Enhancing EFL Freshman Students' Reading Skills with Inspirational Quotes

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Many ESL college students have reading comprehension problems in English, such as difficulty understanding ideas explicitly or implicitly stated in a text, making inferences, and inferring meanings of difficult words from context.
Aims: The article proposes the integration of inspirational quotes in the teaching of English to EFL college students as a supplement to in-class instruction and the textbook, and shows the advantages of integrating inspirational quotes in reading instruction.
Materials, Tasks, and Instructional Phases: The article shows the sources of inspirational quotes; criteria for selecting inspirational quotes; reading skills that can be developed with inspirational quotes (literal, inferential, critical comprehension and appreciation; decoding, using phonic, morphological, semantic, and syntactic clues; deriving word meaning from context; understanding certain grammatical structures such as idioms, ellipsis and participial phrases; locating anaphoric relationships and making inferences). The instructor can use a Facebook page, an online course, or an online discussion forum to post the inspirational quotes and tasks. Reading instruction with inspirational quotes goes through three phases: (i) Before reading an inspirational quote, the instructor introduces the inspirational quote, gives a vocabulary overview and pre-questions, and sets goals for the tasks. (ii) While reading an inspirational quote, the students read for the general topic, pay attention to specific vocabulary, imagery and figures of speech, and use contextual clues to infer the meaning of difficult words. (iii) After reading an inspirational quote, the students discuss answers, summarize or retell the topic orally, comment on it, give their impression

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and the moral or lesson learnt. The instructor serves as a facilitator. She guides the students, encourages them, and gives feedback on weaknesses and areas of improvement.

Reflections and Recommendation: Students' responses to a questionnaire-survey revealed positive attitudes towards practicing reading with inspirational quotes. They found them beneficial in promoting their reading skills. Recommendations for creating an inspirational quote repository are given.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inspirational or motivational quotes are pithy sayings. They are considered a kind of folklore genre. They constitute a component of everyday language and are popular in all languages and cultures. They are widely used on social media among people of all ages, educational levels and walks of life. Inspirational quotes cover all kinds of themes: Children, family, success, attitude, motivation, hard work, life, happiness, friendship, competition, self-esteem, perseverance, power, health, cooperation, beliefs, and others. They are commonly used in different literary genres such as novels, poetry, fiction, and drama. When inspirational quotes are associated with a photo, the photo helps make the meaning more vivid and easy to understand especially by students learning English as a foreign language. Students can easily find them online, download them and read them several times. Their cultural content, conciseness, literal and/or figurative meaning enrich students' linguistic and cultural repertoire. Thus teachers can use them to develop a variety of language skills in the foreign language.

Due to the popularity of inspirational quotes and their familiarity among students, the author conducted an extensive review of the literature which showed no studies that have explored inspirational quotes and their linguistic characteristics. No prior studies explored first and second language learners' ability to comprehend them and how inspirational quotes can be taught to students. However, the author found several lines of research that have investigated students' ability to understand proverbs, adages, idioms and similar literary and folklore genres, figurative language, and literary appreciation.

The first line of research focused on the integration of proverbs in English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) instruction to develop students' language skills such as oral communication, pronunciation, reading, and cultural awareness [1]; reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary development, and structural relations in the text [2]; reading comprehension and abstract reasoning powers in students, i.e., reading and thinking [3]; and inferential reading skills [4].

Few more studies in the literature analyzed certain aspects of proverbs, such as the influence of literal and figurative contextual constraints on proverb comprehension. Since proverbs have meanings that are both literal and figurative, a study by [5] indicated that people have less difficulty interpreting the statements in literal than figurative contexts. Discourse contexts that invite a literal reading of a proverb provide more conceptual overlap with the proverb, resulting in more rapid processing than contexts inviting a non-literal reading. In another study, [6] examined proverb reading comprehension by preadolescent students and compared proficient and less proficient readers. They found that comprehension of unfamiliar concrete and abstract proverbs was associated with word knowledge, reading proficiency, and analogical reasoning. In addition, teaching adages (relational metaphors) to college students facilitated the processing of general ideas and higher-order level-thinking. The higher the degree of structural relations embedded in the titles of passages, the greater the recall and accessibility of system-related ideas [2].

Since many students struggle to comprehend and interpret the figurative language that they encounter in a text even at the proverb or adage level, a second line of research focused on teaching figurative language to students such as: How figurative language interpretation instruction is a necessary component of the reading comprehension curriculum, particularly for at-risk students and how the assessment and instructional design process for figurative language can be implemented [7]; how to decipher language ambiguities that students encounter inside and outside the classroom, and

how to understand ambiguous language and humor [8]; resolving figurative expressions while reading unknown idioms and metaphors and the effect of context on reading patterns and identification of word meaning [9]; the effect of sentence structure on figurative-language processing [10]; reading comprehension and figurative language instruction to Turkish-speaking fifth grade students learning English [11]; and symbolism as a complex, interpretive problem in reading, understanding and teaching of literary texts [12].

A third line of research focused on developing literary appreciation skills in students. For example, [13] highlighted the importance of literature in teaching EFL at the secondary school level, as a pedagogical resource to help improve students' linguistic competence. [14] added that the study of literature is indispensable for EFL university students because it exposes students to meaningful contexts full of descriptive language and interesting characters. Planning lessons around the reading of literary works introduces students to a wide range of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose. In addition, teaching literature appeals to students' imagination, develops their cultural awareness, and encourages critical thinking about the characters, themes, and plots. The activities that a teacher utilizes in literature classes are usually student-centered, interactive and meet the principles of communicative language teaching.

In the Philippines, [15] assessed the literary appreciation skills and reading performance of university students in literature courses. Findings revealed that the students had a moderate skill level in literary appreciation, but a low skill level in recognizing the author's point of view and philosophy, critical appraisal of the text, and relating the stories to their personal lives. Results also showed a fair performance in literature learning. In general, literary appreciation skills and reading performance differed when the students were grouped according to their college affiliations. The author concluded that there is a positive correlation between literary appreciation skills and students' reading performance.

2. NEED FOR STUDY

At the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saudi University (KSU), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the author conducted an exploratory study which used a needs assessment survey with open-ended questions.

The survey was administered to a sample of EFL students in the first four levels of the English-Arabic translation program, and another survey administered to a sample of EFL instructors at COLT who taught reading I, II, III, and IV. Results of the needs assessment survey showed that Saudi EFL students had several reading difficulties such as difficulty identifying main ideas and supporting details, understanding ideas that are explicitly or implicitly stated in a text, making predictions and inferences, inferring the meanings of difficult words from context, and understanding certain syntactic structures such as modals, passives, questions, exclamation, emphatic structures, ellipsis, tenses, participial phrases, idioms and others. Many struggle to interpret figurative language when it is encountered in a text. Some students had negative attitudes towards reading in English and felt that English reading was difficult and boring.

In addition, [14] indicated that many postgraduate EFL teacher-training courses focus mainly on language teaching methodology and offer little guidance on the analytical methods that are essential for interpreting literature and designing effective classroom activities. [16] pointed out that developing EFL students' appreciation of a literary work, ability to perform text analysis, and general language skills are necessary for EFL instruction. Moreover, there is a lack of research that focuses on the teaching of inspirational quotes to EFL college students as revealed by the literature review above.

To develop EFL students' reading skills, prior studies have integrated numerous activities in reading instruction such as extensive reading, doing online reading exercises, using mobile reading apps and reading mind maps, reading short stories and multicultural literature, and combining reading and writing activities [17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24]. However, proverbs, adages, aphorisms, sayings, and inspirational quotes have never been used before by prior studies to promote students' reading skills. Inspirational quotes are of special importance in developing EFL students' linguistic and cultural competence due to their literal and/or figurative meaning and aesthetic value.

3. AIMS OF STUDY

To fill in a gap in the reading instruction literature and to propose a new kind of activity for developing reading skills in EFL students at

COLT, the author proposes the integration of inspirational quotes in reading instruction to EFL students as an extension activity, i.e., as a supplement to in-class reading instruction that depends on the textbook. It shows the advantages of integrating inspirational quotes by authors from around the world and from different cultures in reading instruction; sources of inspirational quotes; criteria for selecting inspirational quotes; how inspirational quotes can be anlayzed and which reading skills can be practiced with them; instructional phases that can be followed in teaching inspirational quotes; and the role of the instructor. It shows reading teachers how to help students correctly interpret multiple meanings homographs and homophones, idioms, metaphors, analogies, emphatic structures and ellipsis in inspirational quotes and others.

The integration of inspirational quotes in reading instruction provides additional opportunities for practicing and mastering English reading by translation students at COLT. They contribute to their English language acquisition and intercultural competence Helping students at COLT develop their reading comprehension skills is important for their success in the English reading courses that they take in the first four semesters of the translation program and in the subsequent specialized content courses (semantics, stylistics, text linguistics, and linguistics) that they take in semesters 5-10 of the program. Inspirational quotes are also important for comprehending written texts in the translation courses that the students take, the translation project, and the production of target texts.

4. MATERIALS, TASKS, AND INSTRUC-TIONAL PHASES

4.1 Locating and Selecting Inspirational Quotes

The course instructor can search for and make a list of useful and relevant English inspirational quotes by entering search terms in Google such as "inspirational quotes about life"; "success inspirational quotes"; "African inspirational quotes"; American inspirational quotes"*;* "inspirational quotes by Gandhi" and so on. The students may search for inspirational quotes that they like as well. In addition, there are many sources for locating global inspirational quotes: Social media (Facebook and Twitter), special websites (www.successories.com), and

YouTube. Inspirational quotes can be selected from the Islamic literature, Bible, well-known politicians (Ghandi, Churchill), psychologists, authors and philosophers (Mark Twain, Goethe, Emerson), scientists (Einstein), businessmen (Bill Gate, Rockefeller), athletes (Vincent Lombardi, Tiger Woods) and others. They can be selected from different cultures such as: Arab, Chinese, Indian, African, and American cultures.

When selecting inspirational quotes, the instructor should take into consideration the following criteria: the length of the inspirational quotes, the difficulty level of the language used in the inspirational quotes, students' proficiency level, students' interests, culture of interest, specific skills to be developed and practiced, and skills and grammatical structures taught in class.

4.2 Reading Skills That Can be Developed with Inspirational Quotes

There are two theories that describe reading comprehension: The first one considers reading as a whole skill or a product that cannot be broken down into smaller sub-skills and that depends on the information and knowledge in the reader's head that he/she uses while reading. To facilitate teaching reading as a product, [25] identified four reading comprehension levels:

- Literal comprehension of details, main ideas, sequence of events, cause-effect relationships, comparisons, and character traits in a text.
- Inferential comprehension such as inferring supporting details, sequence, cause and effect relationships, comparisons, character traits, figurative language and predicting outcomes.
- Evaluation, i.e., judgments of reality or fantasy, fact or opinion, adequacy or validity, appropriateness, worth, desirability, acceptability and judgement of the language, and the effects of the text in the light of appropriate criteria.
- Appreciation, i.e., emotional responses to the content, sensitivity to various literary genres, identification with characters and incidents, reaction to the author's use of language, and response to generated images.

The second reading theory considers reading a cognitive activity in which readers process different kinds of information to acquire

knowledge about the topic presented in the reading text [26]. Therefore, teaching reading involves teaching the following process skills:

- Using phonic clues (phonic analysis) to determine the pronunciation and meaning of unknown words by identifying graphemes, letter combinations, syllables, spelling patterns and spelling-sound or spelling-pronunciation correspondences.
- Using morphological clues (word structure) to determine the pronunciation and meaning of unknown words by breaking them into their appropriate units; recognizing derivatives, roots, prefixes, suffixes; identifying inflectional endings denoting plurals, and comparatives; identifying compound words, contractions, possessives, and dividing words into syllables and placing accent.
- Using syntactic clues such as identifying the part of speech, number and voice of verbs; the position of a word in a sentence; recognizing sentence patterns, word order sequences, noun-adjective, verb-subject and pronoun-antecedent agreement; recognizing the function of punctuation and typographic devices such as apostrophes, exclamation marks, hyphens, question marks, quotation marks, virgules, brackets, parentheses, capitalization, italicization and bold type; and identifying and understanding emphatic structures, exclamation, ellipsis, and clauses.
- Using semantic clues to obtain the meaning of unknown words through the examination of the surrounding context such as the topic, words preceding and/or following the unfamiliar words; commonly used expressions such as idioms, colloquialisms, figures of speech, proverbs, and other familiar sayings.
- Making Inferences, i.e., finding a semantic, grammatical, or logical (causal) relation between the propositions or events that are expressed in the text and identifying the context or the topic of the text.
- Recognizing anaphora, i.e., recognizing words and phrases that refer back to other words and phrases used earlier in the text.
- Using background knowledge, i.e., students' familiarity with the facts, information, and ideas in a text. In a foreign language setting, cultural ideas are a component of students' background knowledge.

4.3 Instructional Phases with Inspirational Quotes

The instructor can use a Facebook or Twitter page, an online course, an online discussion forum, a blog, or a wiki to post the inspirational quotes and the tasks to be performed, to hold the discussion, and provide interaction and feedback. Teaching reading with inspirational quotes goes through 3 phases, each of which is described below.

4.3.1 Before reading the inspirational quote (pre-task phase)

Introduce the students to the Facebook/Twitter page, online course, blog, or online discussion forum to be used for posting the inspirational quotes and reading tasks. Show the students how they can search Google for inspirational quotes with a particular theme or from a particular culture, by selecting specific search terms, enclosing the search terms in quotation marks and using Boolean operators. Tell the students what is expected of them. Before working on a set of inspirational quotes, give pre-questions, set goals for the tasks, i.e., tell the students what they need to do and focus on, and give the order in which tasks will be completed. The instructional strategy focuses on inspirational quote analysis, i.e., analyzing the lexical, morphological, semantic, syntactic and rhetorical aspects of an inspirational quote. Examples of inspirational quotes and reading skills, sub skills and tasks are given in Table 1 below.
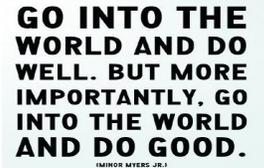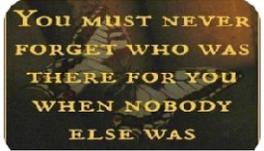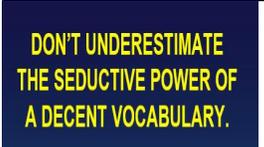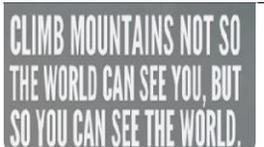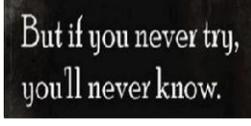
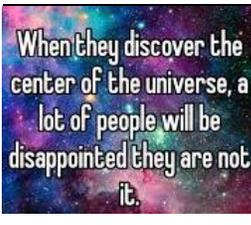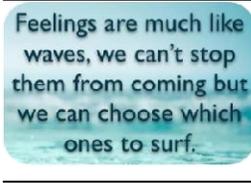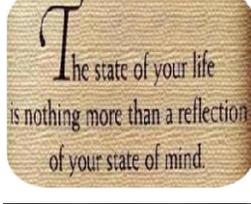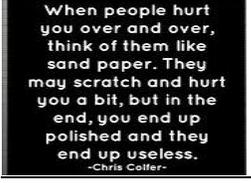### 4.3.2 While reading the inspirational quotes (task phase)

The students perform the tasks at home or in class. The tasks can be performed individually (each student works on a task on her own), in pairs (two students work on a task together) or in small groups (three or more students work on a single task together and present one response). Tasks can be performed interactively (students react, respond to or comment on other students' answers) or collaboratively (each student in a small group works on some inspirational quotes). They can be performed synchronously (all the students go online at the same time and work on the tasks at the same time), or asynchronously (the students go online at different times, i.e., they check the inspirational quotes and perform the tasks, any time, at their own convenience).
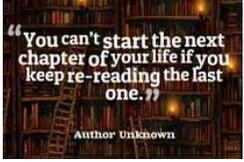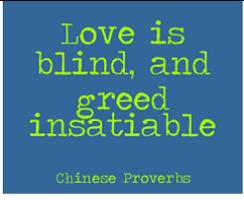
To help the students benefit most from the reading instruction with inspirational quotes, they should engage and participate in, respond to, and be actively involved in the reading tasks. The students read to understand the overall topic and/or moral of an inspirational quote. They pay attention to specific vocabulary, imagery, idioms, figures of speech and certain grammatical structures. They use contextual clues to infer the meaning of difficult words and answer a comprehension question while reading.

Table 1. Examples of inspirational quotes and reading tasks and skills that can be practiced with each

Inspirational quotes	Reading skills and tasks
Do not regret growing older. it is a privilege denied to many. Unknown	• Word meaning: regret, privilege • Inferences: denied to many • Affixes: unknown, seductive • Ellipsis: denied to many. Supply deleted word
GO INTO THE WORLD AND DO WELL. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY. GO INTO THE WORLD AND DO GOOD. (MINOR MYERS JR.)	• Difference in meaning between: "do well" & "do good". • Part of speech of "well" & "good". • Paraphrasing the inspirational quote. • Giving a situation where this inspirational quote is applied. • Lesson learn from this inspirational quote. • What "well" and "good" emphasize.
JOBS FILL YOUR POCKETS, BUT ADVENTURES FILL YOUR SOUL	• Pronunciation: adventure • Does this inspirational quote mean that one should not have a job? • Meaning of "fill your pocket". • Meaning of "fill your soul". • Give examples of an adventure that filled your soul. • Give a word that is pronounced like "soul" and spell it.
YOU MUST NEVER FORGET WHO WAS THERE FOR YOU WHEN NOBODY ELSE WAS	• Modals • Relative pronouns • Ellipsis. Supplying deleted word(s) • Giving and describing a situation to illustrate the inspirational quote.
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF A DECENT VOCABULARY.	• Antonym: unknown / discover • Collocation: launch an adventure • Part of speech: seductive – decent – privilege • Word meaning: decent vocabulary, seductive, underestimate
The world is a magical place full of people waiting to be offended by something.	• Reduced clauses • Implied meaning of the inspirational quote. • Giving examples of a situation where it applies.
CLIMB MOUNTAINS NOT SO THE WORLD CAN SEE YOU, BUT SO YOU CAN SEE THE WORLD.	• Implied meaning of the inspirational quote. • Imagery: climb mountain. • Type of clause. • How the idea is emphasized, i.e., emphatic structure.

Inspirational quotes	Reading skills and tasks
MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO UNDERSTAND; THEY LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO REPLY. - STEPHEN R. COVEY	• Paraphrasing I.Q. • Word meaning: intent. • Giving an example that illustrates this inspirational quote. • Giving a situation in which this inspirational quote can be used. • Purpose of repeating "with the inent".
Time is still the best answer. Forgiveness is still the best pain-killer, And GOd is still the best healer."	• Affixes: forgiveness – healer. • Compounds: pain-killer. • Moral of the inspirational quote? • Giving situations to which this inspirational quote can be applied. • Answer to what? • Pain-killer to what? • Purpose of repeating "is still".
But if you never try, you'll never know.	• Contractions • Conditional sentence. • What should we do, then? • Giving situations to which this inspirational quote applies?
When they discover the center of the universe, a lot of people will be disappointed they are not it.	• Words with a negative prefix. • Pronoun reference: it • Complex sentence. • Meaning of the inspirational quote? • Kind of people are referred to in the inspirational quote.
Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop them from coming but we can choose which ones to surf.	• Imagery: like waves • Pronoun reference: ones • Word with multiple meanings: like • Meaning of surf. • Meaning of the inspirational quote and lesson learnt.
Life is about change, sometimes it's painful, sometimes it's beautiful, but most of the time it's both.	• Pronoun reference: both • What kind of change? • Why painful, beautiful? • Contraction. • Words with suffixes.
The state of your life is nothing more than a reflection of your state of mind.	• Idioms: state of life/state of mind • Multiple meanings of "state" • Imagery 'reflection. • Lesson learnt from the inspirational quote?
When people hurt you over and over, think of them like sand paper. They may scratch and hurt you a bit, but in the end, you end up polished and they end up useless. -Chris Colfer-	• Explaining the analogy. • Idioms: used up • Complex sentence • Word meaning: sandpaper, scratch, polished, • Literal and implied meaning of the inspirational quote. • How should you react when people hurt you?

Inspirational quotes	Reading skills and tasks
	• Figurative language (key). • Imperative & negative. • Meaning of the inspirational quote. • Paraphrasing the inspirational quote. • Giving situations to which this inspirational quote can be applied. • Giving a proverb that has the same meaning as this inspirational quote.
	• Imagery "chapter of life". • What does "next chapter" refer to? • What does "last one" refer to? • Lesson learnt from this inspirational quote.
	• Moral and lesson learnt from this inspirational quote? • Parts of speech: "insatiable", "greed", "blind". • Breaking "insatiable" into its component parts (prefix, root & suffix). • Giving a similar proverb from students' culture. • Ellipsis in this inspirational quote.
	• Imagery (test in life). • Decoding: bitter/better • Meaning: Make us/break us • Meaning: Victim /victor • Paraphrasing this inspirational quote. • How ideas are emphasized. Contrast in this inspirational quote.
	• Inferring meaning from context: rise & fall down. • Complex sentence • Correcting the grammatical mistake in the reported speech. • Giving a life situation to which this inspirational quote applies.

4.3.3 After reading the inspirational quotes (post-task phase)

The students can discuss their analysis of the inspirational quotes and answers to the reading questions. They summarize, or retell the topic of an inspirational quote orally, comment on the topic, write a response, the moral or lesson learnt. The teacher discusses difficulties, clarifies, and helps with the problematic aspects of the inspirational quotes. The students keep a log of the inspirational quotes and tasks they have finished. The instructor assesses students' performance and provides feedback on weaknesses and areas of improvement. Students who need extra help can do remedial tasks. The instructor summarizes the tasks that were performed and gives a new set of inspirational quotes and tasks for the following week.

4.3.4 Role of the instructor

The instructor serves as a facilitator. Her guidance is crucial in facilitating the selection and comprehension of inspirational quotes by the students. She sets a time limit for reading the inspirational quotes and performing the tasks. While performing the task, the instructor gives feedback, helps, and encourages the students. She prompts them with a sense of humor using questions or keywords. The students are encouraged to read more inspirational quotes on their own or even write their own inspirational quotes. Few errors are corrected each time. She creates a positive and supportive learning environment that is secure for making mistakes. She encourages the students to respond to, and comment on each other's performance. She responds to students' needs and answers their questions. To motivate the students to do the

online tasks, the instructor can give extra credit or include a sample of inspirational quotes with comprehension questions on tests.

5. REFLECTIONS

Effectiveness of the reading instruction with inspirational quotes is supported by the results of prior studies in which the students practiced reading with similar types of genres such as proverbs, adage, figurative language, idioms and metonyms [1,3,4,5,6,2,7,8,9,10,11,12].

Furthermore, the author used the instructional strategies outlined in the paper to teach inspirational quotes to EFL college students at COLT. At the end of the semester, the students' answered a survey. Students' responses to the survey revealed positive attitudes towards practicing reading with inspirational quotes. They found the inspirational quotes fun and they enjoyed analyzing them. Use of supplementary reading exercises with inspirational quotes had several advantages: inspirational quotes met students' needs and catered for the differences in reading ability and experiential level among the students, targeting their reading weaknesses such as inferring meaning of difficult words from context, understanding some grammatical structures and inferring the topic and moral of an inspirational quote. Students who struggled with reading long texts in English indicated that inspirational quotes provided them with extra opportunities for practicing reading tasks and exercises they could manage. They reported that reading practice with inspirational quotes helped them acquire cognitive and metacognitive reading skills as the tasks depended on text analysis, making lots of inferences and learning about the different aspects of the English language. Some of the responses that the students gave to the questionnaire were:

- Sana reported: I found inspirational quotes and exercises that match my reading skill level and explanations that I could understand, unlike the textbook that all students have to use whether they understand it or not.
- Maha wrote: Reading inspirational quotes is a new way of practicing reading that I find interesting and fun, unlike long texts in the textbook.
- Sara added: With inspirational quotes and interactive reading tasks, I did extra exercises that helped me overcome my

difficulties in inferring meanings of difficult words from context, inferring the general theme and lesson learnt from the inspirational quote.
- Lana indicated: The extra reading practice with inspirational quotes helped enhance my ability to analyze the text at the lexical, syntactic and semantic levels.
- Nadeen asserted: inspirational quotes with reading exercises provided me with extra practice and helped me focus on specific aspects of the language because the inspirational quotes are short and concise.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLU-SION

The use of inspirational quotes is becoming more and more popular in everyday life especially on social media. To help EFL college students enhance their reading skills, the students should avoid reading inspirational quotes passively. They should read some inspirational quotes and perform some reading tasks on their own as a supplement to in-   class reading instruction. They should pay attention to specific vocabulary, imagery, figures of speech, and grammatical structures in the inspirational quotes. They practice applying phonic, morphological, semantic, and syntactic clues to infer meanings of difficult words, phrases, and structures. Students infer the topic and give the moral or lesson learnt and paraphrase the overall meaning of an inspirational quote.

Moreover, the author recommends that an inspirational quotes' repository be created by EFL/ESL instructors and students in which inspirational quotes are stored and classified according to the theme, author, and source (culture) they represent. A comprehensive alphabetical index can be added to facilitate the searching process and allow EFL instructors and students' to access inspirational quotes of interest to them quickly and easily. Students and instructors should be able to store, search, and retrieve inspirational quotes to be used as supplementary material. Comprehension questions on each inspirational quote can be added with hyperlinks that enable users to access the meaning of difficult words, idioms, and structures in dictionaries and other references. It would be better if the online inspirational quotes' repository is interactive. Students should be able to answer reading

questions, post answers and receive feedback from their instructors. Reviewing and updating the inspirational quotes in the repository constantly is necessary. New inspirational quotes can be added and uninteresting ones removed. Those are believed can enhance EFL students' reading skills in language and translation schools.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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