The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

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Abstract:

The current study aims at investigating "the effect of using story mapping technique on Iraq EFL students' performance in reading comprehension".

The sample of the study was 3rd grade students from the English Department at the College of Basic Education/ Al-Mustansiriyha University. To achieve the aim of the current study, eight weeks experiment is conducted on the sample (experimental group) with pre and posttest. The experiment was started on 11th October and ended in 11th January, 2019.A test submitted to experts to ensure its validity and reliability, to filful the aim of the study, the researcher adopted a null hypothesis which indicates "that there is no significant difference between students' performance that used a new technique in reading comprehension in the pre-posttest".

The calculated results have shown that there is a statistically significance difference between the performance of the students of the experimental group on the pretest and posttest. Finally, the researcher has put down some conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further researches.

Keyword: Story Mapping Comprehension.

Section One: Introduction

English, as an international language which plays an increasingly important role in everyday life in the world. The reason is that the importance of the English language is being recognized by more and more people who are learning English as a second language. Therefore, in many countries, English has been taught as L2 to learners from an early age.

Reading plays an important role in English language acquisition, especially for learners. The essence of language is how to communicate with others. Understanding the meaning of words is the basic of communication.

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

Therefore, an effective didactic method for reading comprehension is essential (Richards & Rodgers ,2001: 73-74).

1-1 The Problem of the Study and Its Significance

Collaborative learning techniques are opposed traditional technologies; These technologies provide learners with opportunities to take a more active role in their learning. One cooperative learning technique is story mapping

Story mapping technique has played an important role in higher education, and the traditional course will likely use the story mapping component in teaching reading comprehension.

Although the story mapping technique is used to EFL learning has a positive effect on the EFL learners' attitudes, engagement, participation, and performances. So, this technique had not been examined in the Iraqi EFL context. A lot of studies referred that Iraqi EFL learners do not have the opportunities to engage in English language use or practice skills inside the classroom, largely due to many reasons. The researcher has stated some of them. The first reason is the passive role; many teachers have adopted and used traditional techniques. The second reason indicated that EFL Iraqi classes are teacher-led because the main teaching method is lecturing, making the textbook and the teacher the only sources of knowledge. This has created passive and unmotivated learners and reduced students' chances to naturally acquire the knowledge. These reasons encouraged the researcher to use story mapping technique because it motivates students to learn by themselves and encourages them to participate more in their class. The other reason is that the limited practice opportunities in Iraq EFL classes are the nature of the curriculum. The curriculum does not encourage learners to take a role in the learning process since learner-centered methods are not used in Iraqi EFL contexts.

Another problem may have taken the form of readers 'lack of comprehension strategies in the classroom of literature, which makes it easier to construct meaning and assimilate texts and provides opportunities for students to make predictions and draw on their prior knowledge. These strategies can either reflect conscious awareness or become automatic with practice. A good reading comprehension often reads the text before reading and makes predictions about it based on their prior knowledge.

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students'
Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

1.2 The Aim of Study

Based on the problem above, the researcher assumed that it was necessary to find a right solution for this problem, the researcher proposed new technique which is called story mapping technique. This technique could give benefit both for the students and the teacher.

From the researcher's aspect, story mapping technique could help the teacher to use a variety of activities to maintain the students' motivation in reading, and gradually it would help the teacher to support the students to improve their comprehension.

1.3 Hypothesis

For the sake of carrying out experimentation, the current study is based on the following hypothesis.

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the subjects of the (EG) who are taught reading comprehension according to story mapping technique on the pretest and posttest.

1.4 Procedures

The following steps are:

1. Selecting a random a representative sample of third level students at the college of Basic Education/ Al- Mustansiriyha University,

2. Constructing a pre-posttest to ensure its validity and reliability,

4. Administrating the test (a pretest posttest) to the subjects to assess their level,

5. Teaching the subjects of experimental group by using story mapping technique

6. Conducting a final administration of the test (as a posttest) to the subjects to find whether the suggested technique has any effect or not,

7. Analyzing the collected data to get results using suitable statistical tools and finally

8. Interpreting the obtained results to come up with conclusions and recommendations and suggestions for further researches.

1.5 Limitation

The present study is limited to:

1. Apply story mapping technique, and

2. It will be limited to third level at the College of Basic Education during the academic year (2018-2019).

1.6 Value

1. to the Teachers of English

This study is useful for teachers of English they may also find it easier to develop the materials which are interesting to the subjects so that teachers will be more creative in teaching reading comprehension.

2. to the Students

For the students, hopefully they will improve their reading .

1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms

In order to avoid any misunderstanding of the basic terms that are in the present study, they are defined operationally.

1.7.1 Story Mapping Technique

Smith (2012:291) states that story mapping technique is a graphic representation of all parts of the elements of the story and the relation between them .

1.7.2 Technique

Richards and Rodgers (2001: 19) state that technique is the "implementation which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective.

1.7.3 Reading Comprehension (RC)

Pardo (2004: 272) defines RC is "a process in which readersϖ construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text".

Section Two: Theoretical Background

2.0 Introductory Note

This section presents an overview of reading in general and reading comprehension in particular. It is also tries to provide a general idea about story mapping technique and its role in reading comprehension.

2. 1 Reading

McDonugh and Shaw (2005:89) state that reading is clearly one of the most important; in fact in many instances around the world. Reading is the most important in foreign language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English materials for their own specialist subject .

Chastain (1988: 216) asserts that reading skill is an essential and integral skill in language learning (L2 learners need to read larger and greater amounts of original material to communicate. The word 'reading' of course has a number of common interpretations depending on the language that may mean that reading Aloud is a very complex skill, which involves first

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

understanding printed words and then producing the correct sounds, and may also mean an activity in which students read a passage to understand (also called silent reading) Whatever it is, reading involves comprehension and when readers don't understand they don't read.

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Brown (2007:379) explains that comprehension as the process of receiving language; listening or reading; input. Comprehension is the ability to take in information, analyze it in its respective segments, and come up with an understanding of the input in a cohesive and accurate manner. Well-developed comprehension abilities involve interactive strategy use to come up with a meaningful understanding of the input .

2.1.2 Types of Comprehension

Day and Park (2005:62) classify reading comprehension into six different types .

 * **Literal *comprehension***: the understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text"

* **Reorganization:** it can be happened when 'readers find different pieces of information from a reading and combine for additional understanding. In this type, readers use a literal comprehension, it is applied to several areas of text in order to answer more specific questions that are related to the text'. (ibid: 62)

* **Inference:** it requires from the learners to go a step beyond literal understanding and to combine and use their own knowledge in order to come up with answers to implicitly stated information (ibid:62)

* **Prediction:** it requires to combine a reader's prior knowledge with his or her understanding of a passage in order to guess what happens next; each answer, however, must be supported by the text in order to be valid (ibid:62)

* **Evaluation:** in this type, it requires from the learner to have a general idea of the topic under examination and an understanding reading material in order to give judgment or opinion about the text (ibid:62)

***Personal response:** it used by the reader to provide their feelings about the topic so that they can have a valid answer, they need to have reasoned their feelings in relation to the text   (ibid: 62).

2.2 The Idea of Story: Definition and Types

Many learners know that literature can be divided into three parts: poetry, prose, and drama. But this is not proper to be a reference in scientific analysis, since this division does not cover all forms of literary texts universally. As Roberts and Jacobs (1995:2) classify literature into four

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

categories or genres: (1) prose fiction (stories), (2) poetry, (3) drama, and (4) nonfiction prose Stories are the most common type to be taught in classrooms.

Story as a word emerges from the ancient Latin word "historie". That word evolved into old French word "estorie" and entered Middle English as "storie". Our word **story** is derived from the Middle English. A bewildering variety of definitions have been proposed for the story. Thursby (2006:4) states that story is referred to a "series of connected events, true or fictitious, that is written or told with the intention of entertaining or informing". It is a series of logically and chronically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (Bal, 1985:5).

Calfee and Drum (1986: 836) explain that stories tell "what happened" and "who did what to whom and why". They are more than simple lists of sentences or ideas. Stories have structure. There is more to a story than saying, "stories have a beginning, middle, and an end."

The short story, as mentioned by Garcia (2007: 500), is one of the most narratives that are used in the language classroom. Many aspects support the use of short stories in ELT. They can be summarized as follows:

1. The short story captures students' attention because of its brevity; thus it can be read in one sitting and the students are not put off by an endless amount of pages.
2. As the short story possesses a relative length, it contains just a few characters what makes it less complex and easier for readers to follow.
3. The short story disposes of limited time and space dimensions. It concentrates on one section of characters' life and offers a direct access to the action.

2.3 Story Elements

The major elements that all works of fiction share can be described as follows:

2.3.1 Subject Matter

Altenbernd and Lewis (1966: 55) state that each story has a certain subject matter.

2.3.2 Character

A character is the representation of a person in a narrative work of art (such as a novel, play, or film). Generally, characters are of two types: protagonist or heroes and antagonists or villains. The protagonist is the principal, leading character in a play. The antagonist, on the other hand, is the

chief opponent of the hero. Strictly speaking, stories usually have only one protagonist, clearly the focus on a major interest, in conflict with an antagonist (Gray, 1984: 167).

2.3.3 Setting

Gray (1984: 187) states that the setting of story refers to " the time and place in which it takes place." The setting may be crucially significant since writers may use it to convey information about the temperament of the characters themselves symbolically or adopting the characters' views towards it.

.2.3.4 Action and Plot

The concept of plot was first introduced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle to describe the properties of drama .Plot, to Aristotle, is the most important of all the elements: it is the soul of tragedy. Plot is the arrangement of the incidents for the tragedy; it is not portrayal of men. Men are the certain kind of individuals they are as a result of their characters; but they become happy or miserable as a result of their action. Without action there will be no tragedy (Whitfield, 1968: 13).

2.4 Story Mapping (SM)

Boulineau et al. (2004: 106): state that SM is "an intervention to direct students' attention to relevant elements of stories, such as setting, problem, goal, events, or actions that contribute to the goal, the outcome or resolution of each passage, and the theme, using a specific structure through visual spatial display for key information in a narrative text".

Almasi (2003: 134) identifies the benefits of using SMT in reading. The use of (SMT) serves not only to assess students' memory and retrieve text. it should be used to enhance students' ability to predict and identify reading purposes, during reading, and to be applied as a cognitive tool that focuses attention and enhances the ability to observe incoming information and compare it to previous predictions.

Taylor et al (2002: 71) stated that SMT is useful technique for students , it forces students to focus on the text and puts the information into a visual aids with that students can better used to communicate. Direct and clear instructions in reading strategies enable students to respond effectively. Teachers can teach narrative texts to learners through SMT to guide learners' understanding of stories. Teachers can also teach the structure of many types of factual texts (McIntyre et al., 2011: 130).

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

Section Three: Methodology of the Study
3.1 The Experimental Design
Good (1973: 174) defines the experimental design as the plan according to which experimental groups are selected and experimental treatments are administrated and their effect is answered .

The current study followed one experimental design of pre- posttest group in which subjects are randomly assigned to experimental and a pretest is administrated before the application of the experiment and posttest at the end of the treatment period. The experimental group has been taught RC by using new technique namely (story mapping) to develop reading comprehension.

Table (3.1) the Experimental Design

The Groups	The Test	Independent Variable	The Test
The experimental group (EG)	Pre-test	Story mapping technique	Post-test

3.2 Population and Sample of the Test
This test was conducted on the 3rd year students studying at English language Department, College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriya University, to investigate "the effect of using story mapping technique on Iraqi EFL student' performance in reading comprehension". The choice was primarily based on the fact that students at this level have a fairly good command of English after 3 years of intensive study. Added to this, they have studied and practiced reading comprehension in a number of courses. I have chosen for the test (36) third year students of total (40) students. Table (.2.3).

Table (3.2) Population and Sample of The Test

University College	Department	Section	Total Students	Present	Absent
Mustansyriha College of Basic Education	English Department	A	36	30	6

3.3 Description of the Test

This study tries to investigate 'the effect of using story mapping technique on Iraqi EFL student' performance in reading comprehension'. As a matter of fact, reading comprehension test aims at developing a wide variety of reading comprehension skills and language aspects (e.g. developing students' ability to understand vocabulary items, grammatical structure, new ideas and thoughts, different text structures, new styles of writing, etc.). Therefore, it is important to recognize the kind of questions asked in order to know what kinds of answers are expected.

The researcher has chosen two passages with twenty items distributed among three questions for the pretest and posttest. The passages have deliberately been chosen for the following reasons:

(a) The students have already been familiarized with the topic by one of the teachers, who have been teaching them.

(b) There were an answer papers attached with the text of the test in order to save time and effort in answering.

3.4 Scoring Scheme

To ensure the reliability of the test, the researcher was put a special scoring scheme that depends on the answers of the students. The maximum score of the test is 20 marks. One mark is allotted to each correct answer of the all questions.

The pretest consists of a passage which is followed by three questions: 1. *(true/ false questions)* which is consisted of five items 2-*Explain the meaning of items* which is an objective test consisting of ten items and 3. *Short answer questions* items which is a subjective test consisting of five items, The total mark of the first question is (5) where the correct answer gains one mark, and the incorrect answer gains *zero*. While the second question's total mark is (10) where one mark is allotted to the correct answer, and a zero mark is for the incorrect answer. The third question which is an objective test has a total mark of (5) where the correct answer gains one mark and the incorrect answer gains zero.

3.5 Test validity

Best and Kaha (2006:295) state that validity is refers to the extent to which test measures what is supposed to measure.

Richards and Schmidt (2002: 196-197) state that face validity is "the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of an observer". The test was

presented to a jury of experts in the field of linguistics and linguistics to judge whether or not the test items were appropriate for the proposed purpose * the jury members are:

1. Prof. Dr A.J. Darwash (College of Basic education, Al-Mustansiriyha University).
2. Asst. Prof. Istapraq Rasheed (College Basic education, Al-Mustansiriyha University).
3. Asst.Prof. Dr Lutfi , Abbas, (College of Education, Al-Mustansiriyha University).
4. Asst .Prof Saad, Salal (College of Basic education, Al-Mustansiriyha University).
5. Asst.Prof Al- Bakri, Mo'ayed (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyha University).

3.6 Pilot Administration

On the 1ˢᵗ of December 2019, a test was carried out. it was experimentally tried out on 30 students who were selected randomly from third year students at the same Department,. it indicated that the instructions were clear, the items of the test were suitable for the sample, and that the time needed for the test was about 45-50 minutes. As for the clarity of instructions, they were clear. After adapting the item discrimination formula, "it is found out that the discrimination power of the test items ranged between 0.315 to 0.496 , whereas by adapting the item difficulty formula, it was found out that it ranged between, 0.30 to 0.70 and the reliability of the test was achieved by using certain statistical tools

3.7 Test Reliability

Oller (1979:4) defines reliability is "the degree of consistency of the test measurement". In the current study, the method used to estimate the test reliability is Kuder-Richardson formulas 20 and 21, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.94 and 0.96 respectively. Eom and Arbaugh (2011:278), do not consider assessment measures of school performance valid unless their reliability is greater than 0.60. This means that the test has an acceptable and adequate reliability since its reliability is greater than 0.60.Test reliability has been 0.75 which is considered valid.

3.7.1 Pre- Test

After checking the reliability and validity of the test, the researcher gave the sample of his study a pre-test. This test is given to the students before the treatment to measure the sample's level of performance in the dependent variable, i.e., reading comprehension.

The pre-test in its final form is administered to the sample on 11of December 2019. The study subjects totaling 30 students are seated to take the test in a comfortable room at the lap of the College of Basic Education.

3.7.2 Administration of the Posttest

The posttest was administrated on the 16 of January, the aim of the posttest is to indicate whether an experimental sample has achieved better in reading comprehension.

Section Four: Results, Conclusion, Recommendation, and Suggestions

4.0 Introductory Note

This section introduces and then interprets the test results by using suitable statistical tools. Conclusions are drawn in the light of the results also recommendations are presented.

4.1 Introduction of Results

The results are introduced according to the hypothesis of the study. The aim of the present study is to investigate 'the impact of developing lexical meaning on Iraq EFL students; performance in reading comprehension'.

4.2 Results Related to Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study states that there was no statically significance between the performances of Iraq EFL students in reading comprehension on the Pre-Posttest. To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a comparison has been drawn between the achievement of the sample on the pretest and that of the posttest. The t-test formula for dependent sample has been used to determine whether the difference between the performance of the sample on the pretest and that of the posttest is significant or not. Table (4.2) will show the following results.

Table (4.2) Pre-Posttest Scores of The Subjects

Test	No. of Subjects	Mean	SD	df	Calculated T-value	Tabulated T-value	Level of Significance
Pre test	30	55.20	9.10	29	2.08	2.017	0.05
Post test	30	65.13	9.44				

The mean score of the sample on the pretest is 55.20; where as the mean score of it on the posttest is 65.13. The calculated T value is 2.08, at 0.05 level of significance and a df (29). Therefore, the differences are a statistically significant in the favour of pre-posttest, i.e., the performance of the students on the posttest was higher.

4.3 Interpretation of the Results

The result reveals that there is a statistically significance between the mean score of the pretest and that of the posttest of the subjects. The performance of the subjects in the posttest is slightly higher than that of the pretest.

4.4 Conclusions

The researcher concludes that story mapping technique is important in teaching reading comprehension. If a teacher wants to be successful in his/her teaching, he/she should know properly how to motivate the students to read and understand the passage besides that, he/ she should have to choose one of the most appropriate techniques in teaching. To overcome the problem above, the teacher should consider a good teaching technique. The teacher not only can use one technique. Story mapping technique is very useful in teaching reading comprehension.

4.5 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:
1. Various form of activities should be used in teaching reading comprehension
2. The teachers should encourage shy students to practice and participate orally by using different activities.

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The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

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The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

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Appendix A
Pretest
Q1 Read the passage carefully and then answer the questions?

"Most people think of deserts as dry, those areas with little vegetation and little or no rainfall, but this is hardly true. Many deserts have varied geographical formations ranging from soft, rolling hills to stark, jagged cliffs, and most deserts have a permanent **source** of water. Although deserts do not receive a high amount of rainfall- to be classified as a desert, an area must get less than twenty – five centimeters of rainfall per year- there are many plants that **thrive** on only small amounts of water, and desserts are often full of such plant life.

Desert plants have a variety of **mechanisms** for obtaining the water needed for survival. Some plants, such as cactus, are able to store large amounts of water in their leaves or stems, after a rainfall plants absorb a large supply of water to last until the next rainfall. Other plants, such as the **mesquite,** have extraordinarily deep root systems that allow them to obtain water from far below the desert's **arid** surface".

 1. What is the main topic of the passage?
a. Desserts are dry, flat areas with few plants
b. There is a little rainfall in the desert.
c. Many kinds of vegetation can survive with little water.
d. Desserts are with not really flat areas little plant life.

2. The passage implies………..
    a. The typical conception of a desert is incorrect
    b. All deserts are dry, fall areas
    c. Most people are well informed about deserts
    d. The lack of rainfall in deserts causes the lack of vegetation

3. The passage describes the geography of deserts as ……..
a. flat   c. sandy
b. varied   d. void of vegetation

4. According to the passage, what causes an area to be classified as a desert?
a. the type of plants   b. the geographical formations
c. the amount of precipitation   d. the source of water

5. Which of the following is mentioned in the passage about cacti?
a. They have deep root systems
b. They retain water from one rainfall to the next
c. They survive in the desert because they do not need water
d. They get water from deep below the surface of the desert

(10 marks)

Q2 Explain the meaning of the following?

(Source, thrive, mechanisms, mesquite, arid, stark)

(5 marks)

Q3 **Write True or False and then correct the false one?**
    a. Many deserts have not varied geographical formations ranging from soft, rolling hills to stark.
    b. Desert plants have a variety of mechanisms
    c. There is a lot of rainfall in the desert.
    d. Desserts are often full of such plant life.
    e. Desserts are really flat areas and a more plant life

(5 mark)

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The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

Pretest

Q1 Read the passage carefully and then answer the following questions

The origin of the word art is Latin. It is used to mean human skill both of mind and body in contrast to all the wonders and **products** of nature. That is why subjects such as grammar, logic, **rhetoric**, geometry and astronomy were usually called "**libera**l arts". Today, however, the word art refers to the fine arts such as painting, **sculpture,** music and the theatre. It is agreed that involves "form" and "content" form means the skill or the manner of the artist's produces. However, there is no agreement on which of the two (form or content is more important. many believe that the two influence one another so deeply that they can hardly be **separated** and analyzed. Is art related to beauty? Not everything that is beautiful of king of art.

1. What is the origin of the word art?
2. What does the word art mean nowadays?
3. What was arithmetic and geometry called in relation to art?
4. What does form mean?
5. What does "content" mean?

(10 marks)

Q2 Give the word card for the following words.

(Products, rhetoric, liberal, sculpture, separated)

(5 marks)

Q3 Choose the right choice

1. We have an exam next week. It is very necessary ………………
  a. hard study   b. study hard   c. to study hard   d. to hard study
2. We have only another five – minutes. I think we ……………
  a. to hurry   b. should hurry   c. be hurry   d. hurry
3. Scott and dickens are the both excellent writers, but I prefer ………..
 a. the latest   b. the last   c. the later   d. the latter
4. I have ……… mistakes in diction
a. not   b. much   c. any   d. no
5. The sky is getting dark. It ……… rain is on its way.
a. looks like b. will be   c. seems to   d. looks

The Effect of Using Story Mapping Technique on Iraq EFL Students' Performance in Reading Comprehension

Bilal Ali Burhan

م. بلال علي برهان

مستخلص البحث:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استخدام تقنية خارطة القصة على الطلاب العراقيين متعلمو اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية في تعلم الاستيعاب القرائي حيث طبق الباحث هذه التجربة على عينة من الطلاب المرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللفة الانكليزية كلية التربية الأساسية الجامعة المستنصرية استمرت التجربة للمدة ثمانية أسابيع حيث بدأت 11 أكتوبر وانتهت في 11 كانون الثاني 2019 . استخدام الباحث اختبار قبلي وبعدي وللتأكد من صدق وثبات الاختبار , قام الباحث بتسليمه الى مجموعة من الخبراء المختصين ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تم افتراض فرضية صفرية كما موضح : لا يوجد فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين معدل درجات الطلبة الذين تعلموا الاستيعاب القرائياستخدام تقنية خارطة القصة بالاختبار القبلي والبعدي اثبت النتائج على وجود فرق ذات دلالة إحصائية في أداء الطلبة بالاستخدام تقنية خارطة القصة من خلال الاختبار القبلي والبعدي. وأخيرا وضع الباحث بغض من الاستنتاجات ةالتوصيات .

الكلمات المفتاحية : خارطة القصة , الاستيعاب