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**Using Reading Buddies Strategy to Improve EFL Vocabulary
learning and attitudes of Primary Stage**

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Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effect of using reading buddies strategy on improving EFL vocabulary learning of primary stage pupils in language schools and their attitudes toward learning. It adopted a quasi-experimental design employing two groups: experimental and control. Instruments included an EFL vocabulary learning test and an attitude toward learning English as a foreign language scale. The participants consisted of 59 sixth year pupils from Al-Wady Language School for Girls in Dakahliya Governorate. . Results revealed that reading buddies strategy helped participants to improve their vocabulary learning and their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. Recommendations included using reading buddies strategy to improve vocabulary learning and the attitude towards learning English as a foreign language for primary stage pupils. It was also suggested that further research should investigate the effect of reading buddies strategy on improving pupils' reading comprehension skills.

Key words: Reading buddies strategy, EFL vocabulary and attitude, Egypt.

Introduction:

Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not assured about the best and foremost technique in vocabulary learning and teaching. Teaching vocabulary is a critical side in learning a foreign language as languages are based on words. It is hard to acquire a language without words as the communication between individuals is based on words. So teachers and students agree that the acquisition of vocabulary is the main factor in teaching a language. During teaching and learning processes, there are a lot of problems come into sight to the teachers. The teacher should construct and find out the suitable techniques, which will be applied to the students. Therefore, teachers should use various and modern techniques. They need to be able to master the material in order to be understood by students, make them interested and contented in learning process inside the classroom (Walters, 2004 and Berne &Blachowicz, 2008).

Research and practice presented ways to influence and build vocabulary for all pupils in the emergent stage of reading. Moreover, a lot of Studies assured the positive impact of reading on pupils as it is considered an extremely important input for foreign language acquisition. Reading is defined as a long term habit which helps readers to learn creativeness and critical thinking. Also, pupils who are developed in reading habits show profound impact on their academic performance (Ögeyik & Akyay, 2009).

Not only using effective learning and teaching instructions are needed for acquiring English language vocabulary but also it is essential to concern about the attitudes of learning English as a foreign language. Attitude plays an important role in the process of learning a language. It reflects pupils' thoughts and frames their mind in which they shape their acquisition of a foreign language. Attitude is described as an internal situation that is affect the behavior and it is a cognitive approach that has emotional and sentimental side that affect students' decisions. In addition, pupils' attitude toward learning depends on the teacher mainly, as he or she is considered the most powerful source of influence over the pupils. Students' achievement in any language depends not only on their intellectual ability, but also on their attitudes towards language learning (Tella et al, 2010).

In order to improve vocabulary learning and learners' attitude towards learning English as a foreign language, an efficacious strategy should be used. Reading buddies strategy is an excellent way to address the learning needs of both younger and older children. Through cross-age tutoring and partnerships, students improve their reading and fluency skills and gain broader literacy and social benefits. Several research studies have found that increasing traditional classroom instruction with one-on-one interventions, such as reading buddies strategy, is a powerful combination that can accelerate students' oral vocabulary gains. Reading buddies strategy is beneficial for peers especially in learning valuable social skills. In addition, reading buddy strategy not require any fixed procedure but the only common characteristic of reading buddies strategy is two or more students sitting together in pairs with printed text. The main common approaches of reading buddies which include pairing of a student and an elder student (cross-age tutoring) as well as pairing of children of similar ages (peer tutoring) (Mak, Coniam & Chan, 2008; Shegar, 2009).

Thus, the researcher believes that reading buddies strategy will have a great impact on vocabulary and pupils' attitude toward learning, if the program could be implied correctly and effectively, it would improve vocabulary learning of the sixth grade pupils

Review of literature

Vocabulary Learning

A number of authors described learning vocabulary; Schmitt (2007) mentioned that vocabulary learning is a gradual and complicated process. This gradual nature of the process contains seeing and using vocabulary many times to be learned depending on how prominent the word is, how necessary the word is, and how the word is met (incidentally or intentionally). Harmon, et al (2009) stated that vocabulary learning is a continual process of acquiring new words in meaningful and understandable context, Ellis (2010) referred to learning vocabulary as a process by which data is acquired, stored, restored and used. Nation & Webb (2011) described learning vocabulary as a progressive process for both clear numbers of words and for specific lexical items.

Salama (2016) aimed at enhancing vocabulary learning of the preparatory stage pupils by using some brain-compatible teaching strategies (BCTSs). The sample consisted of 61 male students from third year of preparatory school. The BCTSs were administered to the experimental group for six weeks. Results of the study revealed that using some brain-compatible teaching strategies can enhance pupils' vocabulary leaning.

The study of *Hidayat* (2016) investigated the effectiveness of using word game on improving students' vocabulary knowledge. This study was conducted based on the preliminary study which indicated that the students felt difficulties in learning English because of the lack of vocabulary. The participants were 38 students at seven grade of one of junior high schools in Gresik. The data was collected by interview, observation, questionnaires and test. The results of this study showed that word game can help students to memorize the vocabularies easier, motivate students, and make them more interested in learning vocabulary.

AlSaleem (2018) examined the effectiveness of encounter, clarify, remember, and internalize, fluent use (ECRIF) strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Seventh Graders' vocabulary learning and retention. For the purpose of the study, the participants were (125) students in the first term of the school year 2017-2018. The researcher used (pre -post & delayed) vocabulary test and an analysis card to collect data. The results of the posttest showed a significant change in the performance of the experimental group that proved the effectiveness of using (ECRIF) strategy in improving Seventh Graders' vocabulary learning and retention.

Attya (2018) investigated the effects of using the lexical approach-based activities to enhance vocabulary learning. Fifty students were selected through tactic sampling. They were divided into two groups of 25. The study adopted the quasi – experimental design, using one experimental group *and* one control group. The instrument used in the study was a Pre-post Vocabulary Test designed by the researcher. The findings of the study revealed that the students who were taught via the lexical approach based - activities outperformed those who were taught adopting the textbook technique.

Mohammed & El-Rahman (2019) examined the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy on vocabulary learning among eighth graders and its retention. To achieve the aim of the study, the two researchers chose the experimental approach with two groups. The experimental group (41) learners, studied through the metacognitive strategy for vocabulary learning while the control group (40) received usual teaching practice for vocabulary. An achievement (pre-post and delayed) test was applied to get data. The results showed that there was a positive effect of the metacognitive strategy instructions on learner's learning of vocabulary in the experimental group and its retention.

The previous studies have illustrated the importance of vocabulary learning and its effectiveness on acquiring English as a foreign language. The next part will focus on the attitude as it is one of the essential factors influence vocabulary learning.

Attitude

Shameem (2015) described attitude as a collection of feelings concerning language use and its status in the society. The feelings are good, bad and neutral. They can foster or hinder the learning process effectively. Also, *Crano and Preslin* (2016) explained that attitude is a group of judgments which are combination of cognitive and affective reactions. These judgments are different powers in terms of continuity, resistance and turning of attitude into behavior.

Hashwani (2008) investigated students' attitudes, motivation and anxiety *towards* the learning of English of Karachi, Pakistan. The study adapts a survey questionnaire from Gardner's 'Attitude Motivation Test Battery,' to explore attitudes (English language and learning), motivations (intrinsic and extrinsic) and classroom anxiety of grade 8th students in a private secondary school. The survey findings of 77 students (40 males and 37 females) highlighted that students have affirmative attitudes and high level of enthusiasm towards English language and its learning. The findings

also illustrated a higher degree of extrinsic motivational goals attached to the *student's* language learning outcomes and future achievements comparable to intrinsic ones, irrespective of the gender. The results emphasized girls to have a slightly higher degree of positive attitudes and motivation comparable to the boys. The overall classroom anxiety demonstrates student's moderate responses with relatively high standard deviation, highlighting that anxiety levels vary from student to student.

Momani (2009) also examined the secondary stage students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and their achievements in reading comprehension. The findings showed that the respondents had neutral positive attitudes toward learning English. Also, there was a strong correlation between the students' attitudes toward learning English and their performance in reading comprehension.

Fakeye (2010) studied the correlation between attitude and achievement in English among 400 senior secondary students selected randomly from five secondary schools. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Additionally, it was explored that students' attitude is not gender-related. Thus, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students.

Riyanto, Setiyadi & Kadaryanto (2015) researched Students' attitude towards language learning and their reading comprehension and vocabulary. The sample selected through random sampling consisted of 32 students of Sumberejo. Data were collected through distributing questionnaire and administering reading comprehension test. The results of the study showed that one of the factors exerting an influence upon learners' understanding vocabulary was their attitude to language learning. Therefore, teacher needs to bear in mind that enhancing attitude to language learning is essential to boost learners' performance in reading comprehension, particularly their understanding of vocabulary.

After reviewing the description of the attitude and some studies that asserted the importance of attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. It is clear that attitude has a crucial role in learning process. So to improve vocabulary learning and pupils' attitude the researcher used reading buddies strategy. The following part sheds light on describing reading buddies strategy and some related studies asserted is importance.

Reading Buddies Strategy

Reading buddies strategy was defined as two readers of the same abilities can practice reading a book or specific text for the first time or after

hearing the teacher read a passage. Also, reading buddy strategy was known as pairing a more skilled reader models fluent reading with a less skilled reader, as in student-adult reading (Schnorr and Davern, 2005). Burns (2006) described reading buddies strategy as pairing of older children with younger ones and it is known as cross-age tutoring or it involves the pairing of children of the same ages and it is known as peer-tutoring.

Flint (2010) studied how social interactions and literary transactions can combine through buddy reading to enable young readers and reinforce literacy in a first grade classroom. The participants were 20 students-nine boys and eleven girls ranging in ages from six to seven years old. This study used a vygotskian approach and a socio-cultural theory, and focused on how literary transaction and social interaction work together to facilitate emergent and early readers in a buddy reading approach. The results of the study showed that buddy reading as a classroom tool can effectively promote literacy and learning in a cooperative setting.

Jafre (2011) demonstrated that creative buddy reading program (CBRP) is a viable method to improve students' English reading habits at initial stage. The participants were 79 year 4 students from a national type primary school in Penang Island, Malaysia were involved in this study while a representative from each class was selected randomly to be involved in the structured interview. They were both male and female students with the age of 10. This study examined students' reading preferences and their responses towards the program as two criteria. A questionnaire and a structured interview were used for collecting data. The results showed positive responses towards CBRP. An optimistic outcome was that students expected the program could help them enhance their passion towards reading.

Dewing (2011) researched the effects of a two-tiered Buddy Reading Program on the reading skills of 12 to 14 year old middle school students in a high-poverty urban school in a Midwestern United States school. The results of the study showed that the social nature of the program allowed the middle school students to rehearse texts, engage in dialogue surrounding texts, and led to improvement in the affective aspects of reading, as well as in reading skills. Buddy reading led many of the students to engage in literacy activities beyond those required either for the program or in classroom instruction.

Ping (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effect of Buddy Reading strategy to sustain students' interest towards English reading and to develop their English reading habits. Three Year 4 students of different

English language proficiency were involved in this study. For collecting data, the observation and a structured interview were used. In overall, the results indicated that tutors' self-produced English reading materials had been a great stimulus to encourage English reading among them. Besides, cross-age buddy reading had been a powerful method to provide motivating reading experience, provided good interaction between the tutors and the Year 4 students and their English reading habits were successfully developed although each one of them performed differently.

Silverman (2017) explored the effect of a reading buddies program on *vocabulary* and comprehension. Fourth-grade students paired with kindergarten students to read, talk, play, and write together. 16 Grade 4 classrooms and 16 kindergarten classrooms participated in the treatment group and in the comparison group. The treatment included 10 one-hour sessions implemented over the course of roughly 10 weeks. Results revealed effectiveness of the program on supporting older and younger students' vocabulary.

The present study made use of these studies' results as the underlying *premise* of the study is that using reading buddies strategy to improve EFL vocabulary learning and attitudes toward learning. In addition, the review of literature and related studies benefitted the researcher in documenting the research problem, provided guidelines on how to design and implement this study instruments, and was a catalyst in interpreting the results of the current study.

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to assess pupils' vocabulary. A vocabulary test was administered (30) EFL sixth year primary stage pupils at Al- Wady Language School for Girls.

Table (1)
Results of the pilot study

%	SD	Mean	Total score	N
44	4.75	13.3	30	30

Table (1) reveals that the mean score of the students (13.3) was very low and the pupils' vocabulary level in general is below average. This means that EFL sixth year primary stage pupils needed more improvement in vocabulary learning.

Statement of the problem

Based on the review of literature and related studies, the results of the pilot study and the researcher experience as a teacher of English as a foreign language, it becomes clear that EFL sixth year primary stage pupils'

vocabulary needed to be improved. Therefore, the current study aimed at investigating the effect of using Reading Buddies strategy to improve EFL vocabulary learning of EFL sixth year primary stage pupils and their attitudes toward learning.

Questions of the study

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the procedures of Reading Buddies Strategy to improve EFL sixth year primary stage pupils' vocabulary?
- 2- What is the effect of Reading Buddies Strategy on improving EFL sixth year primary stage pupils' vocabulary?
- 3- What is the effect of Reading Buddies Strategy on improving EFL sixth year primary stage pupils' attitude towards learning?

Hypotheses of the study

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level between the experimental and the control groups in the mean score of the EFL vocabulary test in favor of the experimental group.
- 2- There is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group performance on the pre and post administration of the EFL vocabulary test in favor of the posttest.
- 3- There is a statistically significant difference at ≥ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group on the post administration of attitude towards learning English as a foreign language scale in favor of the experimental group.
- 4- There is a statistically significant difference at ≥ 0.05 level mean score of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the attitude towards learning English as a foreign language scale in favor of the post administration.

The Purpose of the study

This study aimed at:

- 1- Exploring the effect of reading buddies strategy on improving EFL sixth year primary stage pupils' vocabulary.
- 2- Improving the pupils' attitude towards learning English as a foreign language.

Significance

The significance of this study appeared in its attempt to:

- 1- Help teachers of English and course designers in designing more effective vocabulary teaching strategies.

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- 2- Encourage the use of reading buddies strategy in English language classes for addressing the vocabulary difficulties that EFL learners face.
 - 3- Pave the way for other studies to use Reading Buddies Strategy to improve other language skills for primary and preparatory students.
 - 4- Raise the awareness of EFL professionals as well as pupils to the importance of reading buddies as vocabulary learning strategy.
 - 5- Improve pupils' attitude toward learning English as a foreign language.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to:

- 1- A sample of EFL sixth year primary stage pupils of Al- Wady Language School for Girls.
- 2- New vocabulary of four units (1, 2, 3 & 4) from '*Family & Friends*' English book for sixth year primary school, first term of the academic year (2020-2021) to improve their vocabulary learning.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were 6th year primary stage pupils at Al-Wady Language School for girls enrolled in the first term of the (2020-2021) school year. The study sample comprised of (59) pupils divided into a control group comprises of (31) pupils and an experimental group includes (28) pupils.

Design of the Study

The current study used a quasi-experimental design to investigate using reading buddies strategy to improve EFL vocabulary learning of primary stage pupils in language schools and their attitudes toward learning. Two groups were employed. One group was the control taught the vocabulary of (*Family & Friends*) English language advanced level book of the sixth year primary stage, first term from unit 1 to 4 using regular method of teaching. The second group was the experimental group taught the same vocabulary through reading buddies strategy used by the researcher.

Instruments

To achieve the aims of the current study, the following instruments were designed and used:

- 1- An EFL vocabulary learning test to measure pupils' vocabulary learning.
- 2- An attitude scale toward learning English as a foreign language.

Definitions of Terms

Reading Buddies Strategy

Reading buddies strategy was defined as two readers of the same abilities can practice reading a book or specific text for the first time or after hearing the teacher read a passage. Also, reading buddies strategy was known as pairing a more skilled reader models fluent reading for a less skilled reader, as in student-adult reading (Schnorr and Davern, 2005). Burns (2006) described reading buddies strategy as pairing of older children with younger ones and it is known as cross-age tutoring or it involves the pairing of children of the same ages and it is known as peer-tutoring.

Buddy reading is described as a method which involves reading to, with, and by students and the basic idea of buddy reading is sharing in reading. For the common characteristic of buddy reading requires readers sitting together with some kind of printed texts (Bernadowski, 2008).

In this study, Reading Buddies Strategy is defined as a social cooperative approach between pairs of pupils who are coupled as (weak readers paired with skilled readers) or (same competence readers) to practice reading from one book and discover the meanings and different aspects of new vocabulary by the aid of teacher.

Vocabulary

Alali & Schmitt (2012) defined vocabulary as the words of a language which include every single unit or chunks of many words which carry a specific meaning. Also, Rouhani & Purgharib (2013) as well defined vocabulary as a tool of mastering a language and connecting the four skills in English language. Al Qahtani (2015) clarified that vocabulary is the total number of words that are needed to communicate and express the speakers' meaning.

The present study defines vocabulary as all words pupils need to understand and use for communicating with others, achieving academic goals and mastering a language.

Attitude

Shameem (2015) defines attitude as a collection of feelings concerning language use and its status in the society. The feelings are good, bad and neutral. They can foster or hinder the learning process effectively. Also, Carno and Preslin (2016) described attitude as a group of judgments which are combination of cognitive and affective reactions. These judgments are different powers in terms of continuity, resistance and turning of attitude into behavior.

In this study, Attitude is operationally defined as a set of feelings, tendencies and thoughts that drive student's mind and desire to accept or refuse any educational situation. These feelings and tendencies are created from various social and educational factors surrounding the student, and have a great impact on student's learning process. Thus, these feelings could be improved by enhancing the factors that effect on learning process and motivating student's interests.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are statistically analyzed in terms of its hypotheses and they are discussed in the light of the theoretical background and related studies. Results of the study were reported as follows.

The first hypothesis stated that "*there is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level between the experimental and the control groups in the mean score of the EFL vocabulary test in favor of the experimental group*". In order to test this hypothesis, the t-test was used. See table (2) below:

Table 2
Comparing the Performance of the Two Study Groups on the EFL Vocabulary Learning Test

Sig.	t.Value	df	S.D	Means	N.of cases	The group	VARIABLES
0.01 Sig.	-8.56	57	4.82	35.6	28	Control	All Test
			1.65	43.5	31	Experimental	

Table (2) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the total score of the English language vocabulary test in the post administration in favor of the experimental group when the $t = 8.55$ which is statistically significant at (0.01). These results validate the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis stated that "*there is a statistically significant difference at ≤ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group performance on the pre and post administration of the EFL vocabulary test in favor of the posttest*". In order to test the second hypothesis, the t-test was used. See table (3) below:

Table 3
Comparing the performance of the experimental group on the pre and post administration of EFL vocabulary learning test

Effect size	Effect size η^2^*	Sig.	t.Value	df	S.D	Means	N.of cases	The practice	VARIABLES
High	94.2%	0.01 Sig.	-22.1	30	5.73	24.5	31	pre – test	All Test
					1.65	43.5	31	post – test	

Table (3) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre - post administrations of vocabulary learning test in favor of the posttest when the $t = 22.1$ is statistically significant at (0.01). Moreover, the effect size of the strategy on the total score of the EFLVLT was (0.94%) indicating that 94% of the variance in the learning of English language vocabulary is due to the effect of experimental treatment.

The third hypothesis stated that *"There is a statistically significant difference at ≥ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group on the post administration of attitude towards learning English as a foreign language scale in favor of the experimental group."* In order to test the third hypothesis, the t-test was used. See table (4) below:

Table 4
Comparing the performance of the two study groups on the attitude scale

Sig.	t.Value	df	S.D	Means	N.of cases	The group	VARIABLES
0.01 Sig.	-8.71	57	2.51	47.82	28	Control	All Scale
			1.57	52.52	31	Experimental	

Results in table (4) illustrate that there are statistically significant differences between the mean score of the experimental and control groups on the post administration of the attitude scale in favor of the experimental group as the $t = 8.71$. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups in the post administration of attitude scale at significant level (0.001) which proves that reading buddies strategy had a great effect on improving pupils' attitude.

The fourth hypothesis stated that *"There is a statistically significant difference at ≥ 0.05 level mean score of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the attitude towards learning English as a foreign language scale in favor of the post administration."*

Table 5

A comparison of the mean score of the experimental group pupils on the pre- post administration of the attitude scale

Effect size	Effect size η^2	Sig.	t.Value	df	S.D	Means	N.of cases	The practice	VARIABLES
High	%97.5	0.01 Sig.	-34.2	30	2.24	37.2	31	pre – test	All Scale
					1.57	52.5	31	post – test	

Table (5) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre - post applications of the attitude scale in favor of the post application (the upper average = 52.5), the $t = 34.2$ is statistically significant at (0.01) and the degree of freedom (30). In addition, the effect size of reading buddies strategy on the attitude scale was (0.975%), indicating that 97% of the variance in the attitude towards learning English language is due to the effect of experimental treatment.

Based on the above analysis, it can be stated that Reading Buddies strategy is effective in improving English vocabulary learning of sixth year primary stage pupils and their attitude towards learning English as a foreign language.

Conclusion

With reference to the results of the study, the following points were concluded:

- 1- The current study provided evidence to the effectiveness of using reading buddies strategy in improving vocabulary learning and the attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language.
- 2- Reading buddies strategy is effective in attracting pupils' attention, activating pupils' social cooperation and experiences, actively involving pupils in the learning process of vocabulary, helping pupils to practice and construct meaning.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were offered:

- 1- Vocabulary learning should receive more attention so as to be enhanced at the primary stage.

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- 2- Reading buddies strategy is recommended to be used as a strategy for improving vocabulary learning and the attitude towards learning English as a foreign language for primary stage pupils.
 - 3- EFL teachers should plan activities that motivate students to use new language learning strategies and provide practice opportunities.
 - 4- Using variety of vocabulary activities inside the class should be recommended.

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