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# The Effect of TRAP Paraphrasing Strategy on Improving Secondary Stage Students' EFL Reading Comprehension of Authentic Texts

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# **The Effect of TRAP Paraphrasing Strategy on Improving Secondary Stage Students' EFL Reading Comprehension of Authentic Texts**

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed at investigating the impact of the TRAP paraphrasing strategy on improving secondary stage students' EFL reading comprehension of authentic texts. Participants were (60) second year secondary stage students at Mahallat Abo-Ali Secondary School for Girls, East Mahalla Educational Directorate, Gharbia Governorate, in the first term of the 2021/2022 academic year. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design using two groups: an experimental group (n=30) and a control one (n=30). To collect the data, the following instruments were employed: an EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Checklist, an EFL Reading Comprehension test and an Authentic Texts Selection Criteria Checklist. The experimental group was taught using the TRAP paraphrasing strategy, whereas the control group was taught using regular instruction. Research results revealed that there was a statistically significance difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the EFL Reading Comprehension Skills test in favor of the experimental group.

**Key words:** Reading comprehension, Authentic Texts, TRAP paraphrasing, Secondary Stage Students

## **Introduction**

English is considered the most prominent language for communication all over the world. Learning English properly is required nowadays for all students and learners. Thus, students need to be equipped well to make the best use of English language in this highly connected world. In addition, the ability to comprehend information of the written texts, gain knowledge, identify new cultures and acquire experience is a necessity for students, especially secondary stage students. Therefore, there is always a need to find effective teaching techniques and strategies to help students engage effectively in reading tasks and activities. TRAP paraphrasing strategy is one of the strategies that can improve students' awareness and participation in the learning process through using authentic texts.

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Reading comprehension is a leading receptive skill in language learning and acquisition since it requires a great effort and practice so as to be developed. Moreover, there is a constant overflow of knowledge, culture, information and experience that the reader can acquire through reading (Hansen, 2016). As a result, teaching EFL reading comprehension is a must because it helps students learn much in all fields, master the other language skills and eventually understand the world around them.

Additionally, using **authentic texts** at all levels seems to be highly beneficial in developing students' confidence to be familiar with real language outside the classroom (Polat & Eristi, 2019). Also, authentic materials are essential in classrooms where the students are able to enhance their interest, motivation and understanding in reading as they contain real materials which are related to what happening in the world and do not depend on text books only. Besides, the teachers can find interesting topics and material relevant to student's need, learning goals and purpose easier to attract their attention and gain the good result in the end (Sari et al., 2020). Authentic refers to the language samples which reflect a naturalness of form, appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by the native speakers (Mallapiang, 2015). As seen by Ileana & Tatiana (2015), authentic materials can be described as any material developed for native speakers of the language and used for teaching purposes. As a result, reading skills can be developed better by choosing authentic texts for students to work on (Nurlita, 2011).

In the field of EFL, several researchers (Amir & Solmaz, 2015; Gulchekhra, 2016; Plocher, 2016; Khoshbakht & Gorjian, 2017; Durukan, 2020; Namaziandost et al., 2021 & Shakibaei et al., 2021) have come up with different researches to investigate the impact of developing learners' EFL **reading comprehension skills** in different stages through using different reading strategies. Results of these studies proved the necessity of improving students' EFL reading comprehension skills at all levels. TRAP paraphrasing strategy is one of them. The TRAP is an acronym refers to the main four steps of the strategy which are: (T: stands for thinking before reading, R: stands for reading the text, A: stands for asking question while reading and P: stands for putting the most important information of the text into your own words).

TRAP paraphrasing strategy offers wide benefits to students in reading and writing skill as well. Many academic researches supported the use of TRAP paraphrasing strategy in order to engage students in the learning process; promote learning skills and enhance academic success. In

TRAP paraphrasing strategy, students can paraphrase by determining the main idea and supporting details as well as recognizing the relationship among the sentences in the text being read. Besides, paraphrasing helps students understand texts paragraphs and provide them with the potential to obtain the target information in order to be taught and promotes the use of their complete sentences (İlter, 2017). Furthermore, paraphrasing allows students to demonstrate their understanding of the reading materials into their own analysis and argument (Clark, 2012).

TRAP paraphrasing strategy is beneficial in activating students' thinking and catching the most important information of the text rapidly. Hagaman, et al. (2015) proved that TRAP is valuable in increasing reading comprehension as it helps students catch the information of the text easily and encourages them to preview the text as well as connecting it with their existing prior knowledge. Furthermore, it is used to activate thinking before, during, and after reading (Hagaman, 2012). The four-step TRAP Paraphrasing strategy has a pivotal role in reading comprehension skills of students with and without disabilities on account of being extremely flexible (Mason et al., 2012; & Hagaman et al., 2016). Students are required to engage in reading materials through questioning and paraphrasing which helps them increase their comprehension of the materials, recall information and take notes from a reading passage. Therefore, this research adopted the TRAP paraphrasing strategy and authentic texts to improve students' EFL reading comprehension skills.

#### **Pilot study**

In order to provide an evidence for the problem of the research, the researcher conducted a pilot study to determine second year secondary stage students' level at EFL reading comprehension skills. The researcher conducted a test in order to measure the students reading comprehension skills. Table (1) shows the results.

**Table 1: Results of Pilot Study Reading Comprehension Skills Test**

<b>Reading Comprehension Skills</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Prediction	3	0	1.68	.88	56%
Guessing the meaning of the new vocabulary	3	0	1.76	1.03	59%
Summarizing the text	5	0	1.36	1.44	23%
Skimming	4	2	3.32	0.84	83%
Scanning	3	0	2.52	0.57	63%
Total	18	4	10.64	3.68	53.2%

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Table (1) clearly indicates that the overall mean score of chosen EFL reading comprehension skills is 53.2%. The percentage 53.2% is around the mean of the test, which indicates that those skills need to be improved.

### **Statement of the problem**

Based on the review of literature and the pilot study results, the problem of the research can be stated as follows: there is a need to develop the EFL reading comprehension skills of secondary stage students. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the impact of using TRAP paraphrasing strategy on improving the EFL reading comprehension skills of authentic texts.

### **Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following main question:

#### **How would reading comprehension of authentic text be improved through using the TRAP paraphrasing strategy?**

In addition to this main question, the study attempted to answer the following sub-questions:

- 1- What are the EFL reading comprehensions skills necessary for secondary stage students?
- 2- What are the features of TRAP paraphrasing strategy that may help improve secondary stage students' reading comprehension of authentic texts?
- 3- What is the effect of using TRAP paraphrasing strategy on improving EFL secondary stage students' reading comprehension of authentic texts?

### **Hypotheses**

This study attempted to verify the following hypotheses:

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference at  $> 0.05$  between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the Reading Comprehension Skills post-test in favor of the experimental group.
- 2- There is a statistically significant difference at  $> 0.05$  between the mean scores of Reading Comprehension Skills pre- and post-testing for the experimental group in favor of the post-test.

### **Purpose**

The present study aimed at:

- 1- Finding out the features of the TRAP paraphrasing strategy.

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- 2- Gaining further insight into TRAP paraphrasing strategy for improving EFL reading comprehension skills of authentic texts.
  - 3- Finding out the impact of TRAP paraphrasing strategy on improving students reading comprehension skills.

### **Significance**

This study was considered significant for teachers, researchers and learners in a number of ways:

- 1- Ascertaining the possibility of applying TRAP paraphrasing strategy into EFL classes.
- 2- Contributing to the EFL literature by suggesting the application of the TRAP paraphrasing strategy in the field of education.
- 3- Increasing teachers' awareness regarding the TRAP paraphrasing strategy which may help improve EFL reading comprehension skills of authentic texts.

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to:

- 1- A sample of 2nd year secondary stage students, at Mahallat Abo-Ali Secondary School for Girls, East-Mahalla Directorate, Gharbia Governorate.
- 2- A limited number of EFL reading comprehensions skills necessary for secondary stage students such as: skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning and critical reading.
- 3- Ten authentic texts whose content is related to the students' textbook.

### **Design**

This study adopted the quasi –experimental research design including two groups; experimental and control. The experimental group was taught using TRAP paraphrasing strategy and the control group was taught using regular instruction. Both groups were pre- and post-tested using the Reading Comprehension Skills test.

### **Participants**

Participants of the current study were sixty second year secondary stage EFL students drawn from Mahallat Abo Ali Secondary School for Girls, East Mahalla Educational Directorate, Gharbia Governorate, in the first term of the 2021/2022 academic year. They were divided into two groups; experimental and control. The control group received regular

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instruction and the experimental group was trained using the TRAP paraphrasing strategy to improve their reading comprehension skills.

### **Instruments**

This study made use of the following instruments, which were designed by the researcher and validated by jury members:

1. An EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Checklist to determine the most important reading comprehension skills necessary for 2<sup>nd</sup> year secondary stage EFL students.
2. A pre-post Reading Comprehension Skills test to measure students' reading comprehension skills.
3. An Authentic Texts Selection Criteria Checklist in order to find out the most appropriate criteria necessary for selecting suitable texts for second year secondary stage EFL students and consequently these criteria were integrated into the selected authentic texts.
4. Ten authentic reading comprehension texts were selected by the researcher from different authentic resources according to the selected criteria.
5. A Teacher's Guide for 2<sup>nd</sup> year secondary stage EFL students.

### **Definition of terms**

#### **1- Reading comprehension**

Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) identified reading as an interactive process in which readers can construct a meaningful representation of a text being read. Similarly, Wooley (2011) defined reading comprehension as the process of making the text meaningful and get the entire understanding of the text instead of isolated words or sentences. Moreover, reading can be defined as a complicated process because it covers interrelated physical and cognitive attributes (Ari, 2017).

For the purpose of this research, the following operational definition was used: Reading comprehension is defined as an interactive process of putting letters, words, structures, phrases and sentences together that reconstruct (add) a meaning to the text which derived from the reader's related previous knowledge to comprehend what's read.

#### **2- Authentic texts**

Nazari et al. (2018) defined authentic texts as any material created for native speakers of the language in real-life situations and can be used for teaching purposes. They are also known as "realia". In addition, **Polio**

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(2014) saw authentic materials as texts produced for real life goals and native speakers' communications, not created for educational language purposes.

Thus, authentic texts can be defined as a kind of materials which are not produced for pedagogical purposes, used in educational classrooms in the same way of real life. By using authentic texts in classrooms, students can be exposed to the genuine culture, information and real language which help motivate students and increase their confidence towards reading outside the classroom.

### 3- TRAP paraphrasing strategy

Paraphrasing can be identified as a restatement of an idea into students' own words. It is an aid to learning active engagement with the material and it is the opportunity to translate difficult writing into clear writing, because using your own thinking and writing style adds the idea to your regular mental inventory (Harris et al., 2014).

TRAP is a four-step paraphrasing strategy. It stands for: think before you read, read a paragraph, ask myself what this paragraph was mostly about and put it into my own words (Hagaman, Casey & Reid, 2015)

For the purpose of this study, TRAP paraphrasing strategy can be operationally defined here as: A restatement of authentic texts and convert them to another form to simplify and clarify their meaning. In another words, it is the process of organizing the main ideas and details by converting them into students' own words to simplify and clarify the language and emphasize what is important in order to remember them easily.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the current research are statistically analyzed in terms of its hypotheses and they are discussed in the light of the theoretical background and related studies. Research results are reported as follows:

### Verifying Reading Comprehension Skills Hypotheses

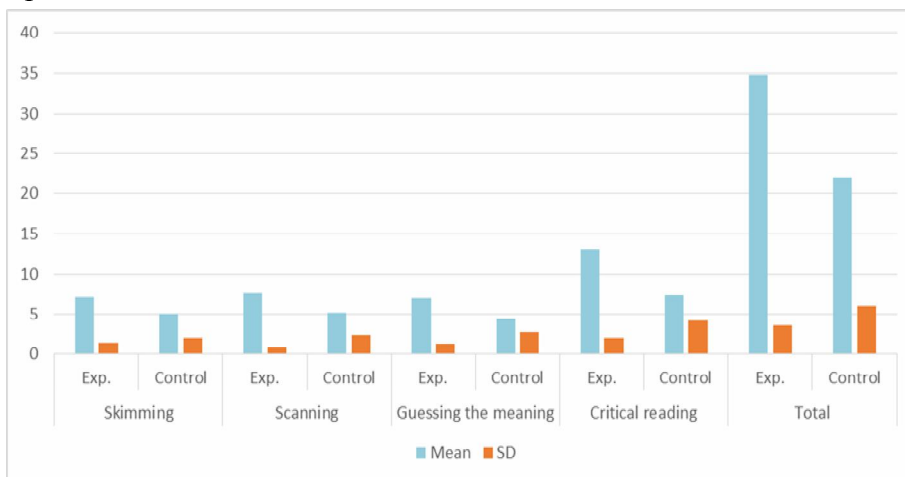
The first hypotheses stated that **“There is a statistically significant difference at > 0.05 between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the Reading Comprehension Skills post-test in favor of the experimental group”**. To verify the first hypothesis, the *t*-test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Results are presented in table (2).



**Table (2): Comparing results of t-test values of the control and experimental groups on the post-administration of the reading comprehension skills test**

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Df (n1+n2-2)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Skimming	Exp.	30	7.1667	1.36668	4.8	58	Significant at 0.05
	Control	30	5.0667	1.98152			
Scanning	Exp.	30	7.6000	.81368	5.2		
	Control	30	5.2000	2.38385			
Guessing the meaning	Exp.	30	7.0000	1.25945	4.7		
	Control	30	4.4000	2.74929			
Critical reading	Exp.	30	13.0333	2.09241	6.5		
	Control	30	7.4000	4.24751			
Total	Exp.	30	34.8000	3.63318	9.96		
	Control	30	22.0667	5.98811			

The statistical results presented in table (2) show that the estimated *t*-value was significant at 0.05 level. This means that there is a statistical significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control group on post-administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test in favor of the experimental group due to implementing the TRAP paraphrasing strategy. In other words, the experimental group students' outperformed the control group students in their EFL reading comprehension skills posttest. Hence, the first hypothesis was verified and accepted. The following figure (1) shows the results of t-test of the control and experimental group on the post-administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test.



**Figure (1): The results of t-test of the control and experimental group on the post-administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test.**

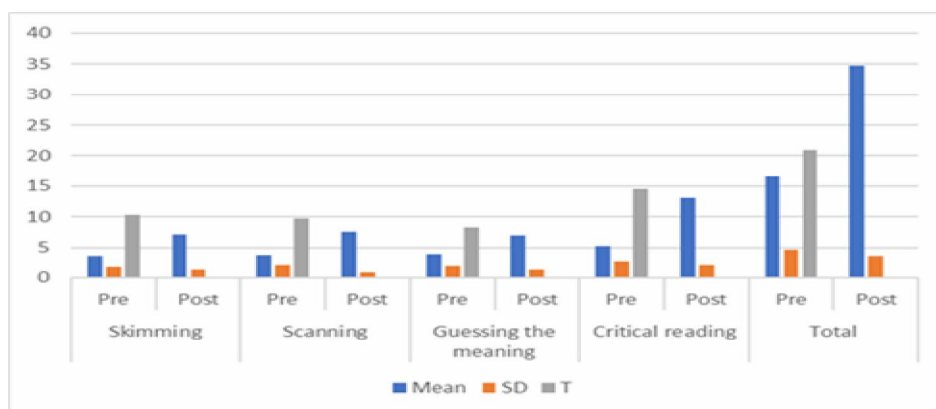
The second hypothesis stated that “**There is a statistically significant difference at > 0.05 between the mean scores of the Reading Comprehension Skills pre and post-testing for the experimental group in favor of the post-test**”. The t-test for paired samples was used to compare the mean score of the experimental group students on the pre-post EFL reading comprehension skills test due to the administration of the experimental treatment. Table (3) shows the results.

**Table (3): Comparing t-values of the experimental group on the pre-post administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test**

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>D. f (n-1)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Skimming	Pre	30	3.6000	1.71404	10.3	29	Sig.
	Post	30	7.1667	1.36668			
Scanning	Pre	30	3.8000	1.98963	9.8		
	Post	30	7.6000	.81368			
Guessing the meaning	Pre	30	3.9333	1.92861	8.3		
	Post	30	7.0000	1.25945			
Critical reading	Pre	30	5.1667	2.61406	14.6		
	Post	30	13.0333	2.09241			
Total	Pre	30	16.5000	4.59197	20.9		
	Post	30	34.8000	3.63318			

Results in the above table indicate that:

- The estimated t-value for paired samples was significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-post administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test.
- These significant differences were in favor of the post administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test. Figure (2) shows the results:



**Figure (2): The results of *t*-test of the experimental group on the pre-post administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test.**

### Discussion of the results

The results discussed above reveal that there is a significant development in the identified EFL reading comprehension skills of the experimental group on the post administration of the EFL reading comprehension test. This obvious improvement can be ascribed to the implementation of the TRAP paraphrasing strategy.

Eventually, it is worth mentioning here that students were encouraged to paraphrase, recognize the main idea and determining the supporting sentences and showed good performance in the worksheet of the strategy steps as they followed the strategy easily before, while and after reading. As well as adopting authentic texts develop the students' motivation towards reading.

TRAP paraphrasing strategy gave students opportunities to be active, concentrate, think and participate during most of the sessions through filling the strategy worksheet. In addition, determining the main idea, recognizing the supporting sentences helped them in understanding the relationships among the text ideas. Moreover, it helped students develop their understanding and recalling the most important information of the reading comprehension text rapidly in answering the questions of the text.

Getting students to practice several authentic texts of various topics related to students' level, needs, interests, daily life and cultural appropriateness attracted their attention and helped them become eager to learn and more enthusiastic to acquire new vocabulary, information, knowledge, expressions and authentic writing techniques. Besides, the authenticity of the texts was interesting and meaningful to the participants.

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The session included many interesting authentic texts which helped in developing students' motivation towards reading comprehension skills.

Results obtained from this study agreed with the study results of Islam & Santoso (2019) which assured the effectiveness of the authentic texts in improving reading comprehension and shaping confidence. Students became more confident and motivated when they are able to overcome the text and know how the language is really used and what is going on in the world around them.

This study also agreed with the results of Marzban & Davaji (2015) which proved that authentic texts have a strong positive effect not only in increasing the students' comprehension but also promoting other aspects of language learning such as motivation and Wahyuni & Kasim (2016) which used authentic texts to develop reading comprehension.

This study also confirmed the results of Febrianti (2018) which proved the effectiveness of using authentic materials in improving the students' literal and interpretative comprehension and students' achievements at SMK Muhammadigah 3 Makassar.

Similarly, the study of Guo (2012) showed evidence of vocabulary gain and motivation as a result of using authentic texts and exposes students to learning English used in real life by providing a wonderful source of information which expand students' knowledge and motivation.

Concerning the effectiveness of implementing TRAP Paraphrasing in improving the English language skills, especially reading comprehension skills, the results of this research were congruous with the results of some other studies that confirmed the effectiveness of paraphrasing strategy in developing EFL reading comprehension skills. For example, Hagaman & Reid (2008), and Kemp (2017) reported the positive impact of paraphrasing in improving reading comprehension skills and the recall of details. Besides, TRAP Paraphrasing proved to be effective in improving reading comprehension of struggling readers such as the study of Hagaman et al (2015).

Similarly, other studies proved its positive effect on students' reading comprehension at different educational grades such as young readers, intermediate and university students (Hagaman, Casey & Reid (2016), Khismawan & Widiati (2013), and Suwanto (2014). Moreover, RAP proved to be effective in improving reading comprehension of high school students with mild intellectual disabilities as the study of Sukmawana & Priantob (2018).

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It could be concluded that, the improvement of the participants' reading comprehension skill was due to the TRAP paraphrasing strategy. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in favor of the experimental group. In addition, there was a significant difference between the mean score of the participants in the experimental group on the pre-post administration of the reading comprehension skill of authentic text in favor of the post administration of the test. Moreover, the experimental group's results exceeded their pretest results in all reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, all the reading comprehension skills were much improved. This indicates and proves that the TRAP paraphrasing strategy was effective in developing the participants' EFL reading comprehension skills.

The remarkable improvement achieved by the experimental group in the reading comprehension skills of authentic texts and TRAP Paraphrasing strategy could be attributed to some factors.

1. Encouraging students to think before reading through brainstorming activity and use their related previous knowledge in predicting new information, was effective in helping students understand the authentic text.
2. Taking notes and focusing on the most important information to help students recall them easily.
3. Asking questions during reading helped students in recognizing and determining the relationships among the text ideas.
4. Rewording the most important information offered opportunities to express their understanding and learning new writing styles.
5. Engaging students in collaborative team work environment encouraged them to participate with more creative ideas, help each other to learn and do their roles well especially weak students and make a sort of competition among the groups.
6. Using different learning aids, helped the students remember required information and recall them rapidly during answering the questions, especially after knowing how to determine the main idea, the supporting details sentences and understanding the relationship among the text ideas.
7. Paraphrasing helped students in presenting their understanding in their own writing styles confidently.

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8. Adopting authentic texts which were related to students' daily life motivated students and develop their enthusiasm towards reading and learning English.
  9. Finally, the adoption of the strategy worksheet was fruitful in encouraging all the students to participate and organize the text ideas during the reading comprehension stages (pre-reading stage, while reading stage and post reading stage). Students were willing to complete the four steps of the TRAP paraphrasing strategy through brainstorming their ideas, predicting new information, taking notes of their previous related knowledge, answering the strategy main questions and eventually paraphrasing. Moreover, the students became more interested, well prepared and involved enthusiastically in answering the questions of the reading texts rapidly.

It must be also noted that participants' viewpoints and comments were valuable for the current research study. During the introductory session, they were eager to learn about many things such as: determining the main idea and the supporting details sentences, what is paraphrasing, how to paraphrase, the techniques of paraphrasing, reading authentic texts, identifying statics tables and charts, how to follow the strategy steps during reading and how the sessions would proceed. Many questions were asked concerning the steps of the strategy and how paraphrasing would help them answer the question of the reading comprehension passages. During the sessions, the students' attitudes were fairly positive and apparently they enjoyed the experience of being a part of the TRAP Paraphrasing strategy. Besides, they were excited, fully engaged and showed a noteworthy performance in answering the questions especially, giving short answers and essay questions.

### **Conclusions**

Based on study results; the researcher could conclude the following:

- 1- Using TRAP paraphrasing strategy was highly effective in improving EFL secondary stage students' reading comprehension of authentic texts.
- 2- TRAP paraphrasing strategy could be used to improve the EFL language skills at different educational grades.
- 3- The current research provided evidence on the effectiveness of using authentic reading comprehension texts in improving EFL second year secondary stage students' motivation towards reading.

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- 4- Using TRAP paraphrasing strategy was effective in developing the reading comprehension sub-skills of “skimming”, “scanning”, “guessing the meaning” and “critical reading”.
  - 5- TRAP paraphrasing strategy can obviously contribute to effective learning and teaching.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the previous findings, the current study recommended the following:

- 1- TRAP paraphrasing strategy should be used in teaching the writing and listening skills in all educational stages because TRAP paraphrasing strategy could help students to organize their ideas, make predictions, recall the most important information, concentrate on the details, help each other and recognize the relationships among the text ideas.
- 2- Incorporating authentic texts in teaching and learning English languages.
- 3- Using authentic texts could be used in promoting other aspects of language learning such as motivation.

### **Suggestion for further research**

The present study suggests the following research topics:

- 1- Using TRAP paraphrasing strategy to enhance secondary stage students’ listening skills.
- 2- Studying the effectiveness of using TRAP paraphrasing strategy in teaching students with special needs and struggling readers.
- 3- Studying the effectiveness of using authentic texts in enhancing students’ writing skills and their motivation towards learning English language.
- 4- Using TRAP paraphrasing in teaching reading comprehension at different school levels.
- 5- Examining the impact of TRAP paraphrasing strategy using the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) on improving secondary stage students’ listening skills.

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