Using Story Grammar Method to Develop Seventh Grade Students' Narrative Texts Comprehension in English as a Foreign Language

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of using the story grammar method to develop seventh grade students' narrative texts comprehension in English as a foreign language. Previous research suggests that narrative texts comprehension can be improved through story grammar method. The researcher designed a story-mapping for teaching the experimental group. The researcher also developed an instrument, which is a narrative comprehension test to measure the students' performance. The sample consisted of two classes (n= 52) of grade seven male students from a school in the Sultanate of Oman, Al-Batinah South. These classes were randomly selected. One class functioned as an experimental group and the other as a control group. The results revealed that the students in the experimental group performed better than the students in the control group. The story grammar method had a positive effect on the students' narrative textss comprehension. Based on these findings, the study presents some recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: narrative texts, story grammar, story mapping, story schema.

استخدام طريقة البنية القصصية لتطوير فهم النصوص السردية لدى طلاب الصف السابع الأساسي الذين يدرسون الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة أثر استخدام طريقة البنية القصصية لتطوير فهم النصوص السردية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية لدى طلاب الصف السابع الأساسي بمدرسة معولة بن شمس بسلطنة عمان. لقد أثبتت نتائج الدراسات السابقة بأنه يمكن أن يطور فهم النص القصصي باستخدام طريقة البنية القصصية. كما أن هناك دلائل تفيد بأن ثمة علاقة بين طريقة البنية القصصية وفهم النصوص السردية. وفي إطار هذه الدراسة تم التركيز على تطوير فهم النصوص القصصية من خلال استخدام البنية القصصية. وقد قام الباحث باختيار عينة عشوائية للدراسة تكونت من ٥٢ طالبا من طلاب الصف السابع الأساسي في منطقة جنوب الباطنة بسلطنة عمان. وتم تقسيم العينة إلى مجموعتين تجريبية وضابطة واستخدم الباحث أداة لقياس أداء الطلاب وهو اختبار فهم النصوص القصصية القبلي. كما قام الباحث باختيار عدة نصوص قصصية لتدريس المجموعة التجريبية. وقد أسفرت نتائج هذه الدراسة عن تفوق المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة في أداء الطلبة على الاختبار البعدي. وعلى ضوء النتائج قدمت الدراسة بعض التوصيات وبعض الاقتراحات للبحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النصوص القصصية، البنية القصصية، الخريطة القصصية، الإسكيما.

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When students read a text, they easily get frustrated or ask for the direct answers immediately (Dymock, S., 2003). Students often get stuck at a specific point in the process of reading a text and fail to comprehend the text as a whole because they do not have the relevant reading strategies (Ramani and Al-Mekhlafi, 2009). Snow (2002) reported that many students fail to have specific goals that lead to successful comprehension of texts.

Readers approach a text with relevant knowledge, word decoding ability, text-based and situation model-based differencing skills, competency with a variety of reading strategies, metacognitive skills, and so on (Carter, 2001). Each of these factors has a profound impact on comprehension and may hold implications for the students' comprehension ability.

Comprehension is an interactive process between the reader and the text. The reader interacts with the text and relates ideas from the text to prior experience to constructing. Successful extended texts comprehension involves the formation of a well-organized and coherent mental representation of the overall text content (Corio J., 2005).

According to Wade E., Boon (2010) there are five basic types of text: narrative, descriptive, instructional, expository, and argumentative. Caldwell (2002) defines a narrative text as a text which tells a story. It is used interchangeably with "story". According to him, narrative texts are written with a common structure in which characters live in a setting (time and place) experience problems and seek to solve them. Narrative text is about fictional story that tries to entertain the reader and is derived from the writer's imagination.

Narrative texts are the most popular reading material in grade seven English For Me (EFM) Class book. According to the philosophy of this book, stories are an excellent way to introduce English and contribute to the students' language development. As a whole, they can also provide the starting point for a wide range of activities, and of making learning more attractive and interesting.

Through reviewing literature about narrative text such as Ramani (2009), Dymock (2007), Williams (2005), Erkaya (2005), Murdoch (2002), Howie (1993), its features are:

1. Narrative text is the most popular reading materials. It is considered as a powerful tool in language learning and the development of students. (Dymock, 2007).

2. According to Erkaya (2005) Narrative texts seem the most effective instrument in teaching culture to EFL students. Higher-order thinking seems to be stimulated when dealing with short stories.

3. Howie (1993) agrees with the proposition of using narrative texts in teaching critical thinking. The researcher argues that teachers have the responsibility to help students develop their cognitive skills because everyone needs to "make judgments, be decisive, come to conclusions, synthesize information, and organize, evaluate, predict, and apply knowledge." By reading narrative texts, students develop their critical thinking skills.

4. Murdoch (2002) points out that "Narrative texts allow teachers to teach the basic language skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation)."

5. Narrative texts are an excellent way to introduce English and contribute to the students' language development. As a whole, they can also provide the starting point for a wide range of activities (Ramani, 2009).

6. Narrative texts and activities constitute a very natural way of linking English with other subjects in the school curriculum, and of making learning more attractive and interesting (Williams, 2005).

The researcher applied a story grammar method to teach and enhance students' reading comprehension. For teachers, story grammar can be used as an interesting and effective tool for facilitating and improving reading comprehension. For students, story grammar can be as a support method that helps them to recall and retell stories, which do not have a standard structure or do not present events in chronological order.

According to Mandler and Johnson (1977) and Amer (2003), the story grammar method is a set of rule systems for the purpose of describ-

ing the regularities found in one type of texts. The rules described in the units of which stories are composed, i.e., their constituents structure and ordering, the sequences in the constituents appear (Mandler, 1983).

Buehl (2001) indicated that story grammar method allows the students to see the connection between ideas that they already have (which can help them organize ideas), to organize ideas in logical but not rigid structure that allows future information or viewpoints to be included. Dolehanty (2008) argued that the concept of story grammar method would serve as a strategy for improving the comprehension of a particular piece of text. Novak et al. (2008) says that the story grammar method is so powerful for the facilitation of meaningful learning and it serves as a kind of template or scaffold to help to organize knowledge and to structure it, even though the structure must be built up piece by piece with small units of interacting concepts. Thus the story grammar method makes it possible to memorize, re-use and retrieve information more easily in the long run, allowing the representation of ideas, of the relationships between these ideas, and of the way in which the reader perceives these interrelationships.

Wang (2008) reported that students can also get the full picture of stories with the framework provided by a story map, which divides a narrative texts into meaningful parts and emphasizes the interrelationship among them.

A story map is developed based on the concept of graphic organizers which has been proved to have positive effects on thinking and learning for students across a range of proficiency and grade levels (Hall, 2004).

A story map is a diagram, which contains the indispensable story grammar elements of a narrative texts, such as the main characters, the setting, the problem, the action, and the result (Cruz De Quiros, 2008; Idol, 1987). It is the logical sequence of events in a narrative texts (Livo & Rietz, 1986).

McTighe (1992) said that story map can be used at any stage in the instructional process to achieve:

- Activating students' prior knowledge before instruction.
- Helping students actively organize and process information during instruction.
- Providing a structure for review, organize and summarize key points.

A story map helps students to decide what information is important and on what to focus their attention (Gersten, 2001). According to Davis and Zephaniah (1994) "story map are useful for reading comprehension when manipulated at the stage of pre-reading", during reading (Gardill and Jitendra, 1999) and post reading (Boulineau et al., 2004). Story mapping plays an important role in building connections between the learner's prior knowledge (schema) and the new materials (Bensoussan, 1998).

Schema plays an important role in guiding the decoding and retrieval of texts information, and it must be activated in order to enhance one's abilities to comprehend the texts (Barchers, 1998). Bensoussan's (1998) study was focusing on the effect of schema on reading comprehension. This researcher suggested that some of the wrong answers to comprehension questions result from faulty schema. Thus, the ability to decode word meaning in a sentence, and the knowledge of texts structure all serve as different forms of schema, which provide readers with a foundation and assistance for comprehension (Aebersold & Field, 1997).

In the same way, Wilson and Anderson (1986) suggested two types of schema in relation to reading: Knowledge of text structure and knowledge of text content. The knowledge of text structure in narratives refers to "story grammar map" readers are assumed to have the knowledge of discourse conventions or "textual schemata" that assist in text processing. They have expectations about what they will encounter when they read stories, personal letters, research reports, or telegrams (Garner, 1988; Amer, 2003). They use their schemata and clues from the text in varying amounts, as they comprehend (Amer, 2003). Effective readers use an interactive process that relies on their schemata and requires them to obtain information from text. Even though these two processes occur simultaneously as readers comprehend, it is the readers' schemata that provide the structure needed to associate meaning with text (Amer, 2003).

A good reader is able to sift and sort through text and pull out the essential or key ideas while the struggling reader tends to pay atten-

tion to everything in the text. Omani teaching context, it is noticed that many students struggle when they do reading comprehension activities and need some extra support and attention. This observation was made from analyzing grade seven of Basic Education. Supporting this claim is the researcher's discussions with his English teachers partners at staff meeting that revealed that many teachers complain about learners' reading comprehension difficulties, which entails finding a suitable remedy. In addition, many studies have been conducted on the Omani teaching context that have tackled Omani students' reading problems and have consequently tried to suggest some remedies. For example, Al-Belushi (200) attributed students reading comprehension problems to the lack of suitable strategy in teaching short stories that entails a pedagogical theory that takes into account the cultural and linguistic factors that encourage students to produce their own individualized meaning from the text. Whereas, Al-Brashdi (2002) attributed the Omani students' reading comprehension problems to a lack of different strategies students have to use to comprehend a text.

It is worth mentioning that those researchers tried to use different methods to solve those problems. For example, helping students to become strategic readers through the use of "think-out-loud" method and teaching reading as problem identification. That could be done through shifting the focus from teaching the skills to teaching reading as a problem-solving issue and as strategies which deal with the total reading environment rather than teaching hierarchies of reading sub skills. The researcher will use the story grammar method as another solution to overcome those problems as a remedy that provides the students with a system or framework to support them in analyzing and comprehending stories, perceiving and retaining important story details and further on working at a deeper conceptual level.

The present study attempts to investigate the use of story grammar method in developing narrative texts comprehension. Consequently, the present study addresses the following general question: What is the relative effect of using the story grammar method on developing narrative text comprehension for the EFL students of grade seven in comparison with regular instruction?

Review of the literature

The literature includes a number of studies on the reciprocal relationship between the story grammar method and narrative text comprehension. For example, Al-Hadramy (2011) conducted a study that aimed at investigating the effect of story grammar method on Omani EFL students' comprehension of narrative texts. The sample consisted of 54 male students of grade nine. Twenty nine (n = 29) students served as experimental group and twenty five (n = 25) students served as a control group. The results of the study revealed that the students in the experimental group performed better than the students in the control group. The research findings showed that the story grammar method had a positive effect on the students' comprehension of narrative texts. Likewise, Wade, Boon & Sponcer (2010) conducted a research study that aimed at exploring the efficacy of story mapping, with the integration of Kid spiration software, to enhance the reading comprehension skills of story grammar components for elementary-age students. Three students served as the participants, two from third grade and one from fourth grade, with specific learning disabilities (SLD). Results showed a dramatic increase in the comprehension levels, as all three of the participants improved from the baseline to the intervention phase, with no overlaps in the data. Furthermore, during the final phase, all three of the participants continued to show an increase in their scores from the baseline. In addition, Nelca & Tevhide, (2010) investigated the effectiveness of the story map technique on reading comprehension skills among students with mild mental retardation. The research group consisted of 14 students with mild mental retardation. The students in the research group were chosen from students who attended an elementary school and a special education center in Ankara and who met the prerequisite skills for the research study in order to collect data, the "Read-Aloud Test" and "Teachers Interview Form" were used. In the study a pre and post-test experimental design with a control group was used. The study findings showed that the story mapping method positively affected the reading comprehension skills of the students in the experimental group.

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story mapping, with the integration of Kid aspiration software, to enhance the reading comprehension skills of story grammar components for elementary-age students. Three students served as the participants, two in third grades and one in fourth, with specific learning disabilities (SLD). Results showed that a dramatic increase in the comprehension levels, as all three of the participants improved from the baseline to the intervention phase, with no overlaps in the data. Furthermore, during the final phase, all three of the participants continued to show an increase in their scores from the baseline. Pairs & Pairs (2007) in turn examined the effect of instruction of narrative comprehension strategies on students' comprehension and recall. The participants were four-grade classrooms students. Two groups were involved in this research; a control group and an experimental group. The students in the control group received narrative comprehension strategies including the instruction of identifying story grammar, which were not imparted to the students in the control group. After five weeks of training, the students in the experimental group outperformed the control group in the recall of factual information and narrative elements. The results of this research showed that the story grammar has a positive impact on retrieving information.

Limitation of the study

1. The study sample included students from one school in South Batinah Governorate, Willyat Wadi Al-Maawal in Maawala Bin Shams School for the availability of the researcher as he is a teacher and he is working in that school.

2. The study was conducted on grade seven of the basic education school boys for the availability of narrative texts in grade seven textbooks.

3. Some narrative texts required for grade seven students.

4. The study was conducted in grade seven male classes. One class functioned as experimental group and the other as a control group.

5. Only the researcher applied the story grammar method in teaching narrative text comprehension using the stories of the class book and the skills book to carry out his study.

Significance of the study

The rationale for implementing the story grammar method can be summed up in the facilities it provides to improve learning. The story grammar method helps learners make learning more interesting. Moreover, the story grammar method develops mental schema into which new information is transformed, as it becomes personal knowledge. Mandler (1983) said that mental schema represents the general knowledge about the way in which texts proceed. Therefore, it represents the readers' background knowledge that enables them to make prediction for more successful interaction with a text. Robb (2000) points out "mental schema assists students to recognize, represent and retrieve the incoming information" (p. 89-91).

Thus, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of integrating literature in EFL curriculum. The traditional structurally-based text and the newer, integrated, communicative courses might not be sufficient for the demands of academic classes. On the other hand, a syllabus that draws heavily on authentic stories provides a motivating medium for language learning while fostering the development of the thinking skills (Amer, 2003). Literature can also play a powerful change agent by developing pupils' intercultural awareness while at the same time nurturing empathy, a tolerance for diversity, and emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 1997) Emotional intelligence, which is essential for empathy and tolerance, is the understanding of feelings, both of one's own and the others (Goleman, 1995). In addition to theoretical, rationale mentioned above, several benefits might be achieved from this study:

1. This study may help in solving some of the students' problems in comprehension of narrative texts and may contribute in developing the students' thinking.

2. Using the story grammar method in developing comprehension of narrative texts may create a sense of self-confidence on the students' part, because students follow certain ways and techniques that may lead to the improvement of comprehension of narrative texts.

3. Encourage students to use higher-order thinking skills.

4. The story grammar method reduces learning ambiguity and makes compre-

hension of narrative texts more manageable and more meaningful.

5. The story grammar method provides some directions in order to help the learners to focus on achieving their goals.

6. The story grammar method makes EFL teachers aware of alternative teaching methods to improve the students' reading comprehension of narrative texts.

7. Drawing the attention of EFL syllabus designers in the Sultanate of Oman to a research-based method for teaching comprehension of narrative texts.

Research questions

What is the relative effect of using the story grammar method on developing narrative text comprehension for the EFL students of grade seven in comparison with regular instruction?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested in order to address the research question:

HO1: There is no statistically significant difference between the pretest mean scores of the control and experimental group ($p < .05$).

HO2: There is no statistically significant difference between the posttest mean scores of the control and experimental group ($p < .05$).

METHOD

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises all Omani grade 7 Basic Education (BE) students in the academic year 2013-2014 in the Sultanate of Oman. The researcher decided to take the sample from one male school in Al-Batinah South Region. The choice of the male school was based on logistic reasons such as working in the same school where the experiment was conducted. Moreover, the researcher chose Al-Batinah South Region because the students in the regions in the Sultanate study the same curriculum. The school is located in Wadi Al-Maawel.

The sample consisted of two classes, comprising a total of 52 students who were selected by the administration of the school. One class of 26 students functioned as the experimental group and the other class has an equal number of students (26) functioned as the control group. All the students of the study were Omani-born except two students who were Egyptian; one of them was in the experimental group and the other was in the control group. None of the students were receiving special services at the time the study was conducted.

Research Design

This study employed a pre-test-post-test control group quasi-experimental design. It involved treatment conditions and pre and post-tests for both group. The design of the study is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Research design

Groups	N.	Treatment	Pre-post-test
Experimental Group	26	Story Grammar Method	Yes
Control Group	26	Traditional Method	Yes

The story grammar method (teachers' teaching guide)

This treatment is designed to investigate using the story grammar method to develop narrative text comprehension for students of grade seven.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this treatment, the students are expected to:

a. Answer questions on story elements.

b. Rread and fill in a story map diagram.

c. Work cooperatively with other members of the group and share ideas.

d. Discuss, make decisions and to act on suggestions that help each group member achieve individual and group goals.

e. Show some teamwork skills asking questions, listening and interrupting.

f. Show social skills that students might use outside the classroom.

Materials

The researcher used the stories assigned by the Ministry's course book in the reading material for grade seven. There are four short stories in both class books (A & B) as follows:

1. Story (1): The box and the Barbecue.

2. Story (2): Suzy's early memories.

3. Story (3): Ahmed's ill.

4. Story (4): A walk in the Wadi.

5. Story (5): My Generation life as a teenager.

6. Story (6): The birthday party.

Duration

The story grammar program was started in March 2014 and finished in April 2014. Thus the experiment lasted for six weeks as can be seen in Table 2.

Procedure

The researcher designed the story grammar program to describe the procedures and the steps followed in teaching the stories to the experimental group. Cooper's (1986) model was adopted. This model was chosen because it was appropriate for teaching this method represents simple concept that might help the students in teaching context.

According to this model, a story may be composed of several episodes each consisting of a setting, characters, a problem, an action and a theme. In this model teachers could use different strategies to teach. For example, the teacher divides the story into episodes by preparing some guiding comprehension questions such as:

- Where did the story happen?
- Who was the main character in the story?
- What was the problem that the story was about? ....etc

These questions will help the students in their silent reading and post discussion. They will also direct the students to concentrate on the relevant elements in the story.

Validity of the story grammar method

The validity of this program was established by a four member panel. The panel members were a supervisor teacher, a senior teacher who had the Master Degree in ELT Curriculum and Instruction from Sultan Qaboos University and two English teachers who have been teaching English language in the Sultanate of Oman for more than twenty years.

The jury members agreed that the lessons were clear, relevant and appropriate for students' level. Some changes were recommended by some of the jury members such as set-

ting each story with its suitable instructions and adding copies that include the answers for the questions and story map answers for each story.

Instruments

Since the aim of the study was to investigate using story grammar method to develop narrative text comprehension among the EFL students of grade seven, there was a need to develop an instrument to measure students' performance. The researcher designed a reading comprehension test to assess students' performance.

The Reading Comprehension Test. The test was designed to assess the students' comprehension of a story that were adapted from the curriculum of grade seven that its title is   " A walk in the Wadi" consisted of 660 words, multiple-choice question and True or False (T/F) questions. The questions focused on the six elements of the story grammar method (setting, characters, problem, action, resolution and theme) that students learned.

Each element in each story dealt with three questions. The total score for the test was 36 marks. For each multiple-choice test, Wh-questions and T/F test two mark was given for each correct answer.

Validation of the test. The instrument went through some validation processes to determine its clarity and comprehensiveness. The validation involved jury judgment for reliability. The reading comprehension test was given to a group of eleven jury members to establish its validity. They were requested to judge the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the items of the test. There was an agreement that the instrument was clear, relevant and appropriate for the students' level. The test items were slightly modified based on jury members' recommendations. For example, the test must include Wh-questions without specifying (a, b, c) answers. Additionally, it must be include some indirect questions that entail students to use inference skills and other reading strategies.

Validity of the reading comprehension test: The reading comprehension test was also given to a group of eleven jury members to establish its

Table 2
Duration of story grammar method

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Pre-test	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Story 5	Story 6	Post-test
18-03-2014	25-03-2014	01-04-2014	08-04-2014	15-04-2014	22-04-2014	29-04-2014	06-05-2014

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Table 3
Pearson's correlation

	Mean	SD	N
Pre-sign	17.91	3.75	24
Post-sign	22.41	3.21	24
Pre-sign	Pearson Correlation	1	.799
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N.	24	24
Post-sign	Pearson Correlation	.799	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N.	24	24

Reliability of the reading comprehension test. The reliability of the test was established by piloting the test on (24) students from Nahkal school for Basic Education in Al-Batinah South Region in the Sultanate of Oman. The reliability coefficient was (r =.799), which represented a high degree of consistency as shown in Table 3 and Table 4. Pearson Correlation is 0.799.P= .00.

Experiment procedures

The following steps were taken when conducting the experiment in the school:

The researcher met the school principal and explained the aim of the study.

1. The researcher chose two classes from three classes of grade seven (BE) according to the recommendations of the school administration. The researcher chose one class as an experimental group and another class to function as the control group. The researcher discussed the whole plan with his senior and supervisor teacher through the procedures the researcher would be followed in order to conduct the experiment. After the discussions and the recommendations, the researcher taught the two groups with two different methods; by using the same stories that are taught in grade seven curriculum. The control group was taught adopting the traditional method of teaching following the teachers' book, whereas the experimental group used the story grammar method instructions the researcher taught the experimental group following the story grammar teachers' manual, which was designed for the purpose of the experiment.

2. The pre-reading comprehension test was administrated on both groups.

3. In week 8, the researcher administrated the post-reading comprehension test to both groups at the same time.

To measure the equivalence of the students' performance in both groups in the pre-reading comprehension test, the researcher used the Homogeneity of Variance test as in the Table 4.

Table 4 shows comparison of the pre-test equivalent degree of the experimental group and the control group. As displayed in the table, a comparison of the pretest equivalent degree reveals insignificant difference (F = .11, P = .741).

RESULTS

Results of the pre-test

Table 5 shows the overall pre-test means of the experimental group and the control group. A comparison of these reveals no significant differences between the two groups, $t_{(50)}$ = .33, p > .05, which means that the level of the two groups was equivalent.

Table 4
The pre-test equivalent degree of the experimental group and the control group

Source	Type III sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.250	1	3.250	.111	.741
Intercept	14190.019	1	14190.019	484.060	.000
Groups	3.250	1	3.250	.111	.741
Error	1465.731	50	29.315		
Total	15659.000	52			
Corrected Total	1468.981	51			

* R Squared= .002 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

Pre-test to post-test for each story element results

The post test was conducted in one period and a half (60 minutes) time, one week after the **Pre-test to post-test results for story element**

Table 5
Overall means, standard deviations and t-value for the pre-test

Groups	N	DF	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig (2-tail)
Experimental Group	26	50	16.76	6.1	.333	.741
Control Group	26		16.26	4.6		

setting

Setting is the first element of Copper's (1986) Story Grammar Method. It taught formally to the students. The researcher spent one week having focused discussions and explaining by modeling and practice.. Setting is the easiest element that took a little effort especially for the better students. The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the setting elements are approximately the same and this indicates that no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group but the result of the post-test showed that the score of the experimental group was higher than the score of the control group in the setting element (t = 3.051, *p* = .004).

program finished. The same procedure was followed. The following section presents the results of the six elements and the overall results of the post-test as shown in Table 6.

Pre-test to post-test results for story element characters

Character element is the second element of Copper's story grammar method. It was taught on the second week of the experiment. The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the character element that approximately are the same and this indicates that no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group butthe result in the post test show that the score of the experimental group was higher than the score of the control group in the characters element (t = 5.484, *p* = .000). The researcher believes that the training that students had during the story grammar lessons enabled them to respond positively to this element in the reading comprehension test.

Pre-test to post-test results for story element problem

Problem element is the third element of Copper's story grammar method. Problem element was taught on the third week of the experiment. The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the problem element that approximately are the same and this indi

Table 6
Means, standard deviation and t-value for the story grammar element

The story elements	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	Sig(2-tailed)
Setting pre-test	Experimental	26	3.11	1.14	-.439	50	.662
	Control	26	3.26	1.37			
Setting post-test	Experimental	26	5.50	0.70	3.051	50	.004
	Control	26	4.61	1.29			
Character pre-test	Experimental	26	3.88	1.17	.516	50	.608
	Control	26	3.73	0.96			
Characters post-test	Experimental	26	4.92	1.26	5.484	50	.000
	Control	26	2.84	1.46			
Problem pre-test	Experimental	26	2.65	1.35	.116	50	.908
	Control	26	2.61	1.02			
Problem post-test	Experimental	26	5.15	1.0	6.936	50	.000
	Control	26	2.92	1.29			
Action pre-test	Experimental	26	1.80	1.41	-.218	50	.828
	Control	26	1.88	1.10			
Action post-test	Experimental	26	4.84	0.78	5.72	37.9	.000
	Control	26	2.96	1.48			
Resolution pre-test	Experimental	26	2.23	1.30	.455	50	.651
	Control	26	2.07	1.12			
Resolution post-test	Experimental	26	4.42	1.13	4.168	50	.000
	Control	26	2.92	1.44			
Theme pre-test	Experimental	26	3.15	1.08	1.31	50	.196
	Control	26	2.76	1.03			
Theme post-test	Experimental	26	5.53	0.76	8.21	43.8	.000
	Control	26	3.34	1.12			

cates that no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group whereas, the results of the post-test show that the score of the students in the experimental group was higher than the control group as to the problem element (t = 6.936, *p* = .000). The researcher attributed students' high performance in this element to the variety of different types of stories that were presented in the story grammar lessons. Those stories have exposed the students to different types of difficulties that the characters face in each story, which entailed them to find the problem and try to suggest suitable solutions.

Pre-test to post-test results for story element action

The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the action element that approximately are the same and this indicates that no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group whereas, the results of the post-test show the experimental group students' score was higher than the control group's score. (t = 5.72, *p* = .000). According to Copper (1986), the action element is the fourth element of the story grammar elements. Action taught formally to the students and it did not take a long time but the researcher spent one week having focused discussion and explaining this element in two stories. Students did not struggle with the action element because they wanted to find resolutions to the problem they had faced in reading stories.

Pre-test to post-test results for Story Element Resolution

Resolution is the fifth element of Copper's story grammar method. Resolution was taught on the fifth week. Many students were confused about finding the resolutions for the problems of the stories they read and it appeared in the score of the students' comprehension test especially in the pre-test. The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the resolution element approximately are the same and this indicates that no significant differences between the experimental

group and the control group because whereas, the results of the post-test show that the experimental group students' score was higher than the control group's score and this appear in the light of t-value (t = 4.168, *p* = .000). The researcher attributed students' high performance during this element to their ability to analyze the actions and the steps that were taken to solve the problem/s in each story using problem-solving technique. This procedure had a positive impact on identifying the test answers.

Pre-test to post-test results for Story Element Theme

According to Copper (1986) the theme element is the last element of the story grammar elements. Theme taught formally to the students. The researcher spent one week having focused discussion and explaining this element in many short stories. Students embraced discussions of the theme element during a critique of peer's answers for the questions in the group work. The results in Table 6 show that the scores of the pre-test on the theme element approximately are the same. This indicates that no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group, but the scores of the post-test of the experimental and the control group were (t = 8.21, *p* = .000) which means there are statistically significant differences between the two groups in favor of the experimental group. The researcher attributed students' abilities to understand the writer's attitude in each story to their understanding that every story should have a lesson which the writer wanted to convey to the reader although sometimes this lesson is not prominent. Therefore, this technique has taught students to create their own lessons and that was clear while analyzing their story map sheets.

Pre-test narrative text comprehension to post-test overall results

Table 7 shows the overall pre-test means of the experimental group and the control group. a comparison of these reveals no significant dif

Table 7
Overall means, standard deviations and t-values for the post-test

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	DF	Sig (2tailed)
Pre-test	Experimental	26	16.76	6.10	.333	50	.741
	Control	26	16.26	4.62			
Post-test	Experimental	26	30.31	4.39	6.983	50	.000
	Control	26	19.54	6.53			

ferences between the two groups at because and this means that the level of the two groups was equivalent and we need a good technique for understanding the stories.

The overall post-test of the experimental group and the control revealed that there is a statistically significant differences between the means of the two groups in favor of the experimental group (t = 6.983, p = .000) This means that the story grammar method has appositive effect on EFL students' narrative text comprehension of grade seven in basic education.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the story grammar method significantly improved students' comprehension reading narrative texts. This result is in agreement with the findings of (Al-Hadrami, 2011, Necla, 2010, Boulineau, et al., 2004, Nguyen, 2002, Davis, 1994, and Amer, 1992). In this study, the significant differences in the post-test scores of the experimental group indicated that the instructional session using the story grammar method on teaching narrative text comprehension made positive increases in the reading comprehension levels of the students.

The story grammar method provided a framework that assisted students in assimilating and retaining story information. The strategy taught in this study provided students with a foundation on which deeper understanding could be built. Teachers conducting story grammar method must be receptive to the interactive nature of the approach. They also must realize that, in order to improve reading comprehension, it will be necessary to teach stories using a method that requires them to explain how they think and to model the meta cognitive process in comprehension. It was evident from the discussion that took place during the intervention that students were beginning to realize that the study of narrative text could be an exciting endeavor. The students began to read with an investigative and analytic sense that led to an understanding of the importance of the relationship between the elements of the story grammar. Story grammar method provided students with framework they needed to decipher systematically and logically the intricacies of complex short stories.

Based on these results the following recommendations are made:

Future researches should focus on large scale studies in all regions of the sultanate of Oman.

1. Future lines of research might include examining the effects of using story grammar method with students at various reading levels and on younger students' narrative text comprehension (i.e., a possible precursor listening, writing and speaking).

2. Studies that involve both genders.

3. Studies that examine students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of the story grammar method.

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