The Effect of the Concept Sorting Strategy on EFL Preparatory School Students' Reading Comprehension and Motivation

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أثر استراتيجية فرز المفاهيم في الاستيعاب القرائي والدافعية لدى طلاب المرحلة الاعدادية من دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية- لغةً أجنبية

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Abstract

The current research aims to identify the effect of the Concept Sorting Strategy on the reading comprehension as well as motivation among the fifth grade students of English as a foreign language preparatory school students in the English language subject. For the purpose of achieving this aim, four null hypotheses are formulated, the experimental approach with two equivalent groups was used. The research population consisted of fifth grade preparatory students in government schools affiliated to the Directorate of Education of Salah Al-Din for the academic year (2024-2025). The research sample included (60) students, which represents 17.14% of its total population of the study. The sample is randomly assigned to two equal groups, experimental group which includes (30) students taught according to the Concept Sorting Strategy, and control group which also includes (30) students taught according to the conventional method from Saad Bin Aby Waqaas Secondary School affiliated to the Department of Education of Baiji. The equivalence process between the two research groups was carried out in terms of a number of variables. To achieve the aim of the research, the researcher prepared two instruments, namely the reading comprehension test which consists of (20) items and the motivation scale which also consists of (20) items. Validity of the instruments was confirmed by exposing them to a group of experts in the field of methodology, and the reliability was calculated. The result obtained that the use of this strategy had a positive role in raising the level of motivation for the students of the experimental group and their eagerness for the subject and their desire to learn and acquire new vocabulary, as well as increased their integration with each other, which led to an increase in their achievement in the reading comprehension test. The study ends with some conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords: Concept Sorting Strategy, Effect, Motivation, Preparatory School Students, Reading Comprehension.

المستخلص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى التعرف على أثر استراتيجية فرز المفاهيم في الاستيعاب القرائي والدافعية لدى طلاب الصف الخامس الاعدادي في مادة اللغة الانكليزية, ولغرض تحقيق هذا الهدف تم صياغة أربع فرضيات صفرية, وتم استعمال المنهج التجريبي ذي المجموعتين المتكافئتين, وتكون مجتمع البحث من طلاب الصف الخامس الاعدادي في المدارس الحكومية التابعة لمديرية تربية صلاح الدين للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٤-٢٠٢٥ ,وقد شملت عينة البحث ستين طالباً وهي تمثل ١٧.١٤٪ من المجتمع الكلي لعينة الدراسة تم توزيعهم عشوائياً على مجموعتين متساويتين المجموعة التجريبية التي ضمت ثلاثين طالباً تم تدريسهم على وفق استراتيجية فرز المفاهيم، والمجموعة الضابطة التي ضمت ثلاثين طالباً ايضا تم تدريسهم على وفق الطريقة الاعتيادية في مدرسة اعدادية سعد بن أبي وقاص التابعة لقسم تربية بيجي,و تم إجراء عملية التكافؤ بين مجموعتي البحث على وفق عدد من المتغيرات.لتحقيق هدف البحث أعد الباحث أداتين هما اختبار الاستيعاب القرائي المكون في صيغته النهائية من (٢٠) فقرة ,ومقياس الدافعية المكون في صيغته النهائية من (٢٠) فقرة أيضاً ,وتم التأكد من صدق الأدوات من خلال عرضها على مجموعة من الخبراء

والمحكمين في مجال طرائق التدريس, وكذلك تم حساب معامل الثبات. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى أن استعمال استراتيجية فرز المفاهيم كان له اثر إيجابي في رفع مستوى دافعية طلاب المجموعة التجريبية وشغفهم بالمادة ورغبتهم في التعلم واكتساب مفردات جديدة فضلا عن زيادة تكاملهم مع بعضهم البعض، مما أدى إلى زيادة تحصيلهم في اختبار الاستيعاب القرائي, وقد خلصت الدراسة الى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات والتوصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية فرز المفاهيم، اثر، الدافعية، طلاب المرحلة الإعدادية، الاستيعاب القرائي

Section One: Introduction
1.1 Statement of the Problem
The preparatory stage is one of the important educational stages in students' lives, as it represents a qualitative transition towards a more mature and comprehensive stage in terms of cognitive and applied content. This transformation requires teachers to work on developing their teaching methods in line with the needs of learners and the requirements of the era, by adopting modern educational strategies that focus on interaction, participation and stimulating thinking. However, teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL, for short) at preparatory schools, mostly relies on conventional methods based on memorization and indoctrination (Darsih, 2018). This negatively affects students' level of motivation and academic achievement. Since English language is taught as a foreign language, conveying it in an engaging manner is the responsibility of the teacher, who should make the learner a cornerstone of the educational process (IIP Series, 2024). Through a questionnaire and interviews conducted by the researcher with a number of English language teachers, it becomes clear that students suffer from low levels of reading comprehension and motivation, as a result of the lack of interaction and weak classroom activities, which led to their inability to deeply understand the texts and not interact with them. Employing modern strategies such as, the Concept Sorting Strategy, which relies on group work, discussion, and activating the learner's role in constructing meaning, may be one of the effective ways to address this weakness. Hence, the research problem stems from the weak level in reading comprehension and motivation among the fifth-grade preparatory school students as a result of adopting conventional teaching methods, and a need to adopt more effective and interactive educational strategies.

1.2 Value of the Study
The value of this study is summed up in the following points:

1. Highlighting how the Concept Sorting Strategy can enhance reading comprehension among preparatory school students in English Language, which contributes to developing their abilities to understand texts and deal with written information.

2. Provides insights on how to motivate students to learn and actively participate in lessons, reflecting positively on their overall performance.

3. Provides a practical framework for applying innovative concept-based learning strategies, helping teachers adopt interactive and targeted teaching methods towards developing students' linguistic thinking.

4. Contributes to enriching educational and linguistic studies by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Concept Sorting Strategy in the context of teaching EFL, which opens up prospects for the development of future educational curricula.

5. Improving students' reading comprehension skill and motivation enhances their ability to deal with future challenges, and contributes to raising the level of education in general, which reflects positively on the entire community.In this way, the current study is of theoretical and practical importance, as it provides practical solutions for the improvement of education and contributes to achieving positive results at the level of students' academic performance

1.3 Aims of the Study
The current study aims at: Investigating the effect of the Concept Sorting Strategy on the reading comprehension as well as motivation of the EFL fifth grade preparatory school students.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study
1. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement which is taught EFL by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and that of the control group which is taught EFL by using the conventional method, in the reading comprehension posttest.

2. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level which is taught EFL by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and the control group's level which is taught EFL by using the conventional method, in the motivation post-scale.

3.There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement in the pretest and posttest of reading comprehension.

4. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level in the pre and post administration of the motivation scale.

1.5 Limits of the study
This study is limited to:
1. English as a foreign language fifth grade preparatory school students at Saad Bin Aby Wqaas Secondary School for Boys/ Baiji City during the academic year 2024-2025.
2. Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 of **English for Iraq** (5th Preparatory/ Students' Book and Activity Book).

1.6 Operational Definitions of Basic Terms
The basic terms used in the current study are defined operationally, as follows:

1.6.1 Reading Comprehension
The ability to read written texts and understand their meanings by the fifth grade preparatory school students through the correct responses that they will get in the posttest-comprehension that has been prepared for the purposes of the current study.

1.6.2 Concept Sorting Strategy
A set of procedures and steps followed by the researcher to enable the fifth grade preparatory school students to sort and learn as much English vocabulary as possible, through providing learners with the opportunity to learn the content of the material and the new concepts.

1.6.3 Motivation
Self-power that motivates the learner's behaviour to acquire language and directs his behaviour and efforts towards achieving learning goals, whether self-motivated stemming from personal interest, or external motivation associated with academic, professional, or social incentives.

1.6.4 Preparatory school students are learners enrolled in the fifth grade of the Iraqi preparatory stage (ages 17–18), during the academic year 2024–2025.

Section Two: Theoretical Background

2.1 Active Learning
In the last years of the twentieth century, active learning appeared, and with the beginning of the twenty-first century, interest in this field clearly increased as one of the contemporary educational and psychological trends with a significant positive impact on the learning process for students in schools and universities **(Badawi, 2010).**

Jacobson, et al. (2022) state that active learning is a teaching technique that aims to engage learners in learning processes effectively. It is considering as the antithesis of idle learning in which the management of learning processes is the responsibility of the teacher. Active learning is considered as a learner-centered approach. It is associated with a number of positive effects on learners, such as the formation of positive attitudes towards learning, a high level of motivation to learn, stimulate thought processes, improve the quality of information assimilation, and increase the level of academic achievement.

Mujallid (2024) adds that active learning strategies require the completion of a meaningful learning activities, and think carefully about each task the learner completes. Active learning contributes to improving the fixation of information in the learner's memory, it is also considered a style of teaching and learning where learners automatically find themselves favouring it and considering it valuable.

2.2 Teacher's Role in Active Learning
According to Muhammad & Khalil (2024), the teacher's role in active learning is more than a carrier of information. The teacher becomes a facilitator and catalyst for an interactive learning experience. The role of the teacher is illustrated through the following points:

1.Activity Design: Excels in preparing educational activities that stimulate students' critical thinking and creativity.

2.Organizing the educational environment: creates a class that encourages discussion, cooperation, and problem solving, which promotes effective participation.

3.Guidance and support: Provides individual and group support, guiding students through the learning process, with constructive feedback.

4.Promote self-learning: Encourages students to research and learn by themselves, helping them develop independence skills.

2.3 Active Learning Strategies

Active learning is an educational approach that focuses on students' active participation in the learning process which enhancing their understanding and developing their skills. There are many strategies that can be applied to achieve active learning, such as cooperative learning, think, pair, share, role-playing, mind maps, active listening, and Concept Sorting Strategy. The application of these strategies contributes to the creation of an interactive learning environment, encourages students to think critically and collaborate, and enhances their understanding and retention of information **(Mujallid**, 2024).

2.4 Concept Sorting Strategy

It is an active learning technique that helps students organize and arrange information and concepts into groups or categories according to their similarities and differences. This strategy promotes deep understanding of the material by linking new knowledge to what already exists, developing learners' critical thinking and analytical skills. It also motivates students to actively participate in the learning process, where they can discuss and arrange ideas in a way that simplifies complex concepts and turns them into structured visual models (Lopez & García, 2023).American Institutes for Research, (2023) announces that the Concept Sorting Strategy can be applied according to the following steps:

1. The teacher distributes a table that includes a number of concepts and then presents them with categories or criteria on which the concepts will be classified.

2. Learners begin to classify either individually or in groups within the categories and criteria that they have, and through that, the teacher follows up and sees the extent to which they understand the scientific concepts in the subject.

3. Divide concepts into groups based on similarities and differences. Discuss the reasons for classification with students to ensure clarity of the idea.

4. Exchange of views among students on how to arrange concepts. Then clarify ideas and correct errors in classification.

5. After completing the implementation of the strategy, the teacher discusses the learners' answers collectively.

These steps help organize information and develop students' critical thinking through an interactive activity that links new knowledge with previous experiences.

2.5 Reading Comprehension Skill

Paige, et al., (2024) identify that reading comprehension is considered one of the fundamental skills in language learning. It goes beyond merely decoding linguistic symbols and understanding words and sentences. It involves grasping the deeper meanings of texts, analyzing them, interpreting ideas, and connecting them to prior knowledge. Reading comprehension is viewed as a complex cognitive process that includes critical thinking, inference, and meaning-making, making it a core skill that significantly contributes to students' academic achievement, especially at the preparatory schools' level.

Slamet, (2019) states that, **since reading comprehension is influenced by various instructional, cognitive, and linguistic factors, researchers have focused on employing effective instructional strategies to overcome these challenges and enhance students' comprehension.** Among these strategies is the Concept Sorting Strategy, which is recognized as an effective tool that helps learners organize information, classify concepts, and discover relationships among ideas, thereby enhancing their ability to deeply comprehend written texts. The Concept Sorting Strategy is grounded in constructivist learning principles, where students are required to categorize key concepts or vocabulary into specific groups. This process activates their prior knowledge and makes the reading task more focused and meaningful. Therefore, studying the relationship between reading comprehension and the use of the Concept Sorting Strategy is of a great importance, as it can improve learners' comprehension and enhance their academic performance in learning EFL.

2.6 Importance of Reading Comprehension Skill

1. It is the basis for understanding the subjects, as it enables students to absorb the educational content effectively, which reflects positively on their academic performance.

2. It helps develop analytical and evaluation skills, enabling individuals to deeply understand information and make informed decisions.

3. Enables individuals to express their ideas clearly and understand the messages of others, improving social and professional interaction.

4. Allows individuals access to a wide range of information and ideas, which contributes to the expansion of their cultural and cognitive horizons.

5. Enables individuals to continuously learn and independent research, enhancing their ability to acquire new skills and self-development.

Therefore, the development of reading comprehension skill is essential to success in various areas of life, whether in education, work or social interaction (Putra & Sutopo,2023).

González & Soler (2021) and Oguntade, (2022) state that reading comprehension process involves several aspects, including levels, elements, factors, and skills. Related to the levels of reading comprehension they are, as follows:

1. Literal Level: It is about understanding information and ideas explicitly found in the text, such as recognizing the main details and ideas.

2. Inferential Level: It requires the ability to read between the lines, extract implicit meanings, and link disparate information.

3. Critical Level: Includes evaluating the text, analyzing its credibility, and thinking about different points of view

4. Creative Level: Employing information extracted from text in new situations, and generating innovative ideas or solutions based on readable content.

While, the elements of reading comprehension are, as follows:

1. Readers: includes their background knowledge, language skills, and ability to concentrate and analyze.

2. Text: Includes content, style, organization of ideas, and clarity of language used.

3. Surroundings: Includes physical and psychological conditions while reading, such as calm and proper lighting.

Whereas, the factors affect reading comprehension are, as follows:

1. Fluency in reading: the ability to read texts smoothly and without hesitation

2. Linguistic wealth: Possess a wide vocabulary to understand different meanings.

3. Ability to concentrate: Constant attention while reading to avoid loss of information.

4. Previous experience: Benefit from previous knowledge and experience to link them to new information.

Moreover, the skills of reading comprehension are, as follows:

1. Ability to distinguish between basic information and supporting details.

2. Ability to read between the lines and deduce implicit meanings.

3. Analyze the correctness and reliability of the information provided in the text.

4. Employing read information in new contexts and linking it to previous knowledge.

By developing these levels, elements, factors and skills, the reader can achieve a deeper and more effective understanding of the texts read.

2.7 Motivation

Motivation is a pivotal factor in educational process, influencing students' engagement, persistence, and overall achievement. Educators continually seek effective strategies to enhance motivation, particularly among EFL learners. One such strategy is the concept sort, a vocabulary and comprehension technique that involves categorizing words or concepts based on shared attributes. This interactive strategy does not only aid in vocabulary acquisition but also promote critical thinking and active learning. By encouraging students to analyze and group concepts, concept sort can increase engagement and motivation, making learning more meaningful and effective **(Ekmekci & Serrano, 2022).** Ekmekci & Serrano, (2024) add that motivation is one of the main factors in the educational process. It is defined as the internal state that motivates an individual and directs his behaviour towards achieving a specific goal, which contributes to enhancing learning and academic achievement. Motivation is triggered by internal factors, such as the desire to succeed, or external, such as rewards and encouragement. Among the active learning strategies that contribute to enhancing motivation, is the Concept Sorting Strategy. This strategy is based on classifying concepts or information into specific categories, helping students organize knowledge and understand the relationships between different concepts. This organization contributes to facilitating the learning process and increasing interaction with the academic content, which enhances students' motivation and motivates them to actively participate in the educational process.

2.8 Elements of Motivation to Learn

Hands & Limniou, (2023) state that there are many elements of motivation to learn, as follows:

1.Curiosity: Individuals by nature tend to seek new experiences and enjoy learning unfamiliar things, which enhance their desire to learn.

2.Self-sufficiency: The learner's belief in his ability to carry out specific tasks and reach certain goals enhances his motivation to learn.

3.Attitude: Represents the positive attitude learners exhibit towards learning, which may be influenced by external factors, such as the presence of the teacher.

4.Adequacy: Internal motivation towards learning associated with the learner's sense of achievement and success in educational tasks.

5.External motivations: include environmental factors and external stimuli that affect learner engagement and interest in learning.

2.9 Functions of the Motivation for Learning

Hennebry-Leung & Xiao, (2023) state that the functions of the motivation for learning are, as follows:

1.**For the teacher:**

o Helps determine the activities that the learner is inclined to and desires.

o Enables the teacher to know how much effort is expected of the learner during the lesson.

o Helps assess the learner's ability to face educational problems and persevere in solving them.

2.**For the learner:**

o Provides his behaviour with energy and stimulates his activity towards learning.

o Helps in selecting and identifying his activities based on his personal interests.

o Directs his behaviour towards achieving specific goals and promotes continuity in learning.

2.10 Factors Influencing Learners' Motivation: Barriers and Enhancers

Zhao & Zhang, (2024) **state that the following factors lead to a decrease in motivation among learners:**

1.The learner's lack of interest in learning.

2.The learner's tendencies and future plans are unclear, making him unaware of the importance of continuing to learn.

3.The absence of clear and mature models to be emulated by the learner.

4.Feeling psychological pressure as a result of restrictions and laws imposed on the learner from outside the educational environment.

5.Not satisfying some basic needs, which affects his concentration and motivation.

On the other hand, Martin & Marsh, (2024) point out that the following factors play a significant role in increasing learners' motivation:

1.Provide continuous feedback by informing learners of their performance and how to improve it.

2.Employ the classroom rules as a tool rather than constraints to achieve the educational goals.

3.Illustrate the importance of educational activities by linking school materials to learners' future lives and long-term goals, even if these activities are not enjoyable in themselves.

Based on the reviewed theoretical literature, Concept Sorting Strategy has been found to play a significant role in improving reading comprehension and increasing students' motivation. Its collaborative and student-centered nature encourages active engagement with the text, promotes deeper understanding, and reduces passive learning. For preparatory school students, this strategy creates a more interactive environment that fosters both comprehension and enthusiasm for learning English.

Section Three: Methodology

3.1 Experimental Design

Experimental design is the blueprint of the procedures that enable the researcher to test hypotheses by reaching valid conclusions about relationships between independent and dependent variables (**Leavy, 2022**). The current study has been built on the pretest-posttest equivalent groups design, as shown in table (1).

Table 1: The Experimental Design

Group	Pretest	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Posttest
Experimental	Reading Comprehension test and Motivation Scale	Concept Sorting Strategy	Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension test and Motivation Scale
Control		Conventional Method	Motivation	

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population of the current study consisted of all fifth-grade students in the secondary schools at Al-Sinaiyah district, which is affiliated with the General Directorate of Education in Salah Al-Deen during the academic year 2024–2025, whose total number is 350. The fifth-grade students at Saad Bin Aby Wqaas Secondary School

for Boys has intentionally chosen the as a sample of the study. The students are grouped into two sections, (A, and B) whose total number is 77. Sections (A) has been randomly selected to be the experimental group and section (B) represents the control group. Section (A) consists of 39 students while section (B) consists of 38 students. 9 students are excluded from section (A) and 8 students from section (B). Those 17 students are employed for the pilot study. Thus, each of the involved groups includes 30 students. Therefore, the total number of the involved sample is 60 who represent 17.14% of its original population, as shown in table (2).

Table 2: The Population and Sample of the Study

Group	Section	No. of population	No. of students	No. of pilot study	Final No. of sample
Experimental	**A**		**39**	**9**	**30**
Control	**B**	**350**	**38**	**8**	**30**
Total			**77**	**17**	**60**

3.3 Equivalence of the Groups

Due to the fact that some variables may have some effects on the experimental design, information required for the purpose of the groups equivalence, i.e. experimental and control groups, has been collected from the available archive of the involved school. It includes:

1. The age of each student (measured in months).
2. Parents' educational attainment.
3. Students' achievement in English language for the preceding year.
4. Students' general achievement for the preceding year.

Some other important variables have also been taken into consideration for this purpose, namely intelligence, pretest for the speaking skill and the time available for each group.

3.4 Instructional Materials

The Fifth Preparatory Textbook consists of eight units, each comprising ten lessons. Instructional Units 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 present new linguistic content, while Units 4 and 8 are designated for reviewing the material covered in the preceding units. The units that are taught to the sample of the current study are, as follows:

Unit Five: Health and Well-being

• Lesson 9, topic: Why are holidays so important? Lesson 10, topic: Sports help you sleep wellUnit Six: Environmental Awareness

• Lesson 2, topic: Reduce pollution from cars. Lesson 7, topic: Your own careerUnit Seven: Education and Career PlanningThe experiment of the current study has been done in the second semester of the academic year 2024 – 2025 during a period of eight weeks, i.e. from the 16th of February 2025 till the 10th of April 2025. The experimental group is taught by using the Concept Scoring Strategy in teaching English language while the control group is taught by using the conventional method.

3.4.1 Lesson Plan for Teaching the Experimental Group

Date: 16th February 2025

Class and Section: Fifth (A)

Duration: 45 minutes

Unit: 5 – *Health* *and* *Well-being*
Lesson: 9 – *Why* *are* *holidays* *so* *important?*
Strategy: Concept Sorting

Skill Focus: Reading comprehension

1. Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

• Identify key ideas and supporting details from the reading passage.
• Categorize vocabulary and concepts from the text using the Concept Sorting Strategy.
• Improve reading comprehension through collaborative discussion and sorting activity.
• Express personal opinions about holidays and their importance.

2. Materials Needed

• English for Iraq Student's Book – Unit 5, Lesson 9
• Pre-selected vocabulary cards (words/phrases from the reading)

- Concept sorting worksheet (with category headers)
- Whiteboard and markers

3. Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- Ask: "What is your favourite holiday? Why?"
- Brainstorm words related to holidays (e.g., relax, family, travel, health).
- Write them on the board.

4. Presentation (10 minutes)

- Read the passage in Lesson 9 together as a class (either aloud or silently).
- Check for understanding through brief comprehension questions.

5. Activity – Concept Sorting (15 minutes)

- Divide students into small groups.
- Give each group a set of vocabulary/concept cards from the passage (e.g., "blood pressure," "stress," "holiday," "mental health," "workplace," "exercise," etc.).
- Ask students to sort the cards into categories, such as:
o Causes of stress
o Benefits of holidays
o Effects on health
o Activities during holidays
- Each group presents their sorting and explains why they grouped the terms as they did.

6. Wrap-Up Discussion (5–10 minutes)

- Ask students:
o "How do holidays help people stay healthy?"
o "What new words do you learn today?"
- Highlight the link between vocabulary understanding and deeper reading comprehension.

7. Assessment (Formative)

- Observe group discussions and their ability to categorize ideas accurately.
- Ask a few written comprehension questions or ask students to write 2–3 sentences summarizing the passage using sorted vocabulary.

3.4.2 Lesson Plan for Teaching the Control Group (Conventional Method)

Date: 16th February 2025
Class and Section: Fifth (B)
Duration: 45 minutes
Unit: 5 – *Health and Well-being*
Lesson: 9 – *Why are holidays so important?*
Teaching Method: Conventional (Teacher-centered)
Skill Focus: Reading comprehension

1. Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Read and understand the main ideas of the passage.
- Answer comprehension questions based on the text.
- Identify key vocabulary related to health and holidays.
- Express opinions about the importance of taking holidays.

2. Materials Needed

- English for Iraq Student's Book – Unit 5, Lesson 9
- Whiteboard and markers
- Vocabulary flashcards (optional)
- Printed comprehension questions (if needed)

3. Stages of the Lesson

A. Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- Begin by asking simple questions:
o "Do you like holidays?"
o "What do you do on holidays?"
- Write students' answers on the board.

B. Presentation (10 minutes)

- Teacher reads the text aloud once or twice while students follow along in their books.
- Teacher explains the meaning of difficult vocabulary on the board (e.g., stress, blood pressure, relaxing, etc.).
- Ask a few oral questions to check general understanding.

C. Practice (17 minutes)

- Students read the passage again silently.
- Distribute or assign comprehension questions (from the book or teacher-prepared), such as:
o Why are holidays important?
o What happens to people who don't take holidays?
o What are the health benefits of taking time off?
- Students answer the questions individually or in pairs.
- Teacher checks the answers orally or collects written answers.

D. Production (13 minutes)

- Engage students in discussion:
o "Do you think holidays improve your life?"
o "How would you spend your ideal holiday?"
- Encourage students to speak in complete sentences.

4. Assessment (Formative)

- Oral and written responses to comprehension questions.
- Participation in discussion.
- Use of vocabulary in context.

5. Homework (Optional)

- Ask students to write a short paragraph about the best holiday they've had and how it helped them relax.

3.5 Construction and Administration of the Reading Comprehension Test

The items of the reading comprehension test are constructed in terms of the contents and behavioural objectives of the instructional material, i.e. the topics of the three units that are taught to the students during the experiment. The test items are derived from the reading texts in the Student's Book, with an emphasis on reading comprehension skills, such as: identifying the main idea, extracting information, and understanding the relationship between cause and effect. Consideration is also given to designing the questions in a multiple-choice format, to provide an objective and accurate assessment, and to ensure the comprehensiveness of the required skills as stated in the educational content. The test included twenty multiple-choice items, as shown in appendix (1). One mark is specified to each item. The total mark is (20). The test has been simultaneously administered to both groups (the experimental group and the control group) on the 10th of April, 2025. The assigned time for answering the test is forty-five minutes. Later on, the test papers have been collected to be scored.

3.6 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which results of an evaluation procedure serve the particular uses for which they are intended. Validity is always concerned with the specific use to be made of the results and with the soundness of our proposed interpretations (Miller, et al., 2024).

The speaking comprehension test has been given to a group of specialists in methodology, education, and linguistics to judge whether it is applicable as far as the current research is concerned. 85% of the jurors consulted have agreed that the test is valid.

3.7 Reliability

A test is reliable if it consistently yields the same results when repeated measurements of a property are taken of the same entities under the same conditions (Johnson & Christensen,2024).In order to estimate the reliability of the instrument, the speaking comprehension test is given to 17 preparatory school students in the same school for Teaching Application on the 10th of November 2024, and then after two weeks the same test is given to the same group of students. By using the test-retest reliability method and Pearson Correlation Coefficient with Spearman-Brown formula, the reliability coefficients ranged between (0.80-0.92) which refers to the homogeneity of the test items.

3.8 Pilot Study

According to Muresherwa & Jita, (2022), a pilot study is a small sub-sample selected from the original study population, used to conduct a preliminary survey study aimed at testing research tools, and to ensure its validity, clarity, and applicability. The pilot study helps the researcher uncover any potential problems related to the

wording of the questions, the time required to answer, or the application procedures. This enables him to make the necessary adjustments before applying the constructed instrument to the full sample.The study instruments in this study are administered to a sample of seventeen students. The result indicates that the items of both instruments are clear. The time required for each of the two instruments (the reading comprehension test and the motivation scale) to answer all the questions ranged from 40 to 45 minute. The pilot study is conducted at the same time as the motivation scale and the reading comprehension test on the 10th November 2024.

3.9 Analysis of the Posttest Items

After preparing a reading comprehension posttest for the fifth-grade preparatory school students, it is applied to a pilot sample for the purpose of analyzing its items statistically. The difficulty level is calculated for each item to ensure its suitability to the students' level. The discrimination power is also calculated to verify the item's ability to differentiate between high-performing students and low-performing students. The items that show appropriate difficulty and good discrimination level are retained, while some items are reworded or excluded based on the analysis results to ensure the validity and effectiveness of the test in measuring reading comprehension skills.

3.10 Construction of the Motivation Scale

In order to construct a motivation scale, the objective of constructing the scale is determined, which is to measure students' motivation towards learning English language. Self-Determination Theory has been used to determine the dimensions (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) and components (statements that are used to measure each dimension) to be measured, as well as reviewing previous literature and previous studies related to motivation to learn are reviewed in order to extract the basic concepts used in earlier scales. The items of the scale are written with ensuring their clarity and suitability for the target sample, as well as choosing the appropriate type of response scale. The three-point Likert Scale is chosen to determine the extent to which each item correspond to the respondent. The scale items are presented to a group of specialists in the education and psychology, and the necessary comments are provided. The validity and reliability of the scale are verified to accurately measure motivation. Accordingly, the final version of the scale, as shown in appendix (2).

3.11 Final Administration of Motivation Scale

After completing the designated instructional period based on the Concept Sorting Strategy, the Motivation Scale for learning English is administered to both the experimental and control groups. This procedure aimed to assess the impact of the teaching strategy on enhancing students' motivation toward learning English.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the scale, the following question is directed to the students.

To what extent do the situations or feelings described in the following statements occur to you while learning English?

Please choose the option that best reflects how frequently each case happens to you.

The process of completing the scale items takes approximately one hour for both groups. The students' response sheets are collected for scoring and statistical analysis.

Section Four: Analysis of Data, Discussion of Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

4.1 Analysis of Data

4.1.1 Comparison between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and that of the control group which is taught by using the conventional method in the reading comprehension posttest.To verify the first hypothesis that states "There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and that of the control group which is taught by using the conventional method in the reading comprehension posttest", results show that the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement is 16.43, while that of the control group's achievement is 13.43. Using the t-test formula for two independent samples, the calculated t- value is 6.31, and the tabulated t-value is 2.00 at (58) degree of freedom and at (0.05) level of significance, as shown in table (3). This shows that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement and that of the control group's achievement, and for the benefit of the former, which consequently means that the achievement of the experimental group which has been taught by Concept Sorting Strategy is better than the achievement of the control group which has been taught by the conventional method. Thus, the first hypothesis is rejected.Table 3: The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and T-Values of The Two Groups' Achievement in the Reading Comprehension Posttest

4.1.2

Groups	No. of Students	Mean Scores	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Experimental	30	16.43	1.79			58	0.05
Control	30	13.43	1.89	6.31	2.00		

4.1.3 Comparison between the mean scores of the experimental group's level which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and that of the control group which is taught by using the conventional method in the post-administration of the motivation scale.

To verify the second hypothesis that states "There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy and that of the control group which is taught by using the conventional method in the post-administration of the motivation scale", results show that the mean scores of the experimental group's level is 54.23, while that of the control group is 29.16. Using the t-test formula for two independent samples, the calculated t- value is 29.42, and the tabulated t-value is 2.00 at (58) degree of freedom and at (0.05) level of significance, as shown in table (4). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level and that of the control group's level, and for the benefit of the former, which in turn suggests that the level of motivation of the experimental group which has been taught by Concept Sorting Strategy is better than the level of motivation of the control group which has been taught by the conventional method. Thus, the second hypothesis is also rejected.Table 4: The Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and T-Values of the Two Groups' level of Motivation in the Post-Administration of the Motivation Scale

Groups	No. of Students	Mean Scores	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Experimental	30	54.23	1.79			58	0.05
Control	30	29.16	1.89	29.42	2.00		

4.1.4 Comparison between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy in the pretest and posttest in reading comprehension.

To verify the third hypothesis that states "There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement in the pretest and posttests of reading comprehension", results show that the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement in pretest is 12.88, with a standard deviation 1.85, while its mean scores in the posttest is 16.43 and with a standard deviation 1.79. Using t-test formula for the two paired samples, the calculated t- value is 42.43, which is bigger than the tabulated t-value which is 2.00 with (29) degree of freedom and (0.05) level of significance, as shown in table (5). This means that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement in the pretest and that in the posttest of the reading comprehension and in favour of the later. So, the third hypothesis is also rejected.Table 5: The Mean Scores and, Standard Deviations and T-Values of the Experimental Group's Achievement in the Pretest and Posttest in the Reading Comprehension

Experimental Group	No. of Students	Mean Scores	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Pertest	30	12.88	1.85			29	0.05
Posttest		16.43	1.79	42.43	2.00		

4.1.5 Comparison between the mean scores of the experimental group's level which is taught by using the Concept Sorting Strategy in the pre- and post-administration of the motivation scale.To verify the fourth hypothesis that states " There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level of motivation in the pre and post administration of the motivation scale.", results show that the mean scores of the experimental group's level

in the pre-administration of the motivation scale is 24.10, with a standard deviation 4.87, while its mean scores in the post-administration of the motivation scale is 54.23 and with a standard deviation 3.56. Using t-test formula for the two paired samples, the calculated t- value is 41.11, which is bigger than the tabulated t-value which is 2.00 with (29) degree of freedom and (0.05) level of significance, as shown in table (6). This means that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's level in the pre-administration of the motivation scale and that in the post-administration of the motivation scale and in favour of the later. So, the forth hypothesis is also rejected.Table 6: The Mean Scores and, Standard Deviations and T-Values of the Experimental Group's Level of Motivation in the Pre and Post-Administration of the Motivation Scale

Experimental Group	No. of Students	Mean Scores	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
Per- administration of the motivation scale	30	24.10	4.87	Calculated	Tabulated	29	0.05
Post- administration of the motivation scale		54.23	3.56	41.11	2.00		

4.2 Discussion of Results

Results of the study indicate that the achievement of the experimental group in reading comprehension is better than the achievement of the control group. This indicates that the Concept Sorting Strategy is more effective and useful than the conventional method, in improving reading comprehension skills and enhancing students' motivation to learn the English language. From the researcher's perspective, this improvement in students' performance can be attributed to the following factors:

1. The Concept Sorting Strategy relied on deep understanding and visually organizing information, has helped students connect concepts and understand the relationships between them, not just memorize them.
2. Active student participation during lessons, as the Concept Sorting Strategy provides an interactive learning environment that encouraged thinking, analysis, and discussion.
3. Clarity of educational objectives through the classification and ordering of concepts, which helps students know what they are expected to understand and learn.
4. Boosting students' self-confidence, as they feel they are able to deal with and comprehend texts in an organized and coherent manner.
5. Diversifying activities within the classroom help break the conventional routine and make lessons more interesting and motivating.
6. Focus on linking previous and new knowledge, enhances understanding and contributes to consolidating information.

4.3 Conclusions

In the light of the results arrived at, the following points are concluded:

1. The Concept Sorting Strategy has proven to be clearly effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of the fifth-grade preparatory school students, compared to the conventional method, through the experimental group's superiority in the posttest results.
2. The strategy enhances students' motivation to learn English by stimulating their interest and enthusiasm for the subject, and increasing their engagement and interaction within the classroom, which positively impacted their achievement.
3. The strategy has motivated the students to discover their educational abilities and develop their self-confidence, as they found the strategy to be an organized and effective way to understand the material and employ their skills better.
4. Classroom activities linked to the strategy increased active participation and stimulated critical thinking, making learning more engaging and effective than conventional instruction.
5. The Concept Sorting Strategy helps reduce stress and anxiety in the classroom, by providing a supportive and comfortable learning environment that encouraged positive interaction.
6. The Concept Sorting Strategy is a suitable and applicable educational tool in the Iraqi classroom environment, especially in teaching English language skills, due to its impact on raising both achievement and motivation.
7. The strategy stimulates the use of higher mental processes, such as imagination, inference, association, and analysis, which are intellectual processes that contribute to brain activation and support a deep understanding of concepts.

4.4 Recommendations

1. Adopting the Concept Sorting Strategy by the EFL teachers, as it has proven effective in improving reading comprehension skills and motivating students towards the English language subject.

2. The preparation programmes of EFL teachers should include training on how to apply the Concept Sorting Strategy, which will help them use it effectively in the classroom.

3. Encourage preparatory school EFL teachers to diversify their teaching strategies and focus on active strategies that engage their student in the learning process, such as the Concept Sorting Strategy.

4. Conducting training courses and workshops for English language teachers to familiarize them with the benefits of the Concept Sorting Strategy and the steps of applying it appropriately for different student levels.

5. Integrating concept maps and classification activities into the content of the English language textbook, as they play a role in facilitating understanding and linking new concepts to prior knowledge.

6. Create a stimulating classroom environment that relies on teamwork and critical thinking to enhance students' interaction and cooperation while implementing the strategy.

7. Encouraging researchers in the field of teaching methods to conduct similar studies to investigate the impact of the Concept Sorting Strategy on other language skills, such as speaking, writing, and listening, and at different educational levels.

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Appendix 1

Reading Comprehension Test

Choose the correct answer

1. What is one health benefit of taking holidays, according to the lesson?
A.   Increasing   productivity   at   work
B.   Reducing   psychological   stress
C.   Improving   English   language   skills
D. Enhancing the ability to concentrate

2. According to the text, what can happen to people who never take holidays?
A.   They   become   more   sociable
B.   They   suffer   from   high   blood   pressure
C.   They   sleep   better
D. They gain athletic skills

3. The author states that holidays help mental health by:
A.   Working   longer   hours
B.   Spending   quality   time   with   family
C.   Eating   fatty   meals
D. Watching TV all day

4. Which of these activities is given as an example of what people do on holiday?
A.   Studying   new   subjects
B.   Visiting   tourist   places
C.   Working   extra   hours
D. Organizing school parties

5. How does regular exercise affect sleep, according to the lesson?
A.   Makes   you   wake   up   early
B.   Helps   you   sleep   deeply
C.   Increases   anxiety
D. Reduces the need for rest

6. What is the recommended daily duration of exercise to improve sleep quality?
A.   Five   minutes
B.   Ten   minutes
C.   Thirty   minutes
D. One and a half hours

7. Which benefit of good sleep is mentioned in the lesson?
A.   Strengthening   memory
B.   Losing   weight
C.   Improving   vision
D. Learning a new language quickly

8. Which of the following is **not** listed as part of a healthy routine?

A.   Exercising   regularly

B.   Eating   a   balanced   diet

C.   Staying   up   late

D. Sleeping early

9. What is identified as the main source of air pollution in the lesson?

A.   Unregulated   factories

B.   Car   emissions

C.   Household   waste

D. Intensive farming

10. Which of the following is recommended to decrease car emissions?

A.   Driving   at   high   speed

B.   Using   electric   cars

C.   Not   maintaining   the   engine

D. Keeping the engine running while waiting

11. Why is clean air important, according to the text?

A.   To   improve   the   taste   of   food

B.   To   reduce   respiratory   diseases

C.   To   increase   fuel   production

D. To facilitate traffic flow

12. According to the lesson, carpooling would most directly:

A.   Reduces   air   pollution

B.   Saves   money   on   fuel

C.   Increases   road   accidents

D. Slows down mobility

13. Which action is mentioned as a way to conserve water at home?

A.   Leaving   the   tap   running   continuously

B.   Repairing   leaking   taps

C. Filling the basin with water and washing it once a month

D. Using the air conditioner continuously

14. According to the lesson, water conservation is necessary because:

A.   Water   is   abundantly   available

B.   Water   shortage   can   affect   agriculture

C.   People   prefer   to   take   longer   showers

D. Water does not affect the ecosystem

15. What problem results from wasting water, as stated in the text?

A.   Increasing   green   spaces

B.   Rising   electricity   bills

C.   Depletion   of   groundwater

D. Increasing noise levels

16. One suggested habit to save water is:

A.   Using   garden   sprinklers   all   day

B.   Washing   the   car   every   day   with   clean   water

C.   Taking   a   short   shower   instead   of   a   bath

D. Filling swimming pools with fresh water

17. Which resource is highlighted as available in the library?

A.   Gymnasium

B.   Favorite   café

C.   Computers   and   various   books

D. Performance theater

18. Visiting the library regularly can improve:

A.   Students'   typing   ability

B.   Research   and   language   skills

C.   Ability   to   travel
D. Physical fitness level
19. What is the primary goal of a community clean-up project?
A.   Increasing   unemployment   rate
B.   Improving   neighborhood   appearance
C.   Building   shopping   complexes
D. Organizing car races
20. According to the lesson, participants benefit from clean-up events by:
A.   Earning   money
B.   Motivating   a   sense   of   responsibility   and   teamwork
C.   Getting   an   official   holiday
D. Learning new languages

Appendix 2
Motivation Scale Items
Dear Student, to what extent do the situations or feelings described in the following statements occur to you   while   learning   English?
Please choose the option that best reflects how frequently each case happens to you.

No.	Items	Always	Sometimes	Seldom
1	I feel confident when reading English texts.			
2	I enjoy reading stories and articles in English.			
3	I read in English to improve my academic performance.			
4	I feel satisfied when I understand a difficult English text.			
5	I read in English because I enjoy learning new things.			
6	I believe that reading English texts helps me improve my language skills.			
7	I feel excited when I learn new vocabulary through reading.			
8	I read in English because I want to achieve high grades in school.			
9	I feel motivated when I can understand long English texts.			
10	I read in English because I believe it will benefit me in the future.			
11	I enjoy challenging myself by reading complex English texts.			
12	I feel a sense of accomplishment when I can accurately summarize an English text.			
13	I read in English to interact with different cultures.			
14	I feel motivated when I notice improvement in my ability to understand English texts.			
15	I read in English because I want to enhance my overall language skills.			
16	I feel confident when I can answer questions related to English texts.			
17	I read in English because I enjoy discovering new ideas.			
18	I feel motivated when I can use new vocabulary I have read in my conversations.			
19	I read in English because I want to be able to understand academic content.			
20	I feel satisfied when I can critically analyze English texts			