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Implementing Lexical Inferencing Strategies to Improve High School Students' Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT: The research discovers the impact of Lexical Inferencing Strategies (LIS) on the English reading comprehension of thirty 11th-grade students in Thai Nguyen Specialized High school, Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam. This study uses a quasi-experimental research design in which thirty students are divided into two groups: experimental and control groups. Over a seven-week intervention, the experimental group received specialized instruction on how to guess the meanings of unknown words based on linguistic and contextual clues, while the control group followed traditional methods. The statistics were collected through the pre-test, three practice tests and the post-test. Also, attitudes of students were perceived and gathered with the post-questionnaire. The findings reveal that students' scores from the experimental group improved significantly which proved the effectiveness of LIS to their reading comprehension. Also, as being reported from responses of the post-questionnaire, attitudes and perceptions of students about their experiences on lexical inferencing strategies were significant when most of them replied that lexical inferencing strategies had a positive impact on their reading comprehension.

KEYWORDS: lexical inferencing strategies, high school students, reading comprehension, tests, questionnaire, attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

English is being spoken widely across the world with approximately 370 million native speakers and roughly 1.5 billion non-native speakers worldwide (British Council & Ethnologue) and it serves as a global gateway to advanced education and employment opportunities. In the context of education, English serves as a gateway to global education and employment opportunities. In Vietnam, English has been taught to students from an early age in many kinds of educational institutions, and learned in various fields such as communication and advertisements (C.K. Ly, 2022; Van V.H. ,2020; Huong, T.N.N. & Hiep, P.H., 2010).

Reading is defined as a primary receptive skill that involves perceiving written text to understand contents and constructing meaning while processing and interacting with text as the combination of past knowledge and prior experience, and other aspects (Richards & Schmidt, 2013; Rudell, 1994). Reading comprehension is the process that the reader, instead of extracting meanings, builds it by activating knowledge structures in their mind to relate the knowledge that is possessed to the ideas conveyed in a passage or a text (Kusumarasdyat. K, 2023).

There are three primary factors that hinder students from improving reading comprehension: vocabulary retention (Tran, Q. T., & Duong, M. T., 2018) background knowledge (Burmakow, S., 2016), and short-term memory (Ha. V.L. ,2021). According to Dang, T.N.Y. (2020), Vietnamese students who learn English have limited vocabulary knowledge including comprehending English words' meaning, formulaic sequences and their form. Also, textbooks with unpredictable linguistic features can be one essential factor that make reading sections more challenging for teachers and instructors to scaffold. (Nguyen, H. T., & Javorsky, K.,2025). These issues are also particularly visible in the National High School Graduation Exam, where reading sections often exceed the reading proficiency levels of students.

In order to address these challenges, it is advocated that students need instruction in reading strategies. Reading strategies are sets of mental operations taking place when readers approach a text and make sense of what they are reading in an effective way; also, competent readers apply strategies more frequently and efficiently than incompetent ones (Pani, 2004).

Concerning reading, lexical inferencing strategies are one of the promising ones. Initially, in a study conducted by Haastrup, K (1991), "lexical inferencing" means that readers guess words or phrases based on contextual settings or use morphological analysis alone, or readers use both of the aforementioned ones. Multiple studies have been done to examine the effectiveness of lexical inferencing strategies on improving students' reading comprehension and they proved that this set of strategies could help English learners to develop their reading comprehension. Lexical inferencing strategies would be beneficial for students when they approach English texts and are asked to guess the meaning of unknown words. While lexical inferencing strategies were

studied in many countries, there is a notable lack of experimental research on lexical inferencing strategies within the Vietnamese context. This is because existing studies in Vietnam prioritize techniques such as skimming and scanning. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by discovering the impact of the lexical inferencing strategies on 11th-grade students at Thai Nguyen specialized high school. By exploring and measuring its effectiveness, the study seeks to give clear answers to whether this set of strategies enhance students' reading comprehension more than traditional ones.

Research questions:

1) What is the current level of high school students' reading comprehension before implementing lexical inferencing strategies?
2) How do lexical inferencing strategies impact high school students' reading comprehension?
3) What are the students' attitudes after implementing lexical inferencing strategies on their reading comprehension?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The overview of reading

Reading is recognized widely as one of four essential skills of the English language and serves as a primary receptive skill alongside listening. When it comes to a general context, reading is defined as the activity of a written text in order to understand its content (Richards & Schmidt, 2013); and, also reading acts as an interpretative process in which readers use specific strategies and skills to construct meanings based on the text (Afferbach, P, 2025). In the context of education, reading is seen as a process where readers activate relevant linguistic skills and knowledge to absorb information (Chamot A, 2004) and it requires significant effort because readers have to anticipate information, identify key points, organize and summarize data as well as monitor their comprehension to repair any breakdowns (Carrillo, W.L, 1976)

Reading is also viewed as an interactive action which involves a dynamic relationship between the reader and the text; also, it requires readers to apply both bottom-up processing (linguistic systems like word or sentence structures) and top-down processing (schematic or background knowledge), according to Alyousef, H.S (2006). Overall, reading is a multi-stage process in which readers utilize their cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds to comprehend texts and that leads to the development of reading fluency.

The importance of reading involves being the most effective method of expanding vocabulary knowledge and absorbing knowledge (Celik & Altun, 2023); developing language proficiency levels and supporting grammatical development (Goctu, 2016). In conclusion, reading is a fundamental process that can assist learners improve linguistic comprehension and develop their long-term vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

B. Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is an important process in which readers construct meaning from text by integrating linguistic information as well as cognitive processes. According to Richards & Schmidt (2013), reading comprehension is categorized into four types: literal comprehension involves recalling information that is explicitly contained in a text; critical or evaluative comprehension involves the ability that people read to compare information in a text with their own background knowledge and value this text; appreciative comprehension involves readers absorbing and gaining an emotional or meaningful response from the text and inferential comprehension involves reading while using intuition and experience to hypothesize about unstated meanings (Saadatnia & Tavakoli, 2016; Pennel, D, 2002).

There are several factors that affect reading comprehension namely: vocabulary, background knowledge and morphological awareness and cognitive factors including background knowledge (schema), short-term memory and inference skills. First, vocabulary and reading comprehension has a significant relationship due to the fact that vocabulary knowledge has constantly been an important predictor of the difficulty of a text (Stahl, 2003). Secondly, according to Bransford & Johnson (1972), background knowledge may be necessary for students during the initial meaningful process of the information which helps them to remember the information from the text faster and more effectively. Thirdly, in terms of cognitive factors, as a component in the lexical system, morphology is believed to indirectly assist readers in understanding texts as well as facilitating word reading (Levesque, Kieffer & Deacon, 2017). Next, as cited by Trabassso & Suh (1993), when readers acquire new information from the text, short-term memory helps them to retain that information and form a causal connection or "inference" afterwards. The last factor is inference skills. As stated by Sadeghi et al (2018), inference skills significantly affect students' reading comprehension that students who are more competent in guessing and inferring unknown words from the text are better readers.

C. Reading strategies

Reading strategies are defined as methods, plans and behaviors that learners apply in order to make their reading processes more effective and successful (Baker & Boonkit, 2004; Janken, 2003). There are three different types of reading strategies (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001): metacognitive strategies involving organized methods that learners control their reading process which are planning or monitoring; cognitive strategies involving actions and procedures that readers use while reading the texts directly and

when problems arise during the reading process and these include skimming or scanning; support strategies involving note-taking or using dictionaries.

Reading strategies are believed to offer benefits to EFL learners. There are two main reasons why reading strategies are important to EFL students, regarding their reading comprehension as well as their promotion of deeper understanding. First of all, implementing and instructing reading strategies would develop EFL students' reading comprehension. Reading strategies have been discovered to help students improve reading comprehension (Herman, Perkins, Hansen & Gomez, 2010). Also, according to Leow (2022, cited in Hilmi, 2024), students who are instructed with reading strategies can demonstrate greater information processing speed, interpretive accuracy, and improve better knowledge retention compared to students who are not provided with strategy training.

D. Lexical inferencing strategies

According to Nassaji & Hu (2014), lexical inferencing strategies are when readers derive the meaning of unknown words based on context using linguistic knowledge as well as cognitive & metacognitive strategies. There are twelve types of lexical inferencing strategies being divided into four groups: Form-focused strategies involving analysing, associating and repeating; Meaning-focused strategies involving use of textual cues, prior knowledge, paraphrasing; Evaluating strategies involving inquiry making, confirming or disconfirming and commenting; Monitoring strategies involving stating the failure or difficulty, suspending judgement and reattempting. Four groups of lexical inferencing strategies are presented in the following figure:

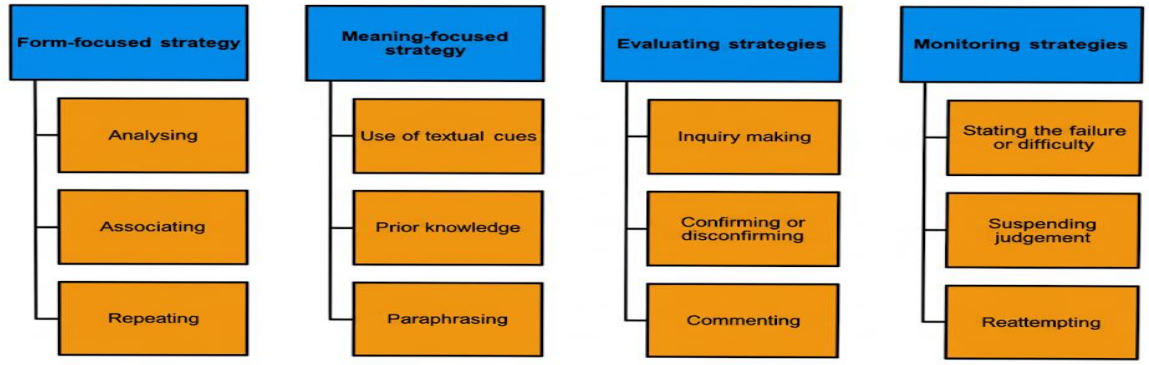


Figure 1. Four groups of lexical inferencing strategies (Nassaji and Hu, 2012). Drawn by Brugger and Juska-Bacher (2021).

In terms of lexical inferencing strategies, there are several factors that readers have to rely on in the lexical inferencing process and they are called "cues". Regarding cues that readers use to infer the meaning of unknown words, there are three main cue types (Carton, 1971; Haastrup, 1991): Extra-lingual cues involving co-text (immediate co-text, beyond sentence co-text, unspecific/general part of the text) and knowledge of the world (factual knowledge, attitudes and beliefs); Intra-lingual cues involving phonological cues, orthographical cues, morphological cues, lexical cues and syntactical cues; inter-lingual cues relating to visual aids and communication which are not taken into account.

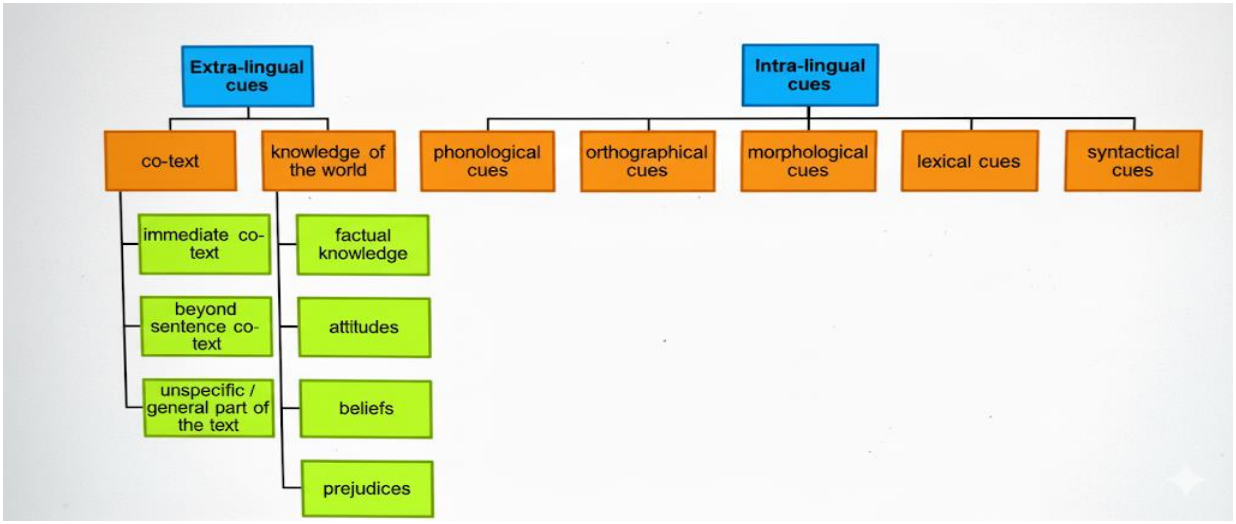


Figure 2: Cues for lexical inferencing process (Haastrup, 1991). Drawn by Brugger and Juska-Bacher (2021).

Beyond these cues, there are three main factors that influence the effectiveness of lexical inferencing strategies namely: learner factors, language factors and task factors. Concerning learner factors, according to Fukkink (2005), older students tend to have more effective inferences and better guesses due to the fact that they have more reading experience, vocabulary knowledge as well as cognitive maturity, in comparison with younger students. Also, concerning reading skills, skilled readers can take advantage of the context more effectively by activating previous knowledge and connecting different parts of the text to infer meanings of unknown words (Costa, 2010 cited in Brugger and Juska-Bacher, 2021). As for language factors, there are two factors affecting lexical inferencing processes: background knowledge and reading fluency. According to Haastrup (1991, cited by Kaivanpahah & Moghaddam, 2012), lexical inferencing involves guessing words that are derived from two kinds of background knowledge which are two kinds of background knowledge which are linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge. Concerning reading fluency, as cited in Pulido, D. (2007), readers with efficient decoding skills and reading proficiency can dictate and integrate ideas from context and use their information from long-term memory, then, results in more successful lexical inferencing. As for task factors, context clues and the quantity of unknown words also play a crucial role. Firstly, research has shown that readers equipped with better contextual awareness achieve higher inferencing accuracy (Nassaji, 2003). With regards to the quantity of unknown words, Laufer (1997) once wrote that the proportion of unfamiliar words that have to be inferred is too high, it can limit readers' ability to guess meanings and result in inaccurate inferences.

E. Related studies

Various studies had investigated the impact of lexical inferencing strategies on reading comprehension of EFL students. Many researchers had found that high-proficiency students use linguistic knowledge to understand whole texts whereas lower-lever ones rely more on sentence-level grammar; while others had opposite insights on how the lexical inferencing strategies contributed to students' reading comprehension. Finally, Sadeghi et al. (2018) confirmed that there was a strong correlation between lexical inferencing strategies instruction and reading comprehension performance.

However, most of the reviewed studies had small or limited sizes. Another significant downside of these studies are over-reliance either on quantitative (test-based) or qualitative (self-reported) methods. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate how lexical inferencing strategies affect students' reading comprehension with broader sample size. Also, a mixed-method design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data in order to gain a more complex understanding of how lexical inferencing strategies affect students' reading comprehension performance. Moreover, a longer intervention period would be conducted to observe clearer effects of the lexical inferencing strategies on students' reading performance.

METHODOLOGY

The research uses a quasi-experimental design which employs both experimental and control groups to gather statistics before and after the intervention period. Participants of the study consisted of 30 students from the 11th-grade literature-majored class at Thai Nguyen Specialized High School in Vietnam. Specifically, students from both groups received the same procedure which includes taking the pretest, doing three practice tests and taking the posttest. All the tests were reading tests used to assess the impact of lexical inferencing strategies on their reading comprehension. However, after taking the pretest, students from both groups received different treatments. While students from the experimental group were given explicit lexical inferencing strategies instructions during the practice stages, those from the control group were only provided with practice reading tests and they followed traditional reading instructions.

In terms of data collection instruments, the study utilized both quantitative and qualitative tools to assess both students' reading comprehension before and after using lexical inferencing strategies and their personal perceptions and attitudes towards the use of lexical inferencing strategies. Regarding quantitative analysis, according to William, D., & Black, P. (1996), tests are undoubtedly an important data collection instrument when it comes to assessing students' mastery of skills and knowledge in the context of educational content. Specifically, students from both groups received the same procedure which includes taking the pretest, doing three practice tests and taking the posttest. All the tests were reading tests used to assess the impact of lexical inferencing strategies on their reading comprehension. After the intervention period, students from the experimental group were given the post-questionnaire to share their feedback on using lexical inferencing strategies in improving their reading comprehension. According to Fife-Schaw, C. (2020), questionnaires are widely utilized by many researchers because of their versatility in terms of cost and practicality, especially in online contexts.

As for the research procedure, the research treatment took seven weeks. The research procedure is presented in the below table:

Table I. The Timeline Plan of The Research

Week 1	- The researcher administered the pre-test. - Students were selectively divided into two groups: experimental group and control group.

Week 2	- Students from both groups took the practice test 1
Week 4	- Students from both groups took the practice test 2
Week 6	- Students from both groups took the practice test 3
Week 7	- The researcher administered the post-test. - Students from the experimental group filled the post-questionnaire forms.

Finally, in regards to data analysis methods, quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and Google Sheets. In detail, for tests' results (especially the pre-test and post-test), two types of t-tests were conducted to compare mean scores. Each type of t-test had a specific purpose in assessing students' scores before and after implementing lexical inferencing strategies and their purposes are presented below: 1. Independent Samples T-test was used to evaluate the average students' scores of the pre-test and the post-test between the experimental and control groups; 2. Paired Samples T-test were used to evaluate the average pre-test scores and post-test scores within the experimental group as well as the control group. Also, as for the post-questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items before implementing any further analysis.

FINDINGS

A. RQ1: What is the current level of high school students' reading comprehension before implementing lexical inferencing strategies?

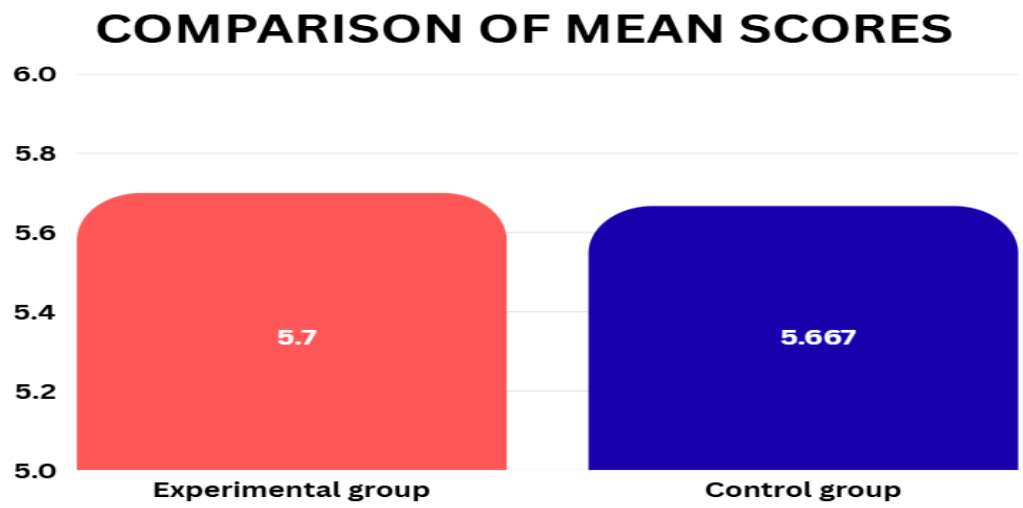


Figure 3. The average score of the pre-test from experimental and control groups

Figure 3 depicts the average pre-test scores of students from two groups: experimental and control group. As can be seen from the figure, the pre-test scores from both groups shared the same level of reading proficiency with the statistics being respectively 5.7 (the former) and 5.667 (the latter). Even though the mean score of the latter was slightly lower than that of the former about 0.033, this difference was insignificant at the initial stage of the research.

Table II. Descriptive Data of Pre-test Results from Experimental and Control Groups Group Statistics

group		**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
pre_test	exp_group	15	5.700	1.0823	.2795
	ctrl_group	15	5.667	1.0465	.2702

Table III. Independent Samples T-test Results for Pre-test Scores Between The Experimental and The Control Group
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
		F	Sig.				Mean differences	Std. Error Differences	Lower	Upper
pre test	equal variances assumed	.086	.772	.086	28	.932	.0333	.3887	-.7629	.8296
	equal not variances assumed			.086	27.968	.932	.0333	.3887	-.7630	.8297

As can be seen from the independent samples t-test (table 3 and table 4) that was conducted on the pre-test scores, the results revealed that the experimental group (M = 5.70, SD = 1.08) and the control group (M = 5.67, SD = 1.05) shared nearly identical reading proficiency levels. Also, the t-test results (t = 0.086, p = 0.932) confirmed that the difference between the experimental group and the control group was not statistically noticeable. It can be concluded that both groups had a comparable level of reading comprehension before the research treatment.

RQ2. How do lexical inferencing strategies impact on high school students' reading comprehension?

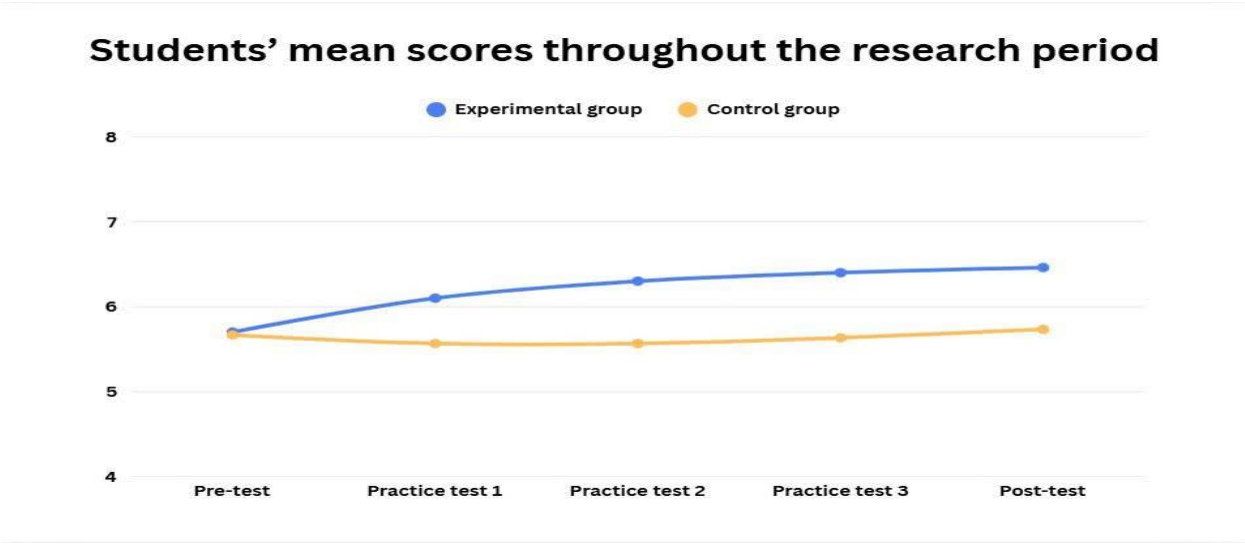


Figure 4. The average scores of students from the experimental group throughout the research period

The figure 4 highlights the gradual upward trend in reading comprehension performance for students' scores from the experimental group. Their average scores increased consistently from 5.7 (pre-test) to 6.1 in practice test 1, 6.3 in practice test 2 and 6.4 in practice test 3. By contrast, the control group witnessed a stagnation during the intervention period. The statistics initially decreased slightly to approximately 5.56 before recovering to 5.63 by the third practice test.

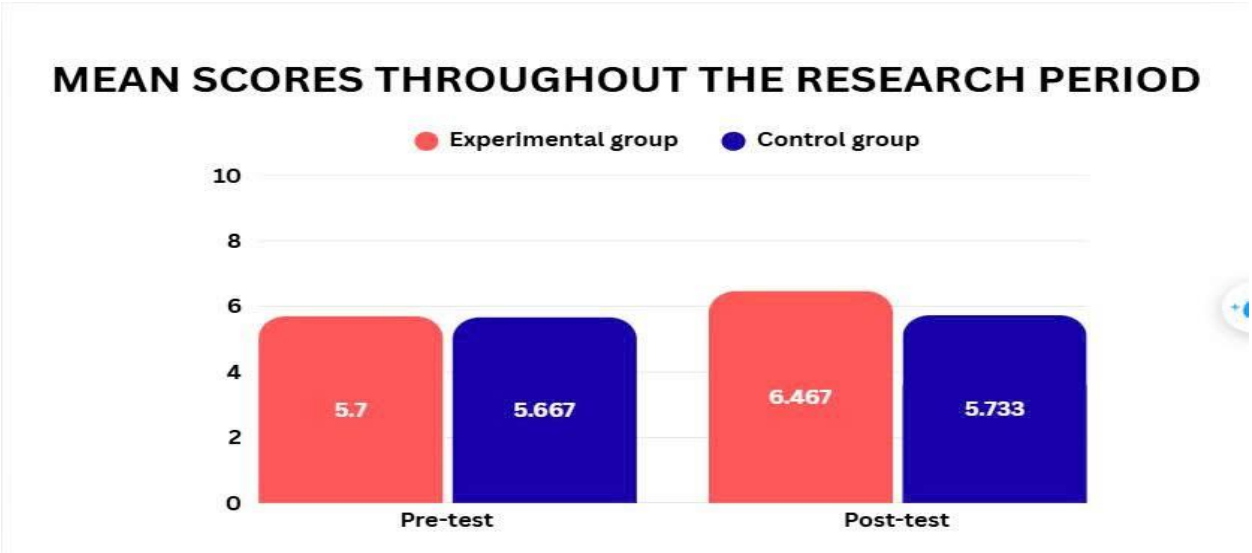


Figure 5. The comparison of mean scores between experimental and control groups in the pretest and posttest

Also can be seen from figure 5, it can be revealed that the mean scores for both groups were nearly identical at the beginning of the research. However, the mean score of the experimental group experienced a substantial rise from 5.7 to 6.4 in the post-test. Meanwhile, the average score of the control group increased insignificantly which moved only from 5.6 to 5.73. It can be concluded that lexical inferencing strategies had been effective to the reading comprehension performance of students from the experimental group.

Table IV. Paired Samples Statistics of The Pretest and Posttest's Scores from Students of The Experimental Group.

Mean			N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Exp. group	post_test	6.467	15	1.1412	.2947
	pre_test	5.700	15	1.0823	.2795

Table V. Paired Samples Correlations of The Pretest and Posttest Scores from Students of The Experimental Group.

N			Correlation	Sig.
Exp. group	post-test & pre-test	15	.974	.000

Table VI. Paired Samples T-test Results of The Pretest and Posttest Scores from Students of The Experimental Group

Paired Differences									
Mean			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Exp. group	post-test-pre-test	.7667	.2582	.0667	.6237	.9097	11.500	14	.000

Regarding the experimental group, it is noticeable that the average increased from 5.7 (SD = 1.0823) in the pre-test to 6.467 (SD = 1.1412) in the post-test. Thus, the results also revealed that the intervention of lexical inferencing strategies to the reading

performances of students from the experimental group was statistically significant, with the data being t(14)=11.500, p < 0.001 and the mean difference of 0.7667.

Table VII. Paired Samples Correlations of The Pretest and Posttest Scores from Students of The Control Group.

N			Correlation	Sig.
Exp. group	post-test & pre-test	15	.977	.000

Table VIII. Paired Samples T-test Results of The Pretest and Posttest Scores from Students of The Control Group

Paired Differences									
Mean			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Exp. group	post-test-pre-test	.0667	.3200	.0826	-.1105	.2439	.807	14	.433

As for the control group, as can be seen from the table, the average score (pretest) rose from roughly 5.6 (SD = 1.0465) to approximately 5.73 in the posttest (SD = 1.2517). Therefore, along with the aforementioned data, the results also indicated that participants' reading performance was not substantially improved with the data being t(14) = 0.807, p = 0.433 (p > 0.05) and the mean score being 0.0667.

Table IX. Descriptive Data of Post-test Results from Experimental and Control Groups

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
gain_score	exp_group	15	.767	.2582	.0667
	ctrl_group	15	.067	.2582	.0667

Table X. Independent Samples T-test Results of Posttest's Scores from Eperimental and Control Groups.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
		F	Sig.				Mean differences	Std. Error Differences	Lower	Upper
post_test	equal variances assumed	2.463	.128	7.425	28	.000	.7000	.0943	.5069	.8931

	equal not variances assumed			7.425	28.000	.000	.7000	.0943	.5069	.8931

As can be observed from the tables, it was clear that the average gain score of the experimental group was 0.767 (SD = 0.25) and it was noticeably higher than that of the control group (M=0.067, SD = 0.25). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, there was no significant difference between two groups (Sig. = 0.128, F = 2.463). Therefore, the "equal variances assumed" row was used and the independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group ($t(28)=7.425$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, it is notable to see that the application of lexical inference strategies had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension (from the experimental group) after the research period.

RQ3. What are students' attitudes after implementing lexical inferencing strategies on their reading comprehension?

Table XI. The Reliability Statistics Results of The Questionnaire Using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.773	5

Table XII. The Item Statistics Results of The Questionnaire Using Cronbach's Alpha

Mean		Std. Deviation	N
Statement_1	3.53	.516	15
Statement_2	3.40	.737	15
Statement_3	3.47	.640	15
Statement_4	3.67	.488	15
Statement_5	3.60	.737	15

Table XIII. The Item-total Statistics Results of The Questionnaire Using Cronbach's Alpha

Scale Mean if Item Deleted		Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Statement_1	14.13	3.981	.481	.753
Statement_2	14.27	3.067	.631	.700
Statement_3	14.20	3.743	.438	.767
Statement_4	14.00	4.143	.432	.766
Statement_5	14.07	2.781	.779	.635

The Cronbach's Alpha analysis revealed that the internal consistency and reliability of the post-questionnaire was acceptable. To be more specific, the calculated value was 0.773 which falls between the 0.70 - 0.80 range classified as "acceptable" for research purposes. Also, Item-Total Statistics showed that all five statements had meaningful contributions to the questionnaire with the correlation statistics ranging from 0.432 to 0.779 which surpasses 0.3 points. In addition, removing any individual item would not have improved the overall reliability score significantly and all five of them were kept for further analysis.

In conclusion, the questionnaire was statistically reliable for subsequent analysis.

Table XIV. Statements and Open-ended Questions from The Post-questionnaire

Statements
1. The lexical inferencing strategies were easy enough to learn and apply while reading English texts.
2. Instead of just looking words up in a dictionary, I also enjoyed using lexical inferencing strategies while reading English texts.
3. Lexical inferencing strategies made reading difficult English texts more interesting and less daunting to read.
4. I was able to apply lexical inferencing strategies (context clues, word roots, prefixes/suffixes) effectively during reading tasks.
5. I would recommend lexical inferencing strategies to other high school students.
Open-ended questions
1. If there were challenges when you tried to use lexical inferencing strategies, what was the biggest one?
2. Do you plan to continue using lexical inferencing strategies in your own reading in the future? Why or why not?

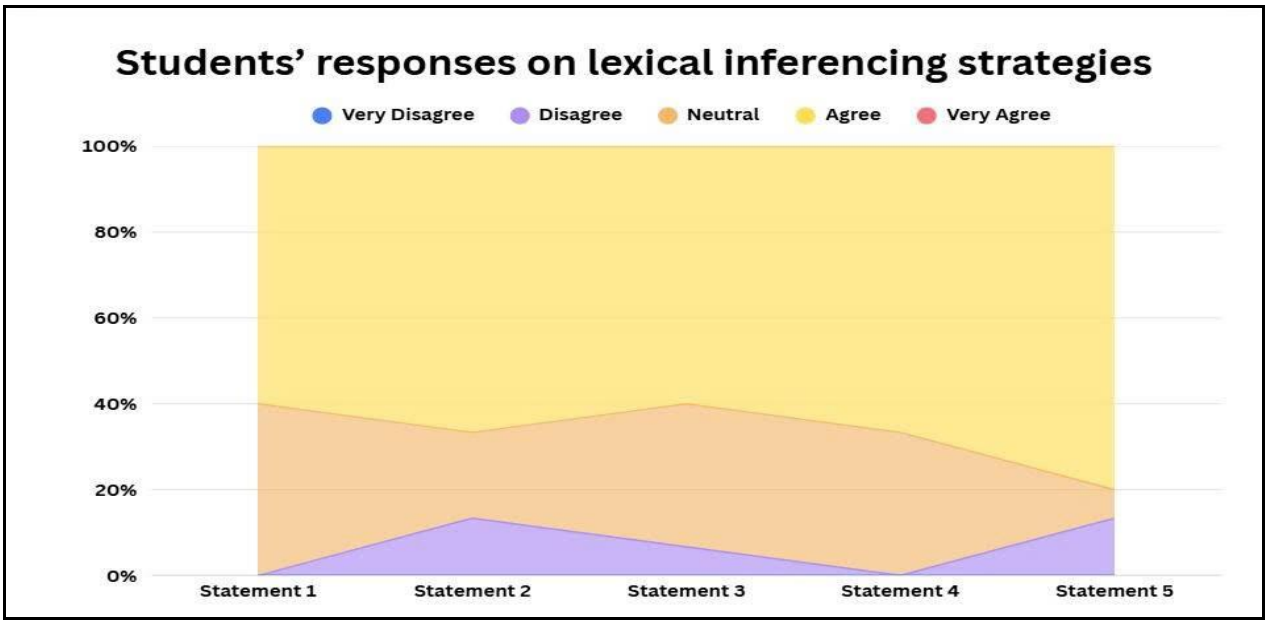


Figure 6. Responses from Students of The Experimental Group on Their Experiences with Lexical Inferencing Strategies

As can be seen from figure 6, students from the experimental group reported an overall positive experience towards the use of lexical inferencing strategies. To be more specific, 60% of students found the strategies easy to learn and apply while reading English texts, and nearly 70% reported that they preferred using lexical inferencing strategies over just looking words up in dictionaries during reading tasks. Furthermore, 60% of respondents felt lexical inferencing strategies made difficult English texts more interesting and less daunting. Meanwhile, 80% of participants agreed that they would recommend lexical inferencing strategies to their peers.

However, in terms of open-ended questions representing students' inner problem with using lexical inferencing strategies as well as their perception of applying these strategies in the future, students provided several insights. In terms of hurdles when using these strategies, the most prominent one was remembering and identifying numerous prefixes and suffixes, which was followed by a difficulty in extracting co-text clues and long, sophisticated sentences. Another challenge was struggling to guess meanings of unknown words when comprehending the context of an entire article or identifying antonyms.

As for further application, the majority of students intended to continue using lexical inferencing strategies. However, many of them suggested lexical inferencing strategies be combined with other strategies such as scanning or skimming. Even though a small number of participants insisted on using dictionaries for speed and felt lexical inferencing strategies less effective for speed,

the others still recognized the overall effectiveness of lexical inferencing strategies in improving their reading comprehension performance. The results showcased the multidimensional nature of student attitudes where they recognized the practicality of lexical inferencing strategies in spite of specific struggles.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the reported statistics highlighted the impact of lexical inferencing strategies on students' reading comprehension performance. At the beginning of the research, initial pre-test results revealed that both the experimental and control group shared comparable reading comprehension performance which was proved by the independent samples t-test. During the research treatment, the experimental group witnessed a significant increase in mean score which showed that lexical inferencing strategies were effective in assisting students improve their reading comprehension performance. Then, the research approved the effectiveness of lexical inferencing strategies on students' reading proficiency as also concluded in many studies such as A. Sadeghi, L. Gilani & M. Niyazi (2018) ; Z. Hu & H. Zhang (2023) and Bos LT, De Koning BB, Wassenburg SI and van der Schoot M (2016).

As for students' feedback, most of them were relatively positive, with over 60% of participants found the strategies practical and easy to apply while reading texts. However, some students still preferred using dictionaries which suggested that the effectiveness of lexical inferencing strategies might vary based on each student's motivation and language proficiency level. Students are encouraged to adapt lexical inferencing strategies into reading as they could gain a richer understanding of the English language, ranging from micro-level clues such as prefixes and suffixes to macro-level clues such as sentence context clues or paragraph context clues. Also, the researcher noted that students might need more time to fully adapt to these strategies in order to use them more effectively. Nevertheless, lexical inferencing strategies were recommended to educators when they apply these strategies into their teaching instructions along with the conventional techniques such as scanning for a longer period of time. Finally, the researcher also suggests that future studies should explore the application of lexical inferencing strategies in other language skills, such as listening or speaking.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, lexical inferencing strategies significantly improved reading comprehension performance of high school students. Key findings showed that the mean scores of the experimental group witnessed a statistically significant gain while that of the control group experienced a stagnation. In terms of post-questionnaire, students expressed positive feedback and attitudes which proved that lexical inferencing strategies a practical tool for enhancing reading comprehension.

The research encouraged educators to instruct students carefully about lexical inferencing strategies as well as integrate these strategies ranging from micro-level affixes to macro-level paragraph context into EFL curricula alongside other reading conventional methods.

However, limitations are also noted. Firstly, participants were 11th-grade students from Thai Nguyen specialized high school with comparable reading proficiency level, and that feature highlighted that the research only showcased specific characteristics of one particular group of students. Other limitations were also noted such as the short seven-week timeframe as well as the lack of the variety of reading question types.

The research also suggested future studies investigate lexical inferencing strategies over more extended durations such as months or years, or explore their impacts on other language skills namely listening and speaking, and examine the collaboration of lexical inferencing strategies and traditional reading methods such as skimming or scanning.

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