Strategy and its Use by Third

Year Students of English, University of Constantine

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Dedication

To all my family; especially to my dear father,

To all my friends

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Abstract

The present study investigates the use of prediction as a reading strategy by Third Year Students of English as a Foreign Language in the Department of Languages at the University of Constantine. The hypothesis for this study is that these students make use of prediction to cope with English reading selections, and when they do so; such use is affected by their linguistic knowledge of English as well as their knowledge of the topic they are reading. In order to verify this hypothesis, a questionnaire and a practical exercise were administered to the students in order to collect data about their awareness of and ability in making predictions while reading. The data obtained from both the questionnaire and the practical exercise indicate that these students of English do successfully use prediction as a reading strategy. Furthermore, the data suggest that there are some factors that positively or negatively affect the students' use of prediction in reading: their linguistic knowledge of English and their background knowledge of the topic they are reading, in addition to their motivation and purpose of reading.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

In the field of reading, a number of cognitive scientists have focused their attention on how readers construct meaning as they read. Specifically, they have studied the mental strategies/activities that good readers engage in to achieve comprehension. The present study is a result of a keen interest in the skill of reading too, its strategies, and also the factors that enable students to understand texts in the foreign language. Specifically, it investigates the use of the strategy of prediction in reading.

Prediction refers to the students' ability to foresee what is to be read ahead. It is a mental activity and an important reading strategy which involves the prior making of hypotheses about what comes next in the reading material on the basis of what is already known.

The use of prediction in reading in a foreign language is affected by many factors which facilitate or complicate the reading task. It has been suggested that there are two main factors which determine the expectations the reader makes while reading in the foreign language: his knowledge of the foreign language and his general knowledge of the world.

1. Aim of the Study

Usually, English language students are not conscious of the fact that they are constantly predicting their way while reading a particular text; however, the skill of prediction is so useful that we may wish to make them aware of it so that they can use it to handle difficult texts. So, the main purpose of this study is to present one possible way of helping students develop their awareness and use of prediction.

2. Statement of the Problem

The major difficulty encountered by foreign language students of English is that most of them just read word by word or sentence by sentence and do not use appropriate strategies to access comprehension. Word by word reading could be harmful because the meaning of the word could be forgotten before the meaning of the next word is built, in addition to being extremely harmful if the students suffer especially from linguistic problems.

For the purpose of this study, the following questions can be asked: Do Third Year Students of English as a Foreign Language at the University of Constantine use prediction as a reading strategy to cope with information in English reading selections? And if they do so, is such use affected by their linguistic knowledge of English as well as their background knowledge of the topic they are reading?

3. Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses can be suggested:

Third Year Students of English as a Foreign Language make use of prediction to cope with English reading selections, especially if their teacher builds in them awareness of its usefulness. Another related hypothesis is that, students' use of prediction may be affected by their knowledge of English as well as their knowledge of the topic they are reading.

4. Methodology

The population of this study consists of twenty five (N=25) third year students taken from general population of seven hundred sixty five (N=765) English BA Students of the Department of Languages at the University of Constantine. We will administer them a questionnaire which intends to collect data about their self statement about their practice of reading in general and of prediction in particular, in addition to an exercise which will be conducted with these same students to elicit further data on their use of prediction.

5. Structure of the Study

The study is divided into two parts, a theoretical part and a practical part:

The theoretical part is divided into two chapters. The first chapter provides a description of reading; a historical background of how scholars have viewed reading with the most influential models of reading (the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model); the theory of schema and the role schema (background knowledge) plays in the process of reading. The second chapter provides a description of prediction in general terms and then as it is used by specialists in the field of reading; the main sub-strategies that are involved in prediction; guessing the meaning of unknown words and some strategies for doing so; and the importance of prediction during the reading process.

The practical part describes the study conducted on the selected group of Third Year English Students. The focus of this part is ascertaining the use of prediction strategy by these students and identifying the different factors which affect this use via analyzing students' answers to the questionnaire and the practical exercise.

Chapter One: Reading, an Overview

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Introduction

Reading is a familiar skill. We often hear people say, "she is still learning to read!", or "I read the book you gave me and I found it hard to understand", or say," I read her mind and know well what she is thinking about", "what does the thermometer read today?" and many instances of reading situations, formal or informal, that are a lot and take part in our lives. For the purpose of this study, however, we are going to restrict ourselves to the kind of reading represented by the two first instances of reading, that is; "the skill of getting meaning out from a written text".

Generally, the reading skill is acquired in infancy in the natural environment or through formal instruction (in the case of reading in the native language), and as with the other skills of speaking and writing and without any difficulty, children are gradually trained (consciously or unconsciously) how to practice it. However, it is when they (children or adults) are required to read in a foreign language, such as English, that they begin to realize the complexity of reading. It is often precisely in that area of learning that they have the greatest difficulties; may be because of inefficiency in the foreign language (especially the vocabulary) that results mainly from lack of exposure, unwillingness to reading in the foreign language, any deficiency in the foreign language reading materials, and so forth.

Yet, it is widely recognized that reading is one of the most important skills for students of a foreign language to master; since it enables them to expand their knowledge of the language, the cultures, and the world; besides, it makes them enjoy literature through

reading different books; furthermore, it is a necessity to do many things in their daily lives, such as reading newspapers, magazines, catalogues, instruction manuals, maps and so on.

The first section of this first chapter will introduce the term reading by stating different definitions by different scholars. As briefly stated, reading is about understanding a written text. It is a complex activity that consists of two related processes word recognition and comprehension and involves both perception and thought.

The second section deals with the different views or models of reading. There are basically two points of view from which reading has been approached: the bottom-up and top-down models. Supporters of the former approach claim that reading is mainly a decoding process, in which the reader associates graphic representation (letters, words) with their phonic equivalents (their sounds). Those who support the latter approach maintain that the successful reader starts first by making predictions about what he is about to read by using various types of knowledge (syntactic, semantic and background knowledge), and then makes use of the graphic display to confirm his expectations. The polarization of thought with these two opposed approaches simply has not manifested itself in reading. Some researchers have oscillated between the two extremes represented by bottom-up and top-down models and have attempted to combine aspects of both perspectives. So, there has been a third more recent approach to reading: that reading is an interactive process.

It has been suggested that mature readers acquire a lot of knowledge about the language in which they usually read as well as knowledge about the world, and store them in the long-term memory. So, the third section of this chapter will shed some light upon the role theory of schema plays in the reading process: what is meant by the term "schema"; the kinds

of schema readers need; and the influential role schema plays in the process of reading.

1. 1. Definition of Reading

Many attempts have been to define reading; yet none of the proposed definitions appears to be fully satisfactory to include all aspects of the actual reading process. This is, perhaps, due to its complex nature (we mean reading) and the variety of views about it. In simpler term, reading is defined as the "activity in which the reader works at constructing meaning from a written text". In the paragraphs below, some more elaborate definitions attributed to reading will be presented.

Harmer (1983, p.153) defines reading as being "an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. The eyes receive messages and the brain has to work out the significance of these messages". Harmer conceives reading as basically a process of perception by the eyes. When the reader's eyes are looking at a word from a text, his eyes first scan this word up to the brain, i.e., send its image, the brain then tries to recognize it either visually – by trying to find its already stored image, otherwise a similar one, in the brain that most conforms with the scanned word; or auditory – by trying to look for its fitting sound.

The auditory recognition of words has been much emphasized by Carroll (1964, p. 62) in her definition of reading. She sets reading as "the activity of reconstructing reasonable spoken message from a printed text and making responses to the reconstructed message that would be made to the spoken message".

The limitations of the above two definitions of reading is that both of them take word recognition as a primary end in itself and tend to depreciate comprehension – the main object

of reading. Clearly, reading is more than just identifying sounds carried by letters; it goes beyond that to getting a message from a written text. This is substantially the view of Goodman (1976, p. 554) when he says that reading is "a psycholinguistic guessing game in which the reader reconstructs as best as he can a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display", and Smith (1994, p. 2) when he says that "reading is a matter of making sense of written language rather than decoding print to sound".

Goodman (1971, p. 135) supports the notion that "reading can be understood as an active, purposeful and creative mental process where the reader engages in the construction of meaning from a text" Goodman's reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, and active mental process is partially based on the relevant knowledge the reader brings to the task of reading to make sense of the written text.

A similar view was given by Grellet (1981, p.7) who describes reading as "a constant process of guessing and what one brings to the text is often more important than what he finds in it". Here again, reading is considered as an activity of guessing where the reader brings his prior knowledge to the written text.

The importance of guessing, according to Goodman, Smith, and Grellet, is promoted at the expense of word recognition. However, sometimes, any slow or inaccurate word recognition is proposed to effect comprehension.

1. 2. Models of Reading

The place in which the reading process takes place, that is the brain, is inaccessible and involves a sort of complexity. That is, there is no direct or obvious way in which one can

look into the brain and account for what actually happens during the process of reading, whether at the level of perception of the text by the eyes or its analysis by the brain. In effect, all what researchers are capable of doing is to try to present 'an abstract model' (or models) of reading process which is/are essentially a "systematic set of guesses or predictions about [this] hidden process" (Davis, 1995, p.57).

As such, attempting hopefully at establishing a scientific theory for reading, the concept of reading has covered much ground and progressed considerably. At the same time, it has become notably diversified benefiting from notions and views derived from various areas (especially psychology). The following section deals with: the bottom-up model, the top-down model, in addition to the interactive model. It indicates their principals, aims, and areas of limitations.

1. 2.1. Bottom-up Model

According to a bottom-up view of reading, a view associated more closely with the name of Gough (1972), the reader while trying to elicit meaning from the text, is seen to sequentially proceeds from smaller linguistic units to larger linguistic units (Davis, 1995) That is, the sequence of processing is from letters, to sounds, to words, to sentences, and finally to meaning. Gough is by no means alone in seeing reading in this sense of linear processing; Laberge and Samuels (1974), as cited in Samuels et al. (1984), introduced the theory of automatic information processing in which the reader begins with smaller components of text (letters) and then proceeds to higher components of text (clusters) and finally get to words. They were strongly influenced by the belief that fluency (or automaticity) in reading could be developed with a lot of practice.

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The Gough's model (1972) has manifested many shortcomings: it minimizes the reader's role; he is merely a passive decoder who merely identifies printed symbols (letters and words) and converts them into sounds. That is, it is strongly associated with the 'phonic approach', which focuses attention on letter-to-sound correspondences, at the expense of other sources of information (especially semantic one). It does not account for the fact that there are more than 166 grapho-phonic rules for regular spelling-to-sound correspondences of English words (Davis, 1995, p.60), and so the difficulty the learner's encounter in memorizing them. It lacks feedback among its different stages of processing, i.e., no higher processing stage has influence on a lower processing stage (Stanovich, 1980). It exaggerates the importance of word recognition and automaticity, but ignores the concept of meaning or understanding of the written text.

The proper conclusion of the above criticism against bottom-up model perhaps should be that bottom-up model processes are basic for reading and their importance should not be underestimated. That is, if the reader is unable to correctly recognize the letters of the language in which he reads, he is definitely unable to start to read a word. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this traditional model of reading had decidedly lost much of its force when realized that other relevant factors other than word recognition, such as knowledge and experience of the reader, were ultimately ignored though are also part of the reading process. Consequently, a more workable model that defines reading in terms of such factors was introduced.

1. 2.2. Top-down Model

As an attempt to make up for the flows of the bottom-up model, Goodman and Smith (1971) advocated the psycholinguistic model of reading. Goodman (1970) views reading as "a

psycholinguistic guessing game". He has suggested that the reader is not merely a passive decoder of the text, as the bottom-up model suggests; but also said to possess some capacity to indulge him in a mental activity. According to him, the reader arrives at meaning essentially by going through a set of cognitive (often sequential) processes which make up the overall cognitive process of reading. Initially, the reader forms predictions (or guesses) about what is in the text. Then, after predictions for seeking meaning of the text are formed, the reader tests their correctness allowing gathering evidence confirming or rejecting them (we mean predictions). This latter can be done by making use of whatever relevant information supplied in the text, i.e., using 'text cues'. Finally, the reader to coordinate text cues to meaning has available to him a variety of other sources of information –semantic and syntactic information. That is, in top-down model the reader actively engage in reading the text when he combines the information he discovers there, in the text, with his linguistic knowledge (semantic and syntactic).In addition to the reader's reliance on the text and his linguistic knowledge, according to Anderson et al. (1984, p.48), "every act of comprehension involves the knowledge of the world as well".

It is clear that, as opposed to the bottom-up model processing which its sequence or movement of processing is from smaller units to larger units, top-down model processing proceeds progressively from prediction to smaller units (Davis, 1995). Also, it is clear that prediction is given much importance and seen as basic activity or process in reading as well as pre-existing knowledge of the reader which would enable him to predict the meaning of the text.

The basic weakness of the top-down model is that it focuses too much on the reader's knowledge as the driving force of the model, with so little attention to visual decoding (Davis,

1955). Sometimes, the time necessary for making predictions about the text is great while its visual information (words) might be processed very rapidly. Moreover, the reader may have little and insufficient background knowledge to generate predictions about it.

Actually, both of bottom-up and top-down models have failed to fully cover the process of reading requisites. That is, each model has succeeded only in part which the other model has failed in. Accordingly, some researchers like Rumelhart (1977), have found it necessary to bring the two models together to form a more sophisticated model than what has already emerged.

1. 2.3. Interactive Model

On the basis of the bottom-up and the top-down models a new model of reading, the interactive model, has been introduced. The interactive model was introduced in attempt to present a model that would make clear how readers use information from various sources at the same time during the reading process (Rumelhart, 1977). The reader either makes use of his pre-existing linguistic and/or world knowledge to make predictions or guesses about the meaning of the text and then immediately resorts to the text to confirm these predictions, or the text plays the role of a stimuli, i.e., it provides the necessary cues that help the reader recall relevant knowledge and make predictions till the most likely meaning is retrieved (Rumelhart ,1988, as cited in Carrel & Eisterhold ,1988) .In both cases, the knowledge the reader possesses plays an important role.

Stanovich (1980, p. 15) states that "interactive model of reading appear to provide a more accurate conceptualization of reading performance than do strictly top-down and bottom-up models. They provide a better account of the existing data on the use of

orthographic structure and sentence context by poor and good readers". That is, the richer stand of the interactive movement has neither advocated the abandonment of attention to word recognition and lower level text processing skills – as advocates of the top-down have, nor has put aside meaning and higher level text processing skills – as advocates of bottom-up have; but rather, in addition to word recognition, the reader needs other kinds of abilities and knowledge if they are to achieve the essence of the reading process.

1.3. The Schema Theory of Reading

1.3.1. Schema

One theory which has had a great influence on how knowledge is used to guide interpretation of texts is schema theory. The basic idea, originally suggested by Bartlett (1932), as cited in Anderson et al. (1984, p.257), is that human memory comprises mental representations known as schemas. That is, a schema is general term for knowledge structure that exists in memory. Everyone is supposed to have many schemas available in his brain, each of which represents a familiar pattern (or situation) from previous experience to be employed in interpreting new experience. Examples are schemas for going to a restaurant, schemas for going to the doctor, schemas for riding a bicycle, and so forth.

1.3.2. Types of Schema

Generally there are three types of schema: linguistic, formal and content schema.

- **Linguistic schema**: is the reader's knowledge of the language system which is made up of phonology, semantics, grammar, and discourse. The reader builds up this knowledge essentially through education and repeated exposure to how

the language is being used.

- **Formal Schema:** is the reader's knowledge of 'the rhetorical organizational structure of different types of texts' (Carrell, 1983). That is, the knowledge the reader possesses of the way in which the text is arranged in accordance with its general theme and purpose.

- **Content schema:** refers to the reader's knowledge of the content area of the text**.** It includes familiarity with the topic, previous experience with the area of the text, in addition to the cultural values, assumptions, and beliefs needed for its interpretation.

Rumelhart (1980) demonstrates that there are four main functions of schemata in reading. (1) Schemata allow the perception of the individual parts in the text. (2)They also play a role in the comprehension of the text in case they fittingly reflect the information presented in the text. (3)The other function of schema is that they increase the reader's ability to bring back to his mind what he has already read in the text. (4) Schemata play a role in learning as they help readers develop new schemata.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that reading is a complex cognitive process that includes two related cognitive processes word recognition and comprehension. That is, the reader first perceives the written symbols on the page as sounds and then makes sense of them actively using his background knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, his experience with the text, and other appropriate strategies as we are going to see in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Prediction in Reading

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Introduction

Good readers are most often strategic readers, in the sense that they make use of a variety of reading strategies. A reading strategy refers to a plan or a way for students to solve problems encountered in constructing the meaning of a text.

As we have already seen, there have been scholars who have explicitly or implicitly supported the use of prediction as a reading strategy. The importance of prediction has been recognized in the top-down model, especially with Goodman (1967), unlike the bottom-up model. In addition to prediction, there have existed other strategies such as reading in broad sentences, inferring the meaning of unknown words from context, and so forth.

In this chapter, the issue of prediction in reading is discussed. The first two sections aim at introducing the concept of prediction in general, and as used by specialists in the field of reading in particular. The third section is an account of the main sub-strategies that are involved in prediction. The fourth section deals with guessing unknown words from context. The last section shows the importance of prediction in reading.

2.1. Definition of Prediction

Many important things in both science and the world involve predicting. Scientifically, prediction refers to "the ability to anticipate the occurrence of an event prior to its actual occurrence" (Christensen, 1980, p. 15). The main objective of science is not only to provide explanations for past and present phenomena, but also to try to anticipate future ones

so that they can prevent the damaging effects of them. For example, meteorologists may attempt to anticipate the amount of rain based on the temperature, barometer, humidity, and other weather patterns; and doctors may attempt to predict the level of obesity and high blood pressure and how they are associated. In these two examples, and many others, predictions are considered as educated and reasonable; rather than random expectations.

In our lives, we may predict things almost by chance (make random predictions) and may be realized; but they cannot be regarded as predictions in the real sense of the term, because they lack the required evidence. However, in scientific predictions (such as in the two presented examples) one thing is based on the knowledge of another one, and even though they may not always be correct there is a high probability of success. (Smith, 1985)

In psychological terms, prediction is considered as a mental activity in which the brain decides to make decisions. In the act of prediction, one's knowledge of the world (past or present events) provides him with possible occurrences, and then the brain is left to decide among these alternatives, until it comes to the most likely occurrence. Then, one's doubt is reduced to the minimum. (Smith, 1985)

2.2. Reading: a psycholinguistic guessing game

The psycholinguistic view of reading did not remain in the limits of research. It also influenced many teaching courses, methodology books, and teaching materials written in the late 1970s and 1980s and still exerts a powerful influence.

In his seminal article "Reading a Psycholinguistic Guessing Game", Goodman (1967) puts forward that reading constantly involves guessing, predicting, and checking one's

anticipations concerning the structure and the content of the text.

In his book *Developing Reading Skills*, Grellet (1981) presents reading, again, as 'a constant process of guessing'. In fact, a striking aspect of this book is that it focuses on providing a variety of reading comprehension exercises, including prediction and guessing exercises.

C. Nuttall's *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language* is another valuable methodology book on reading which clearly reflects the psycholinguistic view of reading. Nuttall (1982) argues:

> A good reader makes fewer eye movements than a poor one; his eye takes in several words at a time. Moreover, they are not just random sequences of words: one characteristic of an efficient reader is his ability to chunk a text into sense units, each consisting of several words and each taken in by one fixation of his eyes. (Nuttall, p.33)

Thus, according to Nuttall a good reader may chunk, read in meaningful groups, the sentence as: the good old man /raised his hand/ in blessing. He would not certainly read the sentence word by word as: the good/old man/raised his/ hand in/ blessing. That is, the large the groups of words the reader can take in the more easily he will turn them into coherent messages (Nuttall, 1982).

She also argues that, when reading, a reader comes with a meaning hypothesis. Then he uses his own linguistic and non-linguistic (background) knowledge to check for the plausibility of his meaning hypothesis. If the meaning hypothesis sounds logical, he continues reading; if the hypothesis sounds illogical and shows something wrong, he goes back/reread the text to check his meaning hypothesis. In fact, rereading is important, but it can sometimes

be frustrating and time consuming especially when it is difficult to know what the problem is.

Goodman (1967) also noticed that reading might not involve the successive use and accurate identifying of every word in the text; rather it might involve information not in the text at all. He states that:

> Reading is a process in which the reader picks and chooses from the available information only enough to select and predict a language structure which is decodable. It is not in any sense a precise perceptual process. (Eskey et al.75)

Grellet (1981) supports Goodman's idea that effective readers do not need to read every word in a text. She says:

> Reading is an activity involving constant guesses that are later rejected or confirmed. This means that one does not read all the sentences in the same way, but one relies on a number of words – or 'cues' – to get an idea of what kind of sentence is likely to follow. (Grellet, 1981, p.56)

2.3. Prediction Strategies

Good readers make use of various reading strategies that could reflect a meaningful, intentional, ongoing and adaptable process to enhance their reading performance. Since in this section of the study we are interested particularly in the process of prediction, we will then restrict ourselves to those strategies that help students develop their use of prediction in reading. The strategies demonstrated to be most important in forming predictions, according to The Pennsylvania Reading Instructional Handbook, include: setting a purpose for reading, previewing the text, activating background knowledge, and making global predictions (pre-reading strategies),in addition to guessing meaning of new words from their context (while

reading strategy). It is important to help students practice and develop such strategies at early stages of their reading so that it would be easy for them to tackle any new reading material without being afraid of misunderstanding.

2.3.1. Setting a Purpose for Reading

Before reading good readers set a purpose for their reading. Wallace (1980) stresses the importance of setting a purpose before reading. She says:

> Before you start reading a book or long article that is connected with your studies, it is always worthwhile taking a minute or two to ask yourself **why** you are reading it, and **what** you hope to learn from it. If you have no clear purpose in reading a text, or if you are confused about the purpose, the results can be: boredom, lack of comprehension; misunderstanding; or simply time wasted. (p.19)

Students' desire to read may come simply from their enjoyment, love of the subject, or attraction to the language. However, they seem to have most of the time some practical reason for their reading (to be assessed in the exam, to be able to discuss some topic, to synthesize some work, etc.)

Students who read for enjoyment have no specific purpose in their minds. However, when reading for some practical reason, students tend to have already a predetermined purpose in their minds which they seek to achieve through the activity of reading.

The importance of the difference between the two cases (having and not having a predetermined purpose) is that it shows the different strategies employed when reading. For example, students who read for pleasure tend to be more relaxed, and in any time may lose

concentration. However, students who read for some practical purpose are highly likely to read attentively, be more focused and engaged in the reading process. Besides, they tend to employ a variety of reading strategies in order to fulfill their specific purpose (such as, skimming, scanning, previewing, etc.).

It is the role of each student to develop awareness of his purpose of reading by asking himself one of such questions:

- What is the purpose of my reading?
- Why this text was given to me?
- What do I want to achieve from this text?

2.3.2. Previewing

Rather than starting reading from the beginning and going till the end, students need to preview the text first. Previewing means to look over a text quickly before reading it. It is a pre-reading activity.

Previewing includes such step as reading the title. Wallace (1980, p.11) supports the previewing strategy and places special emphasis on the use of the title as a means of getting an idea about the content of the reading material, she argues: "usually, the titles of academic books and articles are factual and informative: they can almost be as very brief summaries of the content of the text". Titles normally have special characteristics such as being brief, clear, and often revealing to the topic. Students usually use them as the only criteria to decide whether it is worth to read a particular material (text, book, article, etc.) or not.

Previewing, however should not only involve the use of the title, but also the exploitation of any accompanying elements such as: maps, graphs, charts, diagrams, tables, etc., in addition to a quick reading of any introductory, concluding paragraphs, or summaries. Grellet (1981, p.06) claims that: "by considering the layout of the text, the accompanying photographs or diagrams, the number of paragraphs...etc, the students can be encouraged to anticipate what they are to find in the text". So, according to Grellet, the aim of previewing is to help students predict/anticipate what is in the text.

2.3.3. Activating Personal Knowledge

This strategy helps students to use their memories in the most effective way as possible. Students would think of what they already know, or what they have already learnt, about a similar topic, i.e. having a kind of general knowledge.

According to Carrell (1988), the text must activate in the reader all appropriate schemata in order to able to comprehend a text. When reading a text with a similar topic, students might easily activate the appropriate background concepts to read a text. That is, not only it is important for the reader to have background knowledge, but also that knowledge needs to be activated too. This can be done through pre- reading activities.

Cook (1981), as cited in Carrell et al. (1988), suggested one way of activating knowledge schemata, he says: "the mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context to activate knowledge schemas" (p.9). So, the pre-reading activity consists of having the teacher gives a key word and then elicit associated words from the students.

2.3.4. Making Global Predictions

By this stage, students have already got some way into previewing the text and have already begin to think about what they already know about the text, and how this knowledge can now be employed to set him make general predictions about what is in the text. That is, students now, at this stage, would create a mental framework, a sort of an outline that would represent the whole text. Once students have mastered this global strategy of prediction, they will begin to read with a more specific and focused strategy of prediction.

2.3.5. Guessing New Words from Context

When reading a particular text, students should not give up if they find that a lot of words are unfamiliar to them. Instead, they should approach them positively and use specific techniques to deal with them (Montogomery, 1986). One of these techniques is skipping.

Very often the meaning of some words is not essential to the comprehension of the text that students may simply decide to skip them. There is nothing wrong with skipping words, students do this all the time, especially those who are efficient readers (Bonnivier, 1984). However, students should try to guess their meaning from studying the context in which they appear.

Historically, Context (a term was first put forward by the anthropologist Malinoski) has been classified into two kinds: linguistic context and extra-linguistic context. Linguistic context is further subdivided into two types, language context and co-text. Language context refers to the knowledge of the language shared by participants, among which there are

syntactic lexical and phonic rules. Co-text, on the other hand refers to the linguistic environment preceding or following a word or phrase. As for the extra-linguistic context, it also consists of two types, one is situational which is related to a specific situation, and one is background knowledge which includes a wide range of aspects of our lives (Palmer, 1976).

The strategy of guessing words from their context consists of having students pinpoint those familiar words in the text (co-text) in order to identify the meaning of unfamiliar ones. Guessing is important and its importance lies in the fact that it helps students develop self independence from the teacher or the dictionary. Bonnivier (1984, p. 05) argues that: "guessing is important. It makes it possible for us to read without help from a dictionary or a person". Actually, identifying meaning of unknown words through using the dictionary is sometimes necessary after students fail to skip them or guess their meanings successfully from context. However, the dictionary should not be considered as the immediate resort to reading problems. Since the extensive use of it may disturb for the flow of information and destruct the readers' concentration in the reading task.

2.4. Importance of Prediction

Prediction is an important strategy for reading comprehension. Its importance lies in the fact that:

- It prepares students for what is coming ahead in the text they are reading /or going to read.
- It allows them actively think about what they are going to read and give them some time to have some ideas about it and imagination.

- It helps them remind themselves of the purpose of their reading especially if they get distracted or momentarily forget what they are reading.

- It enables them recognize the most common grammatical, syntactic, and discourse features of what they usually read.

- It prepares for and allows avoidance of likely linguistic difficulties (vocabulary or ambiguity difficulties).

- It improves their reading speed as well as it saves their time by predicting the following content.

- It helps them become self independent, confident, and not frightened to read new texts: they know what they are going to read immediately and react positively to it.

Conclusion

Prediction is not reckless guessing as Smith (1985) said; on the contrary, making intelligent guesses involves such things as: reading the title, headings, and sub-headings, examining any accompanying pictures, charts, diagrams; setting a purpose for reading; activating background knowledge of the language and the world as well; and then making general predictions about what is to be read ahead.

Chapter Three: The Situation Analysis

Chapter Three: The Investigation

Introduction

Generally, the quality of any research study depends largely on the quality of data collected, and the quality of data collected is related directly to data collection procedures. Therefore, in collecting data, it is important to use procedures which elicit high quality of data. In this study multiple data collection procedure has been used, i.e., obtaining data from a variety of sources, a questionnaire and a practical exercise. Actually, it is by using a variety of sources that we are going to obtain rich and more comprehensive data.

3.1. Population of the Study

The data for this study were collected from Third Year English Students from Mentouri University, Constantine. It has been decided to work particularly with Third Year Students expressly because students at this level are expected to possess a good command of general English language proficiency; since they have studied English at least for eight years and have passed several courses in advanced grammar, conversation, basic writing, and reading comprehension at the BA level. Furthermore, it is very likely that third year English students are to be equipped with sufficiently developed reading skills and most of them have acquired domain specific knowledge through different types of texts. That is, they have required applying basic skills or strategies to read English for Specific Purposes (ESP), at least for three years, and prediction is presumed to be one of these reading strategies.

Under certain circumstances, a sample that, it is believed, would represent the designed population was selected. Under one condition, members of this sample have to be

chosen randomly in order to be representative of the whole population. Accordingly, the procedure for achieving randomization is the following: we wrote down in small pieces of papers the number of each group (from 01 to 13) and then we picked out one at random. It was 'group 12' that was selected to take part in this research work. Out of 35 students (members of the whole group), it has been decided because of time constraints, to select only 25 students for study.

3.2. The Questionnaire

Questionnaires are most commonly used instrument for collecting data in any research, they are extremely flexible and can be used to gather information on almost any topic from a larger or smaller group of subjects and most importantly with fewer efforts and in precise times. Such characteristics of questionnaires are what made us decide to adopt this instrument to collect data for the present investigation about the reading strategy of prediction.

3.2.1. Aim of the Questionnaire

The main purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain information that ascertains the students' use of prediction as a reading strategy. It collects data about the students' self statement about reading in general and then reading with prediction in particular.

3.2.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 20 items. The format selected for items or questions in this questionnaire is 'multiple-choice' or as sometimes called 'close' questions in which

students are restricted to answer by choosing among a number of alternatives (a, b, and c).This type of questions is typically useful, since questions are easily completed by the subjects and easily analyzed by the researcher. Nevertheless, when things come to be a matter of various shades of opinion, 'multiple- choices' format of questions ceases to be appropriate. Therefore, it was found more useful to devise a questionnaire that combines 'close' with 'open' questions – a room for 'other' response at the end of some multiple-choice questions (choice: d) was left. By doing so, subjects were provided with more freedom and scope to express their opinions and at the same time a sufficient amount of control to answer that would facilitates the results analysis was retained.

When planning the overall structure of the questionnaire, questions were arranged from general to specific. This is because we want to gradually familiarize students with the topic of the research and slowly refine their ideas. The questionnaire is implicitly divided into three sections.

The first section (Q1–2) is the shortest section in the questionnaire. It aims at obtaining background information about the subjects: the number of years they have spent studying English (Q1), their attitudes towards their level of proficiency in the foreign language (Q2).

The second section (Q3–7) aims at obtaining information about the students' reading habit in general (Q3–5) and reading in English in particular (Q 6–7): students are enquired into their attachment to reading (Q3), frequency of their reading (Q4), the language in which they read most (Q5), frequency of their reading in English (Q6), their motives for reading in English (Q7).

Before the final section and through (Q8– 9), we attempt to have a glimpse at the students' way of reading in English (Q8) together with the problems they most often encounter while reading in English (Q9) before acquainting them with the research target strategy, prediction.

The final section (Q10–20) is the largest section in the questionnaire. It is concerned primarily with the strategy of prediction – the main object of study. Questions in this section are also arranged according to their degree of specificity: from making general predictions about the overall meaning of the text (Q10– 15), to guessing meaning of individual words (Q16–17).

3.2.3. Analysis of the Results

The procedure for analyzing data from the questionnaire is as follows:

- Statement of the items as they appear in the questionnaire.
- Aim of the items.
- Answers to the items in the form of tables.

The abbreviation **N** stands for the number of respondents, **%** stands for the percentage this number represents.

Item 01

❖ How long have you been studying English?

[ ] Year (s)

This item was intended to know the period students have spent studying English, not only at the university, but also at the middle and secondary schools. The results are presented in the following table:

		9 years		8 years		7 years	
Third Years Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	05	20%	19	76%	01	4%

Table 01: Students' Years of Studying English

Table 01 shows that 76% of the total population of the study (N=25) have been studying English for eight (8) years, 20% have been studying English for more than eight years (9 years) , only 4% have been studying English for less than eight years (7years).

Item 02

❖ Do you consider your level in English?

Very good ☐   Good☐   Average☐   Poor ☐

Through this item we come to know the level of proficiency of students in the language they are studying – English. The findings are summarized in the subsequent table:

		Very good		Good		Average		Poor	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	00	00%	08	32%	17	68%	00	00%

Table 02: Students' Level in English

Table 02 indicates that 68% of the total population (N=25) claim to have 'an average' level in English, 32% consider their level in English as 'good', and there is no student who claims to have a 'very good' or 'poor' level in English.

Item 03

❖ You like reading:

A lot ☐   A little ☐   not at all☐

This item was intended to measure how much students like reading. The results are illustrated in the coming table:

		A lot		A little		Not at all	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	08	32%	17	68%	00	00%

Table 03: Students' Love of Reading

Table 03 shows that 68% of the total population (N=25) do not like reading so much (only a little), 32% claim they like reading a lot. There is no student who claims he does not like reading.

Item 04

❖ How often do you read?

Frequently☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely☐

This item was intended to provide information as to whether students are used to read in English. The results are illustrated in the following table:

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		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	03	12%	17	68%	05	20%

Table 04: Students' Frequency of Reading

Table 04 indicates that 68% of the total population read 'sometimes' in English, 20% read 'rarely'. Only 12% read 'frequently'.

Item 05

❖ In which language do you prefer to read?

Arabic☐   French☐   English☐

This item aims at revealing the language in which students prefer to read most whether English, French, or Arabic. The results are presented in the following table:

		Arabic		French		English		English + Arabic	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	07	28%	05	20%	11	44%	02	08%

Table 05: The Language in which Students Read Most

Table 05 indicates that there are 44% of the total population (N=25) read most in 'English', 28% read in 'Arabic', and only 20% read in 'French'. There are 8% who have claimed to read in 'English' as well as in 'Arabic'.

Item 06

❖ How often do you read in English?

Frequently☐   Sometimes☐   Rarely☐

This item was intended to provide information as to whether students are accustomed to the habit of reading. The students' claims are presented in the following table:

		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely	
	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Students	25	02	08%	19	76%	04	16%

Table 06: Students' Reading Frequency in English

Table 06 shows that there are 76% of the total population read 'sometimes' in English, 16% read 'rarely', and only 8% read 'frequently'.

Item 07

❖ Why do you read in English?

    a. For pleasure☐
    b. To increase your knowledge of the language☐
    c. To become familiar with the English culture ☐
    d. Other☐ please, specify……………………..

This item was intended to investigate the students' purpose and motivation in reading English selections. The results are presented in the following table:

		for pleasure		To increase knowledge of the English language		To become familiar with the English culture		The three options		Other	
	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Students	25	01	04%	18	72%	01	04%	04	16%	01	04%

Table 07: Students' Purpose for Reading in English

The above table reveals that 72% of the total population (N=25) tend to read with the purpose of increasing knowledge of the English language. Only 4% claim to read in English for pleasure. Also, only 4% acknowledge reading in English for familiarity with the English culture. Except for 16% who have claimed to usually read for the three mentioned purposes.

Item 08

❖ How do you tend to read in English?

   Word by word ☐   In group of words ☐

This item was intended to investigate the way students precede through an English text. The findings are summarized in the following table:

		Word by word		In group of words	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%
	25	04	16%	21	84%

Table 08: Students' Way or Method of Reading

According to the above table, 84% of the total population (N=25) tend to read in English 'in group of words'. Only 16% tend to read 'word by word'.

Item 09

❖ What makes a text of English difficult for you?

   a. When it reflects of a culture that is different from yours ☐
   b. when the topic is unfamiliar to you ☐
   c. when it contains difficult or unfamiliar words ☐
   d. Other ☐ please, specify…………………………..

This item was intended to reveal those areas of difficulty students are much more concerned with when reading an English text. In this item, three areas of difficulty were suggested: culture unfamiliarity, topic unfamiliarity, and words unfamiliarity. Students' answers to this item are summarized in the following table:

		When it reflects a different culture		When the topic is unfamiliar		When it contains unfamiliar words		Other	
	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Student	25	00	00%	06	24%	19	76%	00	00%

Table 09: Students' Difficulties When Reading in English

Table 09 shows that there are 76% of the total population (N=25) have vocabulary problems when reading in English, only 24% claim to have problems while reading in English when the topic of reading is unfamiliar to them. However, there is no student who claims that cultural differences may hinder their reading.

Item 10

❖ Does the title of a book, text, or an article give you an idea about its content before you start reading?

Yes☐ No☐

The item represents a turning point in the questionnaire because it is the first item which is directly related to the aim of the questionnaire and the study as a whole. It investigates the students' use or none use of the title to make general predictions about the content of the text.

		Yes		No	
	Total	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Students	25	24	96%	01	04%

Table 10: Using the Title for Prediction

Table10 indicates that 96% of the total population uses the title as an instrument for making predictions. However, there is only 4% have acknowledged that the title is of no use for them.

Item 11

❖ If "yes", do you rely only on the title to predict?

Yes☐ No☐

This item was intended to reveal whether students who are for the uses of the title to predict the content of a particular reading material rely/do not rely only on the title to make predictions about the text. The findings are illustrated in the following table:

		Yes		No		Not using the title	
	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Students	25	10	40%	14	56%	01	04%

Table 11: Students' Use of the Title for Making General Predictions

Table 11 shows that 56% of the total population rely on other text elements in addition to the title when making general predictions, 40 % have said they are satisfied with the use of the title without making use of any further elements.

Item12

❖ If "no", what other things may help you in prediction?

    a. Pictures, charts, diagrams, and tables ☐
    b. Subtitles, headings of chapters, and paragraphs (summary, introduction and conclusion) ☐
    c. Your general knowledge of the topic ☐
    d. Other☐ please, specify…………………………

This item aims at investigating the students' use of other textual elements, in addition to the title, for making predictions about text content. The results are presented in the subsequent table:

		Pictures, charts, diagrams and tables		Subtitles, headings of chapters, and paragraphs		General knowledge		Only using the title		Not using the title		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	01	04%	11	44%	01	04%	10	40%	01	04%	01	04%

Table 12: Other Text Elements Used for Making Predictions

Table 12 reveals that, regardless of the 40% who have answered by "no" concerning reliance on the title solely without any further use of other text elements , 44% have claimed that subtitles headings of chapters and paragraphs (summary, introduction, or summary) helps them predict what a text is about. However, only 04% have claimed the use of illustrations (such as pictures, charts, diagrams, and tables) for making predictions about the content of the text, while 04% have claimed the use of general knowledge about the topic of the text, and other 04% did not answer the question at all.

Item 13

❖ As you read, do you usually predict what the writer is likely to say in the next word, sentence, and paragraph?

Yes☐   No☐

As opposed to the three preceding items which deal with making predictions before the reading process, this item aims at investigating the students' use of prediction during the process of reading. The results are summarized in the coming table:

		Yes		No	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%
	25	20	80%	05	20%

Table13: Students' Predictions about what Comes Next

Table 13 shows that out of the total population (N=25), 80% usually make predictions about what to come next in the text. Only 20% do not make predictions about what comes next.

Item 14

❖ If "yes", do your predictions (guesses) always get confirmed (they are true)?

Yes ☐   No☐

This item aims at identifying whether students' predictions always get confirmed or not. The results are summarized in the following table:

		Yes		No		Making no predictions	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	03	12%	17	68%	05	20%

Table 14: Confirmation of Students' Predictions

Except for 20% who claimed to make no predictions Table14 above indicates that 68% of the total population (N=25) their predictions do not always get confirmed. Only12% of the total population their predictions always get confirmed.

Item 15

❖ If "no", what do you do then?

    a. Stop reading ☐
    b. Change your prediction ☐
    c. Reread what you have already read ☐
    d. Other ☐ please, specify………………….

This item intends to reveal students' reactions and their immediate solutions when their predictions about the text are not confirmed. Students' answers to this item are summarized in the following table:

		Stop reading		Change the prediction		Reread		Predictions always confirmed		Making no predictions	
Third year English students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	00	00%	07	28%	10	40%	03	12%	05	20%

Table15: Students' Strategies When Their Predictions are not confirmed

Except for 20% who claim to make no predictions, and 12% who claim that their predictions always get confirmed, Table 15 suggests that 40% of the total population reread what they have already read when their predictions are not confirmed, 28% change their prediction to make them conforming to what is in the text. However, no student claims to stop reading whenever their predictions are not confirmed.

Item 16

❖ What do you do if you meet a word that you do not understand?

      a. Skip it over (avoid it) ☐
      b. Guess its meaning from context ☐
      c. Ask a friend or the teacher ☐
      d. Other ☐ please, specify………………..

This item suggests four ways for dealing with new words in a text. The students' answers to this item are summarized in the following table:

		Skipping it over		Guess its meaning from context		Asking a friend or the teacher		Look it up in the dictionary	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	00	00%	14	56%	02	08%	09	36%

Table16: Students' Strategies for Identifying Unfamiliar Words

From the above Table we see that 36% of the total population look up unknown words in the dictionary, 8% ask the teacher or a friend about their meanings, 56% guess their meaning from context. There is no student who claims he usually skip the meaning of unknown words.

Item 17

❖ For those who decide to "guess" the meaning of unfamiliar words how do you

do so?

      a. By looking at the prefix, suffix or root of the word ☐
      b. By looking at what makes sense in the sentence ☐

This item intends to confirm students' use of context to guess the meaning of unknown

words. The results are illustrated in the coming table:

		Looking at prefixes, suffixes and root of the word		Looking at what makes sense in the sentence		Don't use guessing at all	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	02	08%	12	48%	11	44%

Table 17: Students' Guessing of Unfamiliar Words

Except for 44% who do not usually guess the meaning of unknown words, Table17

shows that 48% of the total population use what makes sense in a sentence to guess the

meaning of unknown words. Only 08 % look at prefixes, suffixes, and roots of the unknown

words to identify their meaning (look at their forms).

Items 18 & 19

❖ Do you think prediction is an important reading strategy?

      Yes ☐   No☐

❖ If "yes", what do you think the importance of prediction is?

    a. It warms you to the topic (makes the topic familiar)before you start reading ☐
    b. It helps you become confident ☐
    c. It saves your time ☐
    d. Other ☐ please, specify…………………..

This concluding item aims at giving an idea about the students' opinion of prediction as a reading strategy. Students' opinions are illustrated in the following table:

		Yes		No	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%
	25	20	80%	05	20%

Table18: Students' Appreciation for Prediction in Reading

Table 18 indicates that 80% of the total population has a positive opinion about prediction. Only 20% of the total population develops a negative view about prediction.

		It warms to the topic		It helps become self confident		It saves time		Other		Prediction has no importance	
Third Year English Student	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	02	08%	10	40%	07	28%	01	04%	05	20%

Table 19: The Importance of Prediction

Table 19 indicates that except for 20% who claim that prediction is not important, 40% of the total population (N=25) suggest that prediction is important because it helps them become self confident, 28% have claim that prediction saves their time, 8% have said that prediction warms the topic for them before reading. However, one student (4%) through the choice 'other' has said: "prediction enriches our imagination and makes us like the text".

3.2.4. Discussion of the Results

Table 01 indicates that the majority of students (76%) have been studying English for at least 8 years (2 years at the middle school, 3 years at the secondary school, and other 3 years at the university). This means that students by the end of their third year university education are expected to have already massed enough background knowledge of the foreign language, English, in all its contexts (the linguistic and the socio-cultural). Besides, during this 8 years period, students are expected to have already experienced and developed a good reading habit. This period further influences the way students read and allows them to employ a variety of reading strategies such as predicting and guessing.

Table 02 shows that the majority of students (68%) have an average level in English. Generally, good level suggests a basic competence students achieve in English and ability to comprehend fairly straightforward reading. Average level, on the other hand, indicates that students still have some deficiencies in English language (mainly in vocabulary) and possible inaccuracy in applying some or any of the reading strategies.

From Tables 03 & 04 it has been found that students do not read 'frequently' but read only 'sometimes' and do not like reading 'so much' but only 'a little', and this may be for the following reasons: students may not have available time to practice reading. That is to say, students at the university are required to take a minimum of 8 courses in applied languages. They often struggle to get through these demanding courses that only little, if no, time is devoted to practice the reading skill. Students may consider reading as irrelevant to the university curriculum, or they may have other hobbies and interests of much importance to them than reading. Sometimes, students are required to accept a task of reading that is quite

contrary to their own. That is, the topic of the reading and sometimes the whole task of reading are imposed on them.

In classroom, English students are usually exposed to English language which they more or less understand. The majority of students of English (44% as Table 05 indicates) have said they are motivated to read most in English in order to learn English. By reading in English, students have opportunities, though limited, to practice, show, and evaluate their progress in the foreign language. However, not all students who learn English tend to read in English, there are 28% of the total population tend to read in their mother tongue, Arabic, (in such case reading is voluntary, independent and practiced outside university). English students read in Arabic and not in English because they may have some trouble with their English; they may not understand much of it to be able to read in it; they find reading in their mother tongue, Arabic, much easier and pleasurable than struggling with their English.

The majority of students (84% as Table 08 indicates) tend to read in English "in group of words". English students usually read in English only when they are required in their study to fulfill specific tasks of specific requirements. For this reason, students bring their own skills when they come to reading. For example, if a student is given the task of only finding the main idea of a particular text, then it would not be necessary for him to examine the text "word by word". The student in this case would read some parts which he thinks are most important and relevant, and ignores those parts which he thinks are of less importance and relevance. But, a student read "word by word" especially when he has to critically study the text, when he is involved in careful analysis of each word in the text.

In an attempt to identify the nature of difficulties and problems students encounter when reading English texts (Item 09); Table 09 indicates that no student has claimed to have difficulty reading a text when this text reflects a culture that is different from his. It seems that students do not take into account the effect of cultural unfamiliarity on their reading. This is, perhaps, owing to the unquestionable conformity of the English textual materials used to their own socio-cultural expectations. Teachers always try to control this possibly intervening variable by positively adapting the English reading materials to fit their students' expectations (especially if the students belong to the same educational and socio-cultural background), particularly through changing several culturally unfamiliar words to more familiar ones in the modified versions of the reading materials.

Teachers usually select materials whose topics are in the students' area of study/ interest. This may be why only 24% of students have claimed to have difficulty in reading when the topic of the text is unfamiliar to them. In fact, it is important that students practice reading within different types of texts, not just the ones in their areas of study/ interest. Sometimes, unfamiliar subjects, though may pose some difficulty, can teach students more valuable things (new vocabulary and new content) than familiar ones.

Contrary to what most teachers think, providing reading materials at a very simplified reading level does not help avoid problems such as cultural unfamiliarity, topic unfamiliarity, or vocabulary unfamiliarity; instead, it ensures that students will be more frustrated when encountered with somehow complex texts, and which will ultimately lead them to discouragement with their reading process.

From Table 09, it is clear that students are much more concerned with linguistic difficulties. That is, 76% of the total population claim that most their reading difficulties are due to the presence of unknown words. Normally, third year students are expected to have already covered sufficient amount of vocabulary that enables them to fairly understand an English text. If students do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge, they may find it hard to understand the content of the text, especially for those who tend to follow a word by word strategy of reading. Besides, students' predicting ability might be affected if there are too many unknown words to be guessed than known words that help them guess the meaning of unknown words. Vocabulary knowledge deficit may be due the inadequacy of the teaching/learning strategies adopted by teachers/students. In classroom, vocabulary lists were memorized and learned with their translation equivalents (in the students' first language or mother tongue) their sentences were especially constructed to contain only the grammar and vocabulary which have been already covered. In fact, methods such these do very little to enhance students' knowledge of vocabulary; since words are presented outside their meaningful context as well as the students' lives and experience , and which makes them quickly forgotten as they have been quickly memorized or learnt.

Item 10 represents a turning point in the questionnaire because it is directly related to the aim of the questionnaire and the study as a whole. Students most often use the title to make general predictions about what they expect to read in the text/book/article. Nearly all students (96% of the total population as Table 10 indicates) recognize the importance of the title for reading in general and for making predictions in particular. The title tends to be very important because it helps students decide whether a particular text/ book/ article … is worth reading, i.e., whether it is relevant to their purpose of reading or not, so that they would not

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waste their time reading an irrelevant one. Besides, the title plays a role in attracting the students' attention, often written in bold typeface.

As Table 11 shows 40% of the total population have said they are satisfied with using the title alone and do not try to use any other textual elements for getting an idea about the content of the text. However, 56% have opted for using other text elements for making predictions (see Table 11). It has been found that third year students are more attracted to linguistic elements (44% opted for using subtitles in addition to the title) and less concerned with non-linguistic elements (only 04% opted for using pictures, charts, diagrams, tables). This, however, does not mean at all that using pictures, charts, diagrams, and tables and so on is not useful. The assumption is that the field of study of these students which is 'art' contains only few visuals (mainly in ESP reading materials). Only one student (04%) has opted for using his background knowledge of the topic to make predictions about the text. This means that students usually find it hard to activate their background knowledge without initially looking at the title, subtitles and other text elements.

As soon as students recognize a failure in generating their predictions and so understanding the whole text, it is this recognition that triggers the use of additional active strategies. Item 15 suggests three of such strategies: to stop reading, change the prediction, or reread the text. As Table 15 indicates, no student has claimed to usually stop reading when their predictions are not correct. Students' purpose of reading may have led them to take such a decision. For example if one student reads a text taking into his consideration that he might be asked about its content, may be in the form of an examination, he is very unlikely to give up and stop reading since this his student has a specific purpose in his mind which he has to

fulfill in one way or another, he may be reluctant about taking the risks by rereading what he has already read in order to find out what is going wrong with his prediction (he may left some important detail) or just continue reading and remain in doubt until new information is provided, then he can change his prediction to make it more compatible with this new information.

Item 16 aims at investigating students' reactions towards unfamiliar words. Four possible ways of dealing with unknown words are suggested in this item: using the dictionary, asking the teacher or a friend, skipping the words, or guessing their meanings from context. Table 16 indicates that 44% of the total population (N=25) have claimed to be dependent readers (36% of them have said they extensively use the dictionary and 8% have said they usually ask the teacher or a friend about the meaning of unknown words). These students are, in fact, 'lazy' and 'passive' readers who are unable to bring their own solutions and ideas to the problem in hand. However, there are other students (56% of the total population) who usually take the decision to be more active and read without most of the time using the dictionary or asking the teacher or a friend. These students think they could do this by themselves, either by simply skipping the words and perhaps replacing their meanings with their own concepts and ideas, or trying to guess the words' proper meanings from context.

Normally, experienced students as they become more familiar with English language do not always go through the text word by word. However, surprisingly as Table 16 indicates, no student has claimed to usually skip unknown words while reading English texts. A possible explanation for this is that these students may be willing, but are afraid that they will not comprehend if they take the risk of skipping unknown words or if they try to guess their

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meanings from context. They tend to be anxious more about getting the right definition or meaning from the dictionary or their teacher or friends so that they make sure they will not be confused about the meaning of the text.

An important number of students (56% of the total population of study as Table16 indicates) have claimed to be independent readers in that they guess the meaning of unknown words from context. The strategy of guessing unknown words from context is very important since it develops active readers who are able to think, analyze make connections to resolve their comprehension problems; sometimes it presents a best solution for students who find themselves in critical situations (for example in an exam situation).

The concluding item indicates that there is an area of agreement among students about the value of prediction. Table 18 indicates that 95% of the total population consider prediction as an important reading strategy. The most important aspects of prediction are suggested in the options of the Sixteenth Item: 50% of the total population, as Table 19 shows, consider prediction as important because it develops their self confidence to be able to read new texts, 35% of the total population have said that prediction saves their time, and 10% of the total population said that prediction warm them to the topic by giving them an idea about the content of the text before reading it. We say that, since third year English students are extensively exposed to many and somehow complex texts and are usually asked to read them quickly, but effectively, in order to be assessed about their content. So, the best way to read such complex texts in a short time, effectively, and especially with self confidence, can be the strategy of prediction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that third year English students who are supposedly proficient in English, since they are no longer susceptible to vocabulary or structure difficulties, tend to usually preview texts before reading them and so are encouraged to make predictions about their content. These previewing and predicting strategies (pre-reading strategies) motivate students to read what follows for a purpose by gaining the requisite of English texts.

3.3. The Practical Exercise

It is not possible to discover what goes on in detail in the brain when someone is reading, though we can make guesses based on some evidence. Valette (1977) argues:

> There is no way for an observer to be sure at a given moment whether a subject reading silently is gleaning facts or gather main ideas or evaluating the writer or gaining aesthetic satisfaction, or in fact, whether he is really putting his mind to the printed page at all. (166)

Since the area of reading is a mysterious and incomprehensible one, many attempts have been made and many instruments have been developed to find out about its mysteries. Just to give brief examples: "Think Aloud Tasks" where participants were explicitly instructed to verbalize all thoughts that occur to them while reading a particular text sentence by sentence; and "Reading Comprehension Tests" where participants were given texts to silently read followed by a set of questions designed to test their comprehension. (Valette 1977)

3. 3.1. Aim of the Exercise

The exercise is the other instrument used to collect data about students' ability in making predictions about an English text. The main objective of the exercise is to identify:

- Students' ability in making general predictions of the content of the reading material by making use of introductory elements such as; the title, the subtitles, and the short summary.
- Students' ability to make specific predictions about what they are going to read in the following passage or paragraph.
- Students' ability to rely on linguistic information (contextual clues) as well as their background knowledge (of content).
- Students' ability to assess their predictions.

3. 3.2. Description of the Exercise

The material used in the exercise is a text entitled "Give Your Back a Break" by Chropractor Michael Watson. This article is taken from an exercise from an academic book *Read Better; Remember More* by Elizabeth Chesla (2000).

The original exercise consists of 9 questions (three of them are multiple-choice); the first two questions are pre-reading (preceding the text) intended to warm up for the text and all the remaining questions are post-reading (following the text) intended to test comprehension of the text. The text stands at the middle as one block.

In the exercise, the text is divided into three separated passages in respect to its title and subtitles:

- The first passage – introductory passage –consists of the title *Give Your Back a Break* and a short summary to the whole text.

- The second passage consists of the subtitle "Why Back Injuries are So Common" and a passage of approximately ninety two words.

- The third passage consists of the subtitle "How to Prevent Back Injuries" and a passage of approximately one hundred sixty five words.

Questions of the exercise are of two formats: multiple-choice and short response questions. As it has already stated, multiple choice questions require students to choose from a number of alternatives for the best answer. However, short-response questions require students to write their own responses. There are 15 items which can be arranged, according to the purpose of study, into 5 sets of items:

- The first set of items (1-2) requires students to make general predictions about the content of the text.

- The second set of items (4-7) asks students to make specific predictions about the content of what comes next.

- The third set of items (5- 6-10-11-12-13) allows students to evaluate their predictions as either wrong or correct.

- The fourth set of items (3-9-10) enables students to make use of different kinds of knowledge, linguistic and background.

- The last set (14-15) enables students to make very specific kind of predictions, guessing meaning of unfamiliar words from context clues and their own knowledge.

The procedure followed in conducting the exercise is the following:

Students were first told what the purpose of the study, which is "to ascertain the use of prediction strategy by Third Year English Students and find out whether it is affected by the amount of knowledge those students possess". After explaining the purpose of the study and then the nature of the task they are to be engaged in, each student from the selected sample were handed a copy of the exercise and requested to answer the exercise questions individually. A time limit of one hour was announced. As the students went through the task of answering the questions of the exercise, they were encouraged to point out to any difficulty they encounter in comprehending the questions of the exercise; however, questions concerning the content of the text were not responded nor was the use of the dictionary allowed. Making sure that students had all answered the exercise questions, copies were gathered.

3.3.3. Analysis of the Results

The procedure for analyzing data from the exercise is as follows:

- Statement of the items as they appear in the exercise.
- Aim of the items.
- Answers to the items in the form of tables.

The abbreviation **N** stands for the number of respondents, **%** stands for the percentage this number represents.

Item 01

❖ What are you about to read about is written by:

a. A student   b. An expert   c. A patient

This type of question aims at identifying the author of the text. Recognition of the author's position, of course, in respect to the subject matter of the text helps students reveal something about its nature. Students' answers on this first item are illustrated in the following table:

		A student		An expert		A patient	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	00	00%	20	80%	05	20%

Table 01: Students' Guesses about the Writer of the Text

Table 01 shows that out of the total population of study, 80% have provided the answer that the text is written by 'an expert'. Only 20% have identified the writer of the text to be 'a patient'. However, there is no student who has expected the text to be written by 'a student'.

Items 02 & 03

❖ What main topics are covered in this article? (Use the title, the subtitles and the short summary to predict).

❖ What important clues (key words) do you see? List them below.

The two items intend to involve students to make general predictions about the main topic(s) that will be discussed in the text on the basis of its title, subtitles and the short summary. The results obtained are the following:

Out of the total population (N=25), 12% have made no predictions, 08% have expected the text to discuss some "causes/advices" without exactly specifying what these causes/advices are of/about, 80% have expected the topic of the text to be about 'injuries'. Out of this 80%, 85% have associated 'injuries' with 'he back', 15% have not.

Item 04

❖ Which of the following seems most likely the beginning?
   a. The author will describe the main causes of back injuries ▢
   b. The author will describe the best way to prevent back injuries ▢
   c. The author will describe the back ▢
   d. The author will describe the frequency of back injuries ▢

This item is intended to enable students to make specific predictions about what they are going to read in the instant following passage (the second passage immediately after the introductory passage). The results are illustrated in the coming table:

		The main causes of back injuries		Way of preventing back injuries		Description of the back		Frequency of back injuries		No prediction	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	10	40%	04	16%	06	24%	04	16%	01	4%

Table 02: Students' Predictions about the Beginning of the Text

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Table 02 shows that 40% of the total population (N=25) suggest the beginning of the text to be an explanation of "causes of back injuries", 24% choose the beginning of the text to be" a description of the back", 16% point out to "ways of preventing back injuries" and other 16% to "frequency of back injuries" to be the most likely beginning to the text.

Items 05 & 06

❖ The article appears to be about "back injuries". Is this what you've really expected?

        Yes ☐   No☐

❖ Did you expect the article to begin with a description of the back?

        Yes ☐   No☐

These two items were intended to provide students with the opportunity to accept, reject, or alter their initial predictions about the content of the text. The results obtained are represented in the two subsequent tables:

		Yes		No	
	Total	N	%	N	%
Third Year English Students	25	12	48%	13	52%

Table 03: Students' Evaluation of their Predictions about the Content of the Text

Table 03 shows that out of the total population (N=25), 48% have said that their predictions about the general content of the text were confirmed, 52% have claimed that their predictions about the general content of the text were wrong, i.e., not confirmed.

		Yes		No	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	*%*	N	*%*
	25	14	56%	11	44%

Table 04: Students' Evaluation of their Predictions about the Beginning of the Text

Table 04 indicates that 56% of the total population (N=25) have made 'correct' predictions about the beginning of the text. There is 44% have made wrong predictions about the most likely beginning of the text.

Items 07 & 08

❖ What do you expect to read next?

❖ What key words or phrases (from the above passage) points to this direction?

These items were intended to make students involved in making further predictions while reading and this time about the last passage of the text. The results obtained are summarized in the following table:

		Causes of back injuries		Prevention of back injuries		Description of the back		Frequency of back injuries		Other prediction		No prediction	
Third Year English Student	Total	N	*%*	N	*%*	N	*%*	N	*%*	N	*%*	N	*%*
	25	13	52%	10	40%	00	00%	00	00	01	4%	01	4%

Table 05: Students' Predictions about the Last Passage of the Text

Except for 04% who have not expected, 04% have made a prediction other than the ones listed in the above table, which he have expected to read in the next passage (the third passage in the text) about, in his or her words "some operations on the back". There is 52%

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have expected to read in the next passage about "causes of back injuries". 40% have suggested that what they are going to read in the next/last passage is about "ways of preventing back injuries".

Item 09

❖ What do you know about back "injuries" in general that makes you predict this?

This item was intended to allow students considerable freedom to bring their prior knowledge to bear on the content of the text. The purpose is to show how to activate their prior knowledge if/once it exists. The students' answers are summarized in the following table:

		Have some knowledge		Have no knowledge		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	06	24%	16	64%	03	12%

Table 06: Students' Knowledge about the Content of the Text

Except for 12% who have not answered the question, 64% have no background knowledge about the content of the text, and only 24% have claimed to have some knowledge.

Items 10 & 11

❖ Were your expectations confirmed (correct)?

Yes ☐   No☐

❖ If "no", why?

		Yes		No		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	19	76%	05	20%	01	04%

Table 07: Students' Confirmation of their Predictions about the Content of the Passage

Table 05 indicates that except for 04% who have not answered this question, 76% of the total population (N=25) have maintained to have successfully predicted the content of the last passage. There is only 20%whose predictions have not been confirmed.

Item 12

❖ Have you misunderstood something in the above passages?

Yes ☐   No ☐

This item is sensitive to those areas of difficulty that could elicit misunderstandings when reading a foreign language text. The findings are presented in the following table:

		Yes		No		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	03	12%	21	84%	01	04%

Table 08: Students' Misunderstandings of the Text

Except for 4% who have not answered this question, 84% have claimed to have clearly understood what is in the text. Only 12% have claimed to misunderstand something in the text.

Item 13

✿ If "yes", what is it?

Among the three students (12% of the total population) who have claimed to have some misunderstandings about the text:

- The first student said: "I have not understood the sentence" you need to keep your back straight" without stating exactly what he did not understand in it.
- The second one said: "I do not understand some unfamiliar words" without stating exactly which words.
- The third one said: "I do not understand the meaning of the word 'injury'.

Notice that all three students seem to have a problem of vocabulary.

Items 14 & 15

These two items were intended to reveal students' ability to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words by making use of their background knowledge and contextual clues in the text. The data obtained are summarized in the following tables:

✿ What does the word <u>conduit</u> mean?

    a. Channel, pathway   b. Home, dwelling   c. Resistance

		Channel, pathway		Home, dwelling		Resistance		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	18	72%	00	00%	04	16%	03	12%

Table 09: Students' Guesses about the Meaning of the Word 'Conduit'

Except for 12% who have not answered this question, 72% have correctly identified the meaning of the word 'conduit' to have the same meaning as 'channel, pathway', only 16% have recognized the meaning of the word to be 'resistance'. There has been no student who has assigned to the word 'conduit' the meaning 'home or dwelling'.

❖ What does the word <u>rend</u> mean?

a. Heal and mend   b. Destroy   c. Tear and rip

		Heal and mend		Destroy		Tear and rip		Don't know	
Third Year English Students	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	25	02	08%	10	40%	10	40%	03	12%

Table 10: Students' Guesses about the Meaning of the Word 'Rend'

Table shows that, except for 12% who have not answered this question, 40% have correctly guessed the meaning of the word 'rend' by giving its synonyms 'tear and rip'. Other 40% have given a wrong suggestion to the meaning of the word 'rend' that it means 'destroy'. Only 08% have assigned the word 'rend' the meaning 'heal and mend'.

3.3.4. Discussion of the Results

Students begin the exercise by skimming rapidly the first passage, the introductory passage, in order to be able to answer items 01, 02, 03, and 04. The purpose of introducing the introductory passage is to motivate students and prepare them, by activating their knowledge, so as to be able to read the text.

The majority of students (80%) have successfully identified the position of the author of the text. Notice that, it is quite possible to answer the first item about the position of the author of the text as, 'a student', 'an expert', or 'a patient', without actually reading the whole of the text. In fact, through a quick analysis of the title, more knowledgeable students would realize that there exists a kind of modality in it – the use of the imperative form of the verb 'to give'. As a rule, imperative form of the verb within a title means direct instruction. So, students who are familiar with such convention of the instructional discourse would read the title as a direct instruction. In addition, making use of their background knowledge, these students, in fact, can identify what 'a patient', 'an expert', and 'a student' is and what they generally do. Consequently, these students would realize that among the three provided options, the option 'an expert' is the best answer for this first item as long as students' knowledge of what 'an expert' is (a person who is highly trained/skilled and who can tell the others what they can do and what they cannot) concords with his knowledge about the nature of the text (giving instructions; detailed information on how to do/use something).

Once students have established the main purpose or function of the text, which is to give instructions to the reader on how to do/use something, they need further to find out what these instructions are for. In other words, they need to identify the main topic(s) discussed in

the text. In this case, it is worth devoting some time and effort looking for other sources of information (other than the title) that would reveal much about this text.

The majority of students (85%) were, to a large extent, successful in identifying the main topic or general content of the text, which is 'back injuries'. Most of them have actually relied on their knowledge of a number of content words such as: 'back' the key word in the title "Give Your Back a Break", the noun phrase 'back injuries' repeated three times; once in the first subtitle "Why are Back Injuries are So Common", once in the second subtitle "How to Prevent Back Injuries", and once in the first sentence of the short summary "Most back injuries are entirely preventable".

Once students have succeeded in identifying the main topic discussed in the text, they need to begin to read with a more specific and focused strategy of prediction. When students were asked through the fourth item to identify the beginning of the text (what is to be read in the second passage immediately after the first introductory passage) only 24% of them have succeeded in doing so. Making the correct answer for this item depends on the students' familiarity with the function of the text and its organizational framework.

Clearly as requested, students did not read the whole of the text (except for the title, subtitles, and short summary) because if they did so, the majority of them would have immediately identified the beginning of the text to be a description of the back, since it is very clearly stated in almost the whole of the second passage. On the contrary, the majority of them have claimed that the text would start with an explanation of what causes back injuries (40% of the total population), or an indication of the frequency of back injuries (16%). These wrong predictions may be due to the students' reliance on the subtitle of the second passage

"Why Back Injuries are so common" which seems somehow misleading. It makes them think, and this is often true, that the term 'why' is usually used to ask for reasons and the term 'common' is used to state frequencies. If students have read the text they would find that the author first describes the term 'back' associated with 'back injuries' in the first four sentences in the passage :"The back is made up of 24 vertebrae…Millions of nerve cells lead into the spinal cord, which is the main conduit for nerve cells to the brain." The purpose of this description is to give the reader new information about the key term. In other words, it benefits readers who are presumably new in the field of the text. Students would also have realized that at the very end of the passage, particularly the last sentence, the writer only briefly states some incidentals of back injuries whose causes, perhaps, are to be mentioned in the next/third passage. Students who have expected the text to begin with ways of preventing back injuries may have used the short summary to guide their expectation. Since the summary starts with the sentence "Most back injuries are entirely preventable.", students expect this sentence to be expanded in the next/second passage.

What can be said is that students have made wrong predictions (general or specific) because: they may lack the linguistic knowledge (knowledge of words) which makes it difficult for them to understand the intended meaning of the title, subtitles, and the short summary, as they may lack the appropriate knowledge of the topic, about back injuries, and could not bring their experience and attitudes to build up correct predictions about the content of the text and what they are going to read next. Another possible reason for having students made wrong predictions is that the title did not give them any idea about the content of the text at all, not because it contains difficult words in it, but just because it is ambiguous. That is, although they understand each word in it, they fail to make them relate to a particular topic.

The last sentence in the second passage of the text about describing the back provides a powerful clue that helps students expect what comes next in the last passage: "These nerve cells can get pinched, these muscle and ligaments can rend, and these discs can slip out of place if you don't take care of your back." Students in this sentence, as it has already been mentioned, are dealing with a causal relationship of the pattern "if X occurs, then Y will happen". The purpose of stating it at the very end of the passage is to prepare readers for what comes in the next/last passage (make them predict), and make them know that what comes next may, or may not, be interesting to them (make them read with a purpose). So, according to this sentence the last passage would deal with 'causes of back injuries' and/or 'ways of preventing back injuries'.

Experts usually let predictions until the end of a text, students might realize. In this exercise text, there is one explicitly stated cause of back injuries in the first sentence of the last passage " the number one cause of back injuries is improper lifting" and almost the whole of the last passage is about giving instructions about how to prevent back injuries.

The last passage of the text itself contains evident clues which help students predict its content which are: the subtitle "How to Prevent Back Injuries", imperative form of verbs (be sure, get down, don't hunch over, maintain, keep, don't twist, and don't stretch), the transitional statement "I recommend the following prevention strategies: ", and the symbol (•) used to present the list of instructions.

The majority of students (76%) their predictions about the content of the last passage were confirmed. This is a very important result which indicates a development in the students' use of prediction and therefore the quality of their predictions. The reason behind this may be

that as students get more involved in reading the text, more text cues are provided, and more background knowledge might be activated. That is, by the end of reading the text, students were provided with a high level knowledge (textual and background) that enables them to make more adequate predictions.

As students become familiar with the topic of 'back injuries', they become aware of the flow of information of the text, and as a result they become able to predict more correctly what is next. The evidence for this was suggested by one student who said: " [since] the writer starts by a description of the back, so, I expect [to read next about] how to prevent back injuries."

Knowledge students claim to possess about back injuries is mainly from their own experience: the majority of them have said that back injuries often stem from 'lifting heavy things', 'wrong positions' and 'working hard along the whole day'. One student has said: "students sit for a long time on chairs in school, or at home in front of their PCs, this can cause them back injuries" another student has said: "I know a lot, since I already experienced them when I was practicing sport."

It seems that there is sufficient information in the text to make up for any possible deficiency or absence of background knowledge. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether the knowledge students claim to have already possess may be altered by the information they have just acquired from their initial reading of the text.

The second passage provides students with enough clues that help them figure out what the word 'conduit' and 'rend' mean: by looking carefully at the context in which the word

'conduit' occurs: "Millions of nerve cells lead into the spinal cord, which is the main conduit for nerve messages to the brain." From this sentence students may be able to pull out:

- The word 'spinal cord' to which the word conduit is attributed. Except for those who might have a scientific inclination, the majority of students might be unable to recognize the 'spinal cord' as the mass of nerves inside the spine (the small bones that are connected together down the middle of the back).
- The preposition 'to' which indicates movement from an X point **to** a Y point. That is, from the spinal cord **to** the brain.

Students may use their background knowledge to clarify the options of the item:

- Pathway or channel: its well-known meaning; a line along which somebody/something moves.
- Home or dwelling: its well-known meaning; a place where somebody lives.
- Resistance: its well-known meaning; opposition to somebody/something.

By associating information drawn from the text with their background knowledge; students would discover that " the spinal cord is the main pathway/channel for nerve messages to the brain." since pathway or channel are the only words, among the provided words, that suggest movement towards a particular point.

For those students who know French well may take the advantage of their knowledge to identify the cognate pair ,'conduit' in English and 'conduit' in French, that is, two words with similar spelling, pronunciation, and meaning(s). The word 'conduit' in French means:

"construction ou dispositif en form de tuyau ou de canalization" (in English, a pipe, channel or tube which liquid, gas or electrical wire can pass through). From the meaning of the word in French, students could extract its meaning which is the same in English.

In order to identify the meaning of the word 'rend', again, students need to look at the context in which it occurs: "These nerve cells can get pinched, these muscles and ligaments can get rend, and these discs can slip out of place if you don't take proper care of your back." Based on this context, students at least are able to recognize that the word 'rend' is something negative. The majority of them have chosen either 'tear/ rip' (40% of the total population) or 'destroy'(40% of the total population) to be synonyms to the word 'rend', since all these words have negative connotations, rather than choosing 'heal' and 'mend' (only 08% of the total population), since they have positive connotations.

Conclusion

The hypothesis suggested at the beginning of this study that "Third Year Students of English as a Foreign Language at the University of Constantine use prediction as a reading strategy, and as they do such use is affected by the level of their linguistic knowledge of English and their background knowledge of the content of the text being read" is again confirmed. In other words, it has been proved that there is a strong relationship between the students' knowledge (whether linguistic and background) and their success in making predictions about the text (whether general or specific).

From the detailed analysis of the students' answers to the exercise questions it is concluded that:

- Before reading, the majority students have succeeded to a large extent in making predictions about the text: they may have used what they already know about the author, or the title of the text may trigger memories of other texts with similar content;

- There are students who have made correct predictions about the beginning of the text as there are students who have made wrong ones; this means that, students' expectations or predictions can never be always and totally correct;

- Nearly all students their predictions about the last passage of the text were correct, this means that, students' failure to make correct predictions at the beginning of the reading process does not mean at all that they will keep making wrong predictions;

- Students, as they go further in reading, become more and more conscious of the nature of their predictions as correct or incorrect and will be able to evaluate them.

General Conclusion

Reading is a complex cognitive activity that draws on many cognitive strategies; the strategy prediction is one of them. That is, in order to be able to read with some proficiency, students have to be able to predict; to make reasonable guesses to what is coming next.

Before reading, students make first general predictions about what the reading material is about. The use of prediction as a pre-reading strategy requires such steps as: setting a purpose for reading, previewing the reading material, activating background knowledge, and making general predictions. However, prediction as an important pre-reading strategy does not only occur before reading; rather it never ceases to occur during the reading process.

Reading is constant process of making and remaking of predictions. In other words, active readers make predictions about what they are going to read. These predictions may or may not be confirmed. In any case readers are continuously involved in the task of making predictions: if their predictions are confirmed they make further hypothesis, if not, they change them into new predictions.

Furthermore, as the results of this study shows, the use of prediction is affected by two main factors. In the first place by students' linguistic knowledge; the greater the linguistic knowledge students' have the better they will make use of the prediction strategy and comprehend the text. The students' background knowledge is the other affective factor just in the same way.

From the theoretical chapters, the first chapter that has presented reading as a cognitive process and the second chapter that has discussed the cognitive reading strategy of prediction and from the chapter that has reported the empirical investigation, the most significant teaching implications for reading in a foreign language classroom can be identified.

The teaching (or the development of explicit awareness) of the strategy of prediction should be the main goal of most educational programs. Therefore the most critical question is "how can teachers help their students become more predictive?". The answer is that the most valuable elements in teaching prediction are:(1) to stop and check students grasp or awareness of the strategy, and (2) to spend much time as possible to practice the strategy of prediction through exercises continuously modified to fit the students needs and circumstances.

Another most controversial question concerning the strategy of prediction is "what its function is?". This is a very important question, since one would not wish to devote time for something without knowing what its value is likely to be.

The primary purpose of prediction practice and exercises should not be to determine the depth of students' knowledge of certain topics (to test their understanding and comprehension), but to determine how well they can exploit the linguistic (structural, grammatical, and lexical) and non-linguistic concepts they have already learned.

Teachers should take into consideration the way their prediction exercises are designed. It is suggested that prediction exercises should consist of having students only a brief view of a set of cues, and then generate a set of predictions about what they expect to find in the text. However, this cannot be achieved unless teachers teach them to use several

pre-reading activities, such as previewing, and train them to do something before reading. It is further suggested that students should be made aware of the rhetorical organizational structures of various types of texts (expository, narrative, historical…, etc.). That is, explicit awareness of the structure and the common features of texts (title, introduction, ending of the text…, etc.) are useful aids for students helping them to invoke relevant background knowledge to facilitate their comprehension.

Finally, we recommend that teachers should ask themselves the following, or any other, questions before deciding on which prediction activities to use in the foreign language classroom:

- Am I helping my students become aware of the fact that prediction is a highly useful strategy?
- Does the reading material provide students with sufficient information that guide them to make predictions?
- How can I help students activate appropriate background knowledge?
- What kind of pre-reading activities that can be designed to increase students' knowledge?

It is very important that teachers would ask themselves such questions. If teachers ask themselves such questions before having their students read any text, it is fairly certain that their students will become more secure, more independent, and especially proficient readers.

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Appendixes

Appendix # A:

The Students' Questionnaire

Name: ………………

Group: ……………...

Repetitive: Yes □   No □

Fill in the following questionnaire, please.

1. How long have you been studying English?

    ☐ Year (s)

2. Do you consider your level in English?

    Very good □   Good □   Average □   Poor □

3. You like reading :

    A lot □   A little □   Not at all □

4. How often do you read?

    Frequently □   Sometimes □   Rarely □

5. In which language do you prefer to read?

    Arabic □   French □   English □

6. How often do you read in English?

    Frequently □   Sometimes □   Rarely □

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7. Why do you read in English?

      a. For pleasure □

      b. To increase your knowledge of the language □

      c. To become familiar with the English culture □

      d. Other □ please, specify.

8. How do you tend to read in English?

    Word by word □   In group of words □

9. What makes a text of English difficult for you? *(You can tick more than one box. In this case, please rank your choices by giving 1 to the most important until 3or 4 to the least important).*

      a. When it reflects a culture that is different from yours □

      b. When the topic is unfamiliar to you □

      c. When it contains difficult or unfamiliar words □

      d. Other □ please, specify……………………….

10. Does the title of a book, a text, or an article give you an idea about its content before you start reading?

    Yes □   No □

11. If "yes", do you rely only on the title to predict (guess) what comes next in the text?

    Yes □   No □

12. If "no", what other things may help you in your prediction (or guess)? (*You can tick more than one box. In this case, please rank your choices by giving 1to the most important until 3 or 4 to the least important).*

      a. Pictures, charts, diagrams and tables

      b. Subtitles, headings of chapters and paragraphs (summary, introduction, and conclusion

      c. Your general knowledge of the topic □

      d. Other □ please, specify………………………

13. As you read, do you usually predict (or guess) what the writer is likely to say in the next word, sentence, paragraph, etc.?

       Yes□   No □

14. If "yes", do your predictions (guesses) always get confirmed (they are always true)?

       Yes □   No □

15. If "no", what do you do then?

      a. Stop reading □

      b. Change your prediction (or guess) □

      c. Reread what you have already read □

      d. Other□ please, please…………………

16. What do you do if you meet a word that you do not know? (*You can tick more than one box. In this case, please rank your choices by giving 1 to the most important until 4 to the least important).*

      a. Skip it over (avoid it) □

      b. Guess its meaning from context □

      c. Ask a friend or the teacher □

      d. Look it up in the dictionary □

17. For those who decide to "guess" the meaning of the unfamiliar word, how do you do so?

      a. By looking at the prefix, suffix or root of the word □

      b. By looking at what makes sense in the sentence □

18. Do you think prediction (guessing) is an important reading strategy?

       Yes □   No □

19. If yes, what do you think the importance of prediction (or guessing) for reading comprehension is? *(You can tick more than one box. In this case, please rank your choices from 1 to the most important until 3 or 4 to the least important).*

a. It warms you to the topic(makes the topic familiar to you before you start reading

b. It helps you become confident (not frightened) about reading a new text □

c. It saves your time □

d. Other□ please, specify

20. Would you like to add any comment or suggestion?

………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix # B:

The Practical Exercise

*Before you read the whole article below (which we've divided into three passages), apply "prediction" technique to "warm up" for the text. Answer the pre-reading questions below. **Don't** read the whole article, and yet **don't** use the dictionary. Once you've answered the pre-reading questions, read each passage and answer the questions that follow.*

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Give Your Back a Break

Most back injuries are entirely preventable. If you keep a short list of do's and don'ts in mind, you will be much more likely to keep your back free from injury.

</div>

1. What are you about to read is written by:

   a. A student   b. An expert   c. A patient

2. What main topics are covered in this article? (Use the title, the subtitles and the short summary to predict)

   …………………………………………………………………………………….

   …………………………………………………………………………………..

3. What important clues (key words) do you see? List them below.

   …………………………………………………………………………………..

   …………………………………………………………………………………...

Before you start reading the next passage, decide how you expect it to begin. Of course, you cannot always predict precisely what an author will say, but you can use knowledge of the text and your general knowledge to make appropriate guesses.

4. Which of the following seems to be the most likely beginning?

   a. The author will describe the main causes of back injuries. ☐
   b. The author will describe the best way to prevent back injuries. ☐
   c. The author will describe the back. ☐
   d. The author will describe the frequency of back injuries. ☐

Now read the passage and see if your expectations are confirmed (correct).

Why are Back Injuries So Common

The back is made up of 24 vertebrae, the small bones that make up the spine and protect the spinal cord. In between the vertebrae are discs, which cushion the vertebrae. The vertebrae and discs are supported by dozens of muscles and ligaments. Millions of nerve cells lead into the spinal cord, which is the main *conduit* for nerve messages to the brain. These nerve cells can get pinched, these muscles and ligaments can *rend*, and these discs can slip out of place if you don't take proper care of your back.

By Michael Watson, Chropractor

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5. The article appears to be critical about "back injuries". Is this what you've really expected?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

6. Did you expect the article to begin with a description of the back?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

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7. What do you expect to read next?

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

8. What key words or phrases (from the above passage) points to this direction?

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

9. What do you know about "back injuries" in general that makes you predict this?

………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………….

Now read the passage to see if your expectations are confirmed (or correct).

How to Prevent Back Injuries

The number one cause of back injury is improper lifting. Whenever you have to lift heavy objects (anything heavier than 25 pounds), be sure to use your arms and legs to the lifting and not your back. Get down into a squatting position so that your leverage is in your legs, not your lower back muscles. If you don't bent your knees, all the strain will be on your lower back. In addition, you need to keep your back as straight as possible. Don't hunch over.

In addition, I recommend the following prevention strategies:

- Maintain a good posture. Walk, sit and stand with your back straight. This will strengthen your overall back strength and help prevent muscle strain and tears.
- Keep frequently used items within arm's reach so you don't have to stretch too far to get them.
- Don't twist you as you carry heavy objects; turn your whole body instead.
- Don't stretch to reach for things above your head. Use a step ladder instead.

10. Were your expectations confirmed (correct)?

Yes ☐   No ☐

11. If "no", why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

12. Have you misunderstood something in the above passages?

Yes ☐   No ☐

13. If "yes", what is it?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

In your reading the passages, there are some words that you do not understand. It is not allowed to use the dictionary, but try to guess their meaning from context.

14. What does the word <u>conduit</u> mean?

   a. Channel, pathway   b. Home, dwelling   c. Resistance

15. What does the word <u>rend</u> mean?

   a. Heal, mend   b. Destroy   c. Tear, and rip