Using a Web quest Strategy to develop Reading Comprehension Skills in English of Second Year Secondary School Students

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Abstract :

The present research has been conducted to investigate the effect of using a web quest strategy to develop reading comprehension skills of second year secondary school students. The research adopted the quasi– experimental design. Sixty students in the second year at Dr Mohammed Abu Eleyoun secondary school; Deirmawas Educational Zone, Minia Directorate of Education participated in the research that lasted for four weeks. They were assigned to an experimental group of thirty subjects, and a control group of thirty subjects. Instruments of the research included a pre–post test in reading comprehension. Findings of the research demonstrated that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group on post–test. There was a statistically significant difference between students' mean scores in the experimental and control groups on the reading comprehension test. Results of the research showed that using a web quest strategy had positive effects on the second year secondary students' reading comprehension skills. In light of the findings of the research, recommendations and suggestions for further research are offered.

Key words: Web quest strategy, reading comprehension skills, second year secondary students.

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استخدام استراتيجية الرحلات المعرفية عبر الويب لتنمية مهارات فهم القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي

حماده علي محمود حسانين

ملخص البحث

لقد تم إجراء هذا البحث للتحقق من أثر استخدام استراتيجية الرحلات المعرفية عبر الإنترنت فى تنمية مهارات فهم القراءة لدى طلاب الفرقة الثانية بالمرحلة الثانوية العامة. و اتخذ هذا البحث التصميم شبه التجريبي. وقد تم مشاركة عدد ستون طالبا من طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي العام بمدرسة الدكتور محمد ابو العيون الثانوية العامة– إدارة ديرمواس التعليمية– مديرية التربية والتعليم بمحافظة المنيا كعينة للبحث والذى استمر لمدة أربعة أسابيع. وقد تم تقسيم الطلاب إلى مجموعتين، إحداهما تجريبية والأخرى ضابطه، حيث تكونت كل مجموعة منهما من ثلاثون طالبا. اشتملت أدوات البحث على اختبار قبلى–بعدى فى القراءة. وأظهرت نتائج البحث تفوق طلاب المجموعة التجريبية على أقرانهم فى المجموعة الضابطة فى اختبار القراءة البعدي. وقد لوحظ أن هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات الطلاب في المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعات الضابطة في اختبار فهم القراءة. مما يشير إلى الأثر الإيجابي لاستراتيجية لاستخدام استراتيجية الرحلات المعرفية عبر الإنترنت على مهارات فهم القراءة لدى الطلاب. وفى ضوء تلك النتائج تم تقديم التوصيات والمقترحات لإجراء البحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: استراتيجية الرحلات المعرفية عبر الويب، مهارات فهم القراءة ، طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي

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1. Introduction:

Reading is a process of comprehending a written text as a type of communication. Reading comprehension is one of the essential skills in broadening the readers' perspectives, and providing them an opportunity to view the world and chances. From a technical perspective, reading comprehension is a dynamic mental activity where the reader interacts with the text to extract meaning (Farhadi, 2005).

Reading comprehension is an essential method for learning English and it has a close relationship with an effective writing style. Kirmizi (2009) argues that reading comprehension assists students to be lifelong literates. He/She adds that effective reading process depends on using reading comprehension strategies successfully. Moreover, reading is a crucial skill that assists students in teaching and learning process, national examination, even in proficiencies test such as TOEFL and IELTS.

Online reading serves as a means of input for many students and the Internet has permanently invaded the language classroom. Students search for information or answer questions using the Web almost every day. Dobler-Schmar (2003), states that the new characteristics of online texts help the readers map out their own route when reading on the Internet. Consequently, according to, Leu *et al.* (2011), the conventional perceptions of the reader, text and task have changed when applied to electronic environments.

Therefore, Coiro et al. (2008) believe that it is crucial to define a broader definition of reading, including the concept of 'new

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literacy skills' including the identification of major issues, the rapid location of useful information, the critical assessment of data, a suitable synthesis of information to develop the best solutions, and then communicating these solutions to others effectively.

Secondary school students suffer from lack of reading comprehension skills. This is asserted by Salah (2018), who mentions that these students cannot identify the main idea of the passage, the writer's purpose, or the organizational pattern the author uses to organize the text. He attributes the reason to the conventional methods of teaching the teachers use. Additionally, the researcher observes that second year secondary students cannot identify detail information or referents.

In his attempt to help these students develop their reading comprehension skills, the researcher suggests using an innovative media of teaching "web Quest." The Internet is considered one of the most beneficial resources, as it has a large amount of varied and easily accessible authentic materials. Using authentic materials in the class helps the students meet the real world and the real language.

March (2003) sees that a web quest as a scaffolding learning system that uses links to important web resources and an authentic task for students to investigate a central, open-ended issue and to take part in a final groups phase to transform the knowledge they have obtained into a sophisticated information process.

Web quests, as one of the foundations of the constructivist method, allow for the success of research-based tasks and encourages students to practice, resulting in high thinking abilities (Lahaie, 2008). Many studies, such as Abu-Elwan, 2007; Lim and Hernandez, 2007,

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show that web Quest is highly efficient in developing problem-solving capacity, high level thinking and creativity, increasing motivation, critical thinking, and correlating with the content.

Torres (2007) identifies web quests as task-based and content-based learning. It is a lesson prepared by teachers that takes the form of a web page with pre-selected links. It exposes students to credible materials that help them develop their language writing skills. What is more, it necessitates community communication and cooperation, allowing students to learn from one another while also developing social skills and critical thinking. Few research, however, have investigated its impact on developing writing skills. Web quests, according to Barros & Carvalho (2007), allow for the incorporation of technology into teaching and make students focus on how to utilize and find quality knowledge on the internet. Moreover, it assists students in developing autonomy as they complete their assignments, share their perspectives, debate, and solve problems.

Kurtulus and Kilic (2009), add that web Quest encourages students to use the internet in a fun way and develops their attitude toward the lesson. It is a tool by which students are engaged in higher cognitive tasks and the persistence of learning activities is achieved. In the same line, Alshumaimeri and Bamanger (2013) postulate that the use of web Quest as a pedagogical method is an important and creative way to incorporate the internet into EFL teaching. At present, students can communicate with one another and use computers as a valuable source of knowledge.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present research springs from second year

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secondary students' low achievement in English reading comprehension. Also, the students have lack of the skills to cope with reading comprehension, such as finding the main idea, identifying the supporting details, identifying the writer's purpose, identifying referents. As a result, they perform poorly and receive low scores at reading comprehension tests.

More specifically, the present research addressed the following question: "***What is the effect of using a web quest strategy on developing second year secondary students' reading comprehension skills?***"

2. Literature Review.

Reading comprehension

The ultimate goal of instructing reading is to help a reader comprehend a text (Salah, 2018). Definitions of reading comprehension have been modified over the years. According to Roebl & Connie (2013), reading comprehension is a process of the interaction of the reader's prior knowledge, the reader's interpretation to the writer's language that he/she used in building the text, and the situation in which the text is read in order to construct meaning from the composed text. Snow (2002), defines reading comprehension as the capability to take out meaning from the text or learn from it. He adds that according to this definition, reading comprehension is a skill that comes from the connection of lower-level skills (e.g., phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, and fluency) and skills such as automaticity, processes of higher-level language understanding, background knowledge and schema building, text structures knowledge, and the ability of various memory structures)in

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order to sustain generic reading comprehension. Oakhill et al, (2005) points out that automaticity with interpreting and word-reading is paramount for generic reading comprehension. As when students are capable of interpreting words easily and automatically (e.g. without dedicating essential cognitive resources in order to distinguish letter-sound correspondences), they avoid extra cognitive resources that support in comprehending the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences inside the text. However, words' understanding separately is not adequate for comprehension since the meaning of words is often dependent upon the context in which they display. Consequently, according to Hanon & Daneman, (2001), students should also possess a stable understanding on processes of higher-level language comprehension, for example understanding the connections of semantic, syntax, and reference among progressive words for constructing meaning from text.

Hedgcock &Ferris (2018), state that the definition of reading comprehension started from the behavioural concept which dominated till the seventies and eighties centuries and moved to the interactive approach which started in the late eighties and continues until now. Some researchers see reading as a cognitive, formative, and socially structured activity that surpasses comprehension of the words on a page. In the past, reading was viewed as a moderately static activity. Overall meaning was imbedded in the text, and the reader's role was to comprehend what was being transmitted via the words on the page. Recent research considers reading as a dynamic process in which the reader constructs meaning dependent upon information he/she collects from the text.

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Widyarini (2017) mentions that effective readers are able to comprehend the text well if they can: a. recognize words quickly, b. analyze unfamiliar words, c. read for meaning, concentrate on constructing meaning, d. guess about the meaning of the text, e. distinguish main ideas of the text.

Grellet (1995:5) cited in Widyarini (2017), lists some reading comprehension skills as follows: a. understanding explicitly stated information, b. understanding information when not explicitly stated, c. understanding the communicative value of sentences and utterance, d. identifying the main point or important in a piece of discourse.

Web quests

A web quest is an inquiry–oriented activity, which some or all of the information that students interact with comes from resources on the Internet. Web quests are basically designed for language learning, and to utilize students' time properly, to focus on utilizing information rather than looking for it, and to support students' thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In the web quest, student groups have to solve a problem or perform a challenging task, often concerned with a controversial topic or with topics which offer various views. For that purpose, students are linked to many web resources (Martonia, Anastasia, and David, 2006).

Structure of Web Quests

Dodge (2001& 2004) and Turville (2008) recognize seven important components of a web quest which present the activity to students and familiarize them with the process steps:

1. **Introduction:** It offers background information on the topic to the

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students to prepare them to what is coming and motivational scenarios like giving students roles to play. The introduction objective is to make the activity fun and desirable for students.

2. **Task:** It is description of what students will achieve by the end of the web quest. It should be fascinating and possible to do for them.

3. **Process:** it describes the steps precisely. Students should go through in fulfilling the task, with links involved in each step.

4. **Resources:** They contain a list of the resources, such as websites, print resources that the students will need to finish the task.

5. **Evaluation:** A group of criteria or a rubric for evaluating students' work. The standards should be clear, consistent and specific to the tasks set.

6. **Conclusion:** It assists students to reflect and teachers to summarize. It reminds the students of what they have learned after finishing the activity.

7. **Teachers' page:** It provides students in written form with details about standards, objectives, and the webquest itself to help another teacher adopt your webquest or adapt it to his or her students.

Uses and advantages of Webquests

Web quests can be utilized for many educational purposes. They help students learn in a constructive way and think critically. Kundu and Bain (2006) show how web quests can be utilized in a constructive way to promote learning. While a large portion of teaching can be directed toward transferring knowledge to students, web quests put students in control of their own learning. Constructivism approach involves open−ended search in real

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contexts. Furthermore, a greater comprehension of constructivism is used to design web-quests, and assignments.

Critical thinking is an essential construct in webquest learning. Vidoni and Maddux (2002) see critical thinking as disciplined, self-directed thinking that illustrates perfections of thinking in a specific mode or area of thinking. Webquests offer students a chance to use critical thinking skills. Webquests enable students to build on their prior knowledge that allows them to think at a higher level.

March (2003) postulates that webquests enable students to complete authentic projects and use technology in search and presentation of information while at the same time alleviating some obstacles teachers may endeavor to work within project-oriented learning. Web quests are generally cooperative exercises, in which students play a different role in relation to an authentic issue. As Ahmed (2012) illustrates, while other more conventional resources, such as journals can be used, the Internet is typically the main outlet for information.

The web quest itself structures authentic topic search, thereby enhancing students' ability to navigate successfully a highly unstructured environment, such as the Internet. Students then create a product that shows how they know the problem and its possible solutions. However, students can explore through web quests different aspects of the target culture and think of the discrepancies between the target country and their respective countries (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, Saniei, 2011). According to Gaskill, McNulty, and Brooks (2006), students enjoy webquests since they are given the opportunity to use the Internet to find and apply information. The

students may also learn to use presentation software, which allows them to impart their information in a creative way while educating others.

Webquest is beneficial for teachers as well. Robert, Mcalack, and Stoddart (2005), state that teachers benefit from web quests in various ways. For instance, web quests provide rubrics for each project and web resource addresses. They provide authentic learning, and ideas for projects. Thus, a web quest can be a successful way to avoid boredom which obstacles the advancement of language skills.

Web quests and language learning

Halat and Peker (2011) clarify the advantages of using web Quest in language learning stating that Web Quest enhances the effective use of time; students utilize the links given by the teacher and quest for information in a structured effective manner. They add Web Quest supports higher−order thinking skills. Students are asked to read, think, analyze, synthesize and evaluate. Ellis (2000) claims that web quests improve communicative interaction and enable students to be engaged in trying to communicate content towards the communicative goal.

For Torres (2007), Web Quest is an inquiry orientated activity placed in a relevant thematic context which implies the use of web resources and the development of higher order thinking skills in a cooperative environment. Simultaneously, he finds that web quests provide the students with the opportunity to learn, practice some linguistic skills, and deal with authentic material in the target language and this can bolster language learning.

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Stoks (2002) argues that Web Quest is useful for language learning in many aspects. When engaging in a web quest activity, students are exposed to the target language by surfing on the web. Making sense out of the web documents while skimming and scanning websites, is a useful exercise for students to increase their language comprehension. Besides, the problem–solving approach of web quests may facilitate language learning. Engaged in a web quest activity, the students integrate a reading to writing approach through internet. Blachowicz, Beyrsdorfe, and Fisher (2006), claim that technology such as web quests can provide opportunities for collaboration and the practice of integrated language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking.

However, according to Torres (2005), there are challenges that need to be considered while teaching languages using web quests. These challenges are represented in completing a web quest that is not designed in the students' native language requires more time and careful guidance. If students do not have sufficient language skills, they might lose interest and motivation in completing the web quest. In this case, they will not completely benefit from the experience.

2.2 Studies of using a web quest strategy to develop reading comprehension skills.

Tsai (2005) investigated the effect of using a web quest learning module as a computer assisted instruction (CAI) on reading vocabulary acquisition and reading performance of EFL students in Taiwan. In addition, this study reported the relationship between student attitudes and the student perceptions towards the use of web quest module. A quasi– experimental design was employed for this

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study since random selection and assignment are not possible. The tools of the study were a pretest and a posttest reading comprehension assessment were administered for the both groups, a questionnaire for the treatment group about learning attitudes and perceptions toward the web quest learning module. The participants of this study were 90 junior-year EFL students enrolled at Yuanpei University of science and technology in Taiwan. The results indicated that the students in the treatment group outperformed the students in the control group. The use of the Web Quest as a CAI enhancement produced significant differences in students' vocabulary acquisition and in the reading performance skills. The result of the survey indicated an overall positive attitude toward the web quest learning. A significant correlation was reported between student attitude and student perception.

Mostafa (2009) investigated the effectiveness of integrating internet resources into EFL curricula, using the web quest model, to enhance graduate students' reading and writing skills for research purposes in Faculty of Education. The study attempted to exploit both the constructivist and cooperative approaches through the use of project-based teams. It adopted an eclectic approach to enhance reading and writing for research purposes through training graduate students to design EFL instructional materials for teaching English at different level and reflect upon this experience. The instruments used were: A) A pre and post-test to measure students' research reading and writing skills; B) A rubric to evaluate the appropriateness of the tasks used in the pre- and posttest; C) Teacher logs to evaluate the different activities of the program and D) A teacher's observations.

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The program was applied on post-graduate students, English majors, in Faculty of Education. The group comprised forty-five male and female students. The findings indicated that integrating web resources into EFL curricula, using the web quest model, was effective in enhancing students' reading and writing skills for research purposes and provided a positive learning experience. It was thus recommended that EFL teaching practitioners adopt the web quest model in making use of web resources for their instruction.

Tuan (2011) investigated the impact of web quest on reading skills of university students and their attitude towards web quest-based teaching of reading. The participants of the study were 44 second-year students at Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City. Web quest-based instruments included pretest, posttest, and questionnaire that helped to collate quantitative data. The findings displayed that the students who received the Web quest-based program made considerable improvement in their reading comprehension skills. The findings were also enhanced by the positive feedback of the students towards the use of web quest through the online survey carried out after the course.

Widyarini (2017) explored the effect of using web quest on improving ninth grade students' reading comprehension skills. The students were enrolled in SMP N 5 Surakarta. The study was conducted by using classroom action research. It was carried out in two cycles including six meetings. Based on the research, it is proven that teaching reading in elementary students by using web quest simultaneously improves students' reading comprehension.

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However, it is worth to note that using web quest is effective and efficient if the activities and materials involve the students. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should be more creative to use various material resources and create an interesting form of web quest in teaching reading to make the students more interested and actively involved in teaching learning process. In addition, web quest can also improve the classroom climate including students' participation and motivation in class, which can be seen from the students' attitude in joining all activities during the research.

Sayed (2020) investigated the effect of using web-quest strategy on developing reading comprehension performance for EFL students. The study participants were English majors at the Faculty of Education, October 6 University. The study participants involved only third year English language majors who are expected to be highly aware of reading comprehension performance. To collect the required data, a reading test was designed, validated and administered. The administration of the study instruments happened in their second term of the academic year 2019- 2020. The participants of the present study were asked to respond to a reading comprehension test through using web-quest strategy. Results showed that 45,5% of the study participants were unable to pass the reading comprehension test while, 54.5% were able to pass the reading comprehension test.

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3. **Methodology**

3.1 **Participants**

The participants of the research were sixty students enrolled in the second year of secondary stage, Dr Mohammed Abu El-eyoun secondary school during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021.The two groups were assigned to a treatment group, which consisted of thirty students, and a non- treatment group, which consisted of thirty students. The treatment group students were taught using a web quest strategy, whereas the non-treatment group students were taught using the conventional method.

3.2 **Instruments**

To achieve the study objective, the researcher developed a reading comprehension test which was used as a pre-test and a post-test. The reading comprehension pre-test was used to ensure that students of both groups were at the same reading comprehension level before beginning the treatment, and thus the progress achieved by the treatment group could be attributed to the program they have been exposed to. As for the post-test, it was used to investigate the effect of using a web quest strategy on developing reading comprehension skills of that group (treatment group). In both tests, students were required to read a passage and find the main idea, the supporting details, identify the writer's purpose, identify the referents, find meaning of words.

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3.3 Variables of the study

A – **The independent variable**: A web quest strategy.

B – **The dependent variables**:

Reading comprehension skills of second year secondary schools students.

3.4 The Study procedures:

The researcher followed these procedures for the purpose of collecting data for the study:

1) Selecting the subjects from second year secondary stage, Dr Mohammed Abu El-eyoun secondary school during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021. 2) Reviewing related literature. 3) Establishing the suitability and validity of the instructional program by a jury. 4) Designing the program in using a web quest strategy.

5) Designing a pre-post reading comprehension test. 6) Establishing the validity and reliability of the " pre-post paragraph writing test. 7) Getting the approval of the College Dean, Deputy Minister of Education in Minia, Director of Deirmawas Educational Directorate to conduct the study. 8) Pre-testing the treatment group and the non-treatment group to measure their reading performance on March,14, 2021.

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Table (1)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of the control and experimental groups in the pre-performance on reading comprehension test

Test	Control Group N= 30		Experimental Group N= 30		df	t-value
	mean	St.dv	mean	St.dv		
Finding the main idea	0.98	1.20	0.90	1.27	58	0.86
Finding the supporting details	1.40	1.10	1.44	0.99	58	1.08
Identifying the writer's purpose	0.53	1.38	0.47	1.44	58	1.26
Identifying the referents	1.02	1.25	1.00	1.20		0,99
Finding meaning of words	1.00	0.97	1.10	0.85	58	0.94
Total score	4.93	4.11	4.91	3.63	58	1.43

Table (1) shows that there was no statistically difference at (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-performance on reading comprehension test. The calculated t-values in all the sub-skills and the total score of the test were lower than its tabulated value. This means that the two group subjects were homogenous in the reading comprehension before implementing the program.

9) Post- testing the treatment group and the non-treatment group students on April,21, 2021, to measure their progress in reading comprehension after conducting the treatment.

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4. Findings and Discussion

The results of the analysis of the post-test scores are shown in table 2.

Table (2)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of the control and experimental groups in the post-performance on the test of reading comprehension skills

Test	Control Group N= 30		Experimental Group N= 30		df	t-value
	Mean	**St.dv**	**mean**	**St.dv**		
Finding the main idea	1.03	1.20	5.40	1.55	58	8.50
Finding the supporting details	1.40	1.10	6.20	2.03	58	7.40
Identifying the writer's purpose	1.04	1.41	4.00	0.70	58	5.51
Identifying the referents	1.06	1.28	5.40	2.39	58	7.61
Finding meaning of words	1.00	0.97	4.60	3.00	58	6.00
Total score	5.53	4.61	25.60	4.28	58	7.02

Tabulated 't' =2.66 at (0.01) level

Table (2) shows that there was a statistically difference at (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups favoring the experimental group in the post-performance on reading comprehension test. The students' scores showed high development in reading comprehension skills where the calculated t-value in each sub-skill and in the whole test was greater than its tabulated value.

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4.1 <u>Discussion of the findings</u>:

The research results demonstrated that the students in the experimental group, who received instruction by the web quest strategy, surpassed the control group who studied by the conventional method in the post-test of reading comprehension. The research results are in agreement with the study of Tsai (2005), Mostafa (2009), Tuan (2011), and Widyarini (2017). These results can be attributed to the positive effect of the web quest strategy on both the affective aspect of students' thinking and the cognitive aspect. As to the affective aspect, the web quest strategy is practiced through the Internet which provides students with multimedia advantages. Any piece of information a student searches for is accompanied with sound, movement, pictures and colors. These advantages of multimedia provokes students' interests and motivation to persist on searching for the information the researcher needs as long as the learner enjoys what the researcher does. As a result, a motivated student can learn easier than other less motivated students. Besides, web quest provides different resources of information in different context. This is supported by Vidom and Maddux (2002), who state that web quests are valuable tools as they can contextualize learning in various meaningful ways. Both motivation and the different resources of information provoke student's expectation and imagination which means that he/she is able to more comprehend the text and know the writer's purpose. Besides, the identification of the referents and finding meaning of words would be feasible.

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5. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1 Recommendations:

In light of the current study findings, the following recommendations can be offered.

1- The need for applying the web quest strategy different educational stages. 2- The need for training teachers on how to utilize the web quest strategy, and its applications in the teaching process. 3- English Language teachers should adopt various activities for developing the competence of their second year secondary students in mastering reading comprehension skills. 4- Improve the students' technological skills as the internet and web technology-based method has a positive effect on students. So teachers must develop their skills. 5- Supply schools with necessary materials to facilitate using web quests.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

In light of the findings of the current research, the researcher suggests the following further studies:

1)-The current study should be replicated using other subjects from first and third year secondary school students. 2) Future research is required to investigate the effect of using a web quest strategy in developing other language skills, such as writing, listening, and speaking. 3) Future research is required to explore the effect of web quest strategy to improve students' engagement, motivation, and achievement in learning English.

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