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The Role of Digital Comics in Enhancing EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

The Case of Second Year EFL LMD Students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Lesya Skoreiko the one who has helped me become a better person for the last two years and has brought me back to myself.

To my parents who probably have been waiting for this research to happen for a long time.

To everyone that helped me and believed in me,

You know it is all because of you.

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the role of digital comics in enhancing novice EFL learners' reading comprehension. This research was raised by the observed problem that EFL learners have when they come to read. Indeed, there do exist problems in reading and reading comprehension especially among learners with low language proficiency. These problems are mostly due to the lack of interest as well as linguistic disabilities; therefore, we hypothesise that If EFL learners read digital comics, their reading comprehension will be enhanced and students will engage actively in reading. The study intends to target second year students of English language with a variety of gender and social status at Mohamed Kheider university of Biskra. In order to collect as much satisfying data as possible, a questionnaire will be given to students of second year at English department of Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. As a result to this study, reading was found to be a difficult task for EFL learners; meanwhile, the study also shows that comics make EFL learners read actively.

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ESL: English as a Second Language

ELLS: English language Learners.

FL: Foreign Language.

L1: First Language.

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

TEL: Teaching English Language.

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General Introduction

English learners often need to be encouraged and motivated while learning the four language skills. Meanwhile, EFL teachers seek to be as creative as possible in order to encourage learners to study English more effectively. The reading skill is considered to be one of the most important skills in learning the English language as it allows English learners to gain knowledge about the target language itself; meanwhile, comics provide EFL learners with a very interesting and motivating reading environment that helps them engage actively in the reading task. The use of comics may reduce many ambiguities for the student when reading, as they provide reading materials accompanied with certain visuals. Considering these suggestions, the present study aims to investigate the effects of using digital comics on EFL Learners' reading comprehension.

1. Statement of the problem

It is observed that there do exist problems in reading and reading comprehension especially among learners with low language proficiency. These problems are mostly due to lack of interest as well as the disability of decoding text and extract the meaning.

EFL beginner learners are not very often active readers and find it difficult to understand everything they read due to the lack of interests and language proficiencies. It is that students are unable to read actively and find a difficulty in decoding the written language and extract the meaning. Therefore, the use of digital comics could be a very effective technique to enhance EFL learner's reading comprehension as well as develops students' interests and competencies in reading.

2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

- Investigates the effects of digital comics on EFL learners' reading comprehension.
- Give a clear concept about digital comics as a technique that can be used in both learning and teaching reading.
- Give an idea about how digital comics can be used effectively in order to enhance EFL learner's reading comprehension.

3. Significance of the study

The present study has a great significance on both the teaching and learning processes, as it clarifies the role of digital comics as a technique in improving EFL learner's understanding of the written language as well as it establishes a better learning atmosphere for teachers and learners. This study is focused on clarifying the digital comics as an effective technique in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension and their effects on EFL learners' learning.

4. Research Questions

In order to understand the role of digital comics in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension and the effects of using this technique on both teaching and learning processes, it is important to answer the following questions:

- What are the main effects that digital comics have on the reading comprehension?
 - Does the implementation of digital comics in classroom improve EFL learners' reading comprehension?

5. Hypothesis

We hypothesise the following:

- If EFL learners read digital comics, their reading comprehension will be enhanced and students will engage actively in reading.

6. Research Methodology

This research will be conducted by using the quantitative approach in order to reach more satisfying answers. Because of the limited period of time, the quantitative approach would allow us to gain enough data about the variables in a short time.

7. Population and Sample

Previous researches have shown that digital comics are used for learners' with low language proficiency. Therefore, among a population of 380 students, this research intends to target a sample of forty second year English language students with a variety of gender and social status at Mohamed Khider university of Biskra for that second year students are not of a very high language proficiency as well as it seems that they have possibly experienced reading comics.

8. Data Gathering Tools

In order to collect as much satisfying data as possible, a questionnaire will be given to students of second year at English department of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra in hope to collect the needed data.

9. Literature Review

Definition and history of comics: According to the (Oxford Dictionary, 2000) comics are defined as art form that features a series of static image in fixed sequence, usually to tell a story. Common comics are printed in papers where a text is supported by images. The most famous formats of comics are newspaper strips, magazine-format comic books and graphic novels. Hayman and Pratt (2005) define ‘comic’ as a sequence of discrete juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text. A digital comic is a comic that is displayed on screen whether of computer, tablet, mobile, etc.

The use of ICT in teaching: Digital comics are one of the pedagogical tools that involve the application of ICT. Recently, many teachers prefer to utilise ICT in teaching and learning, due to the advantages it offers, especially in creating engaging learning environment (Melor, Maimun and Lin 2009; Mainum et al., 2009; Roberto, 2007). ICT is therefore a remarkable phenomenon in modern teaching as teachers and learners have become aware of the importance of ICT.

The Use of Comic Book Style Reading Material in an EFL Extensive Reading Program:

The use of comic book style readers and the participants’ response to them lends support to previous research that contextual illustrations and context help enable participants’ schema formation and general comprehension of text. This results in less reliance on distracting dictionary use and hence less split attention effect. The participants indicated that they enjoyed

The experience of reading the comic books and were more motivated to read more comic books in English. Moreover, participants indicated that the principles of the reading program, especially choice of material and a realistic skill level, contributed to the participants’ overall enjoyment of the Emergency Relief Program.

On the basis of the survey results, however, it can be concluded that the Emergency Relief Program program did not improve participants' attitudes toward reading in English. In addition, the participants involved in the study indicated that their motivation to read English material had slightly decreased.

Further research and an expansion of this program is required to see if the positive results of the program can be applied to the wider student body of the university. The introduction of the comic book style readers has shown there is potential for their use as a tool for EFL teachers looking to increase their students' enjoyment of reading in English (Evan Jones Kanda University of International Studies, Japan, 2010).

10. Limitation of the study

The current study is focused on reading comprehension and digital comics as a suggested reading technique; consequently, the research is limited by some factors. The time devoted for this study is limited what makes it impossible to conduct a deeper study on variables as well as the lack of resources, materials and equipments.

11. Structure of the study

This research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview about comics. It is for having a clear concept about comics and their uses. In addition, it explains for what purposes comics are made and how they are used. The second chapter is devoted to reading comprehension in which we try to define reading comprehension and explains its components. The third chapter is for the field of work. It deals with the description and analysis of the data provided by the survey besides generating the possible findings from the conducted study.

Chapter One

Comics and Digital

Comics

Chapter one: Comics and Digital Comics

Introduction

Comics is a means used by pictures to illustrate ideas and thoughts that are generally combined with text or other visual data. Comics usually take the form of image panel sequences. Textual devices like voice balloons, captions, and onomatopoeia often imply dialog, narration, sound effects, or other data. The most popular image-making means in comics are cartooning and comparable types of illustration. Common types include comic strips, cartoons for publishing and gagging, and books for comics since the early 1900s, bound volumes such as graphic novels, comic albums have become more and more common, while online comics have gained popularity with the advent of the internet in the 21st century.

1. Definitions and Different Views on Comics:

Researchers in the field of teaching and arts have proposed many definitions of reading. They consider comics as a text associated with graphics and written on strips.

Comic is a story being presented with pictures. As Smith (2006:4) stated that:

Comic strips is a comic in the style that appears in a newspaper. These comics utilise panels, having a minimum of one and usually a maximum of three or four. While these strips may centre on the same cast of characters in each strips, the accompanying stories are often meant to stand on their own. While comic is a basically a comic strips that runs on for a number of pages. Although the stories contained within a comic book are, like comic strips, meant to stand on their own, comic books are typically part of a serial story, and frequently require the reader to have knowledge of past issues

According to the online Cambridge dictionary of English, ‘comic strip is a short series of amusing drawings with a small amount of writing that is usually published in a newspaper’

Hayman and Pratt propose the following definition of comics: “x is a comic if x is a sequence of discrete, juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text.”

2. History of comics

The history of comics has passed through different tracks in different areas of the globe. It can be traced back to early precursors such as the Column of Trajan, Rome, Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Bayeux Tapestry.

2.1. Early narratives in art

Trajan's Column is an example of an early precursor for printed comics. Rome's Trajan Column, in 110 AD, is an early surviving example of a narrative that is told in sequential photographs, while Egyptian hieroglyphs, Greek friezes, medieval tapestries such as the Bayeux Tapestry and illustrated manuscripts also combine sequential images and words to tell a story. Versions of the Bible were commonly distributed in Europe, relying mainly on pictures rather than text, to take the teachings of Christianity to the illiterate. In medieval paintings, multiple sequential scenes of the same story (usually a Biblical one) seem to be simultaneously in the same painting.

2.2. Printing and cartoons

The printing press invention, allowing for mobile type, created a separation between images and words, both needing distinct techniques for reproduction. Early printed material focused on religious topics but began to address elements of political and social life through the 17th and 18th centuries and also began to satirize and caricature. The speech bubble was also created during this period as a means of attributing dialogue.

2.3. Form established

The printing press invention, allowing for mobile type, created a separation between images and words, both needing distinct techniques for reproduction. Early printed material focused on religious topics but began to address elements of political and social life through the 17th and 18th centuries and also began to satirize and caricature. The speech bubble was

also created during this period as a means of attributing dialogue. The first comic strip was probably the Glasgow Looking Glass, released in 1826. A satirical publication, previously known as The Northern Looking Glass, it lampooned contemporary fashions and politics. It had all the components that make up the modern comic, including images with captions showing a constant narrative often told in instalments, and the use of speech bubbles, satire, and caricature.

A main figure in the early part of the 19th century was Rodolphe Töpffer, a Swiss Francophone artist. Though speech balloons in the mid-19th century have become less popular, The sequentially illustrated stories of Töpffer have been repressed across Europe and the United States which included a text compartmentalized below images. The absence of copyright laws at that time meant that pirated editions and translated versions created a market for similar works on both continents.

2.4.20th Century and the Mass Medium

Within the industry, the 1920s and 1930s saw further books. The UK's comic anthology market switched to targeting kids with The Dandy and The Beano through juvenile humor. Hergé created Tintin's newspaper strip The Adventures in Belgium for a comic supplement; this was gathered effectively in a bound album and generated a market for further such works. In the same era in the United States, newspaper strips went beyond humor to expand their subject matter, launching action, adventure, and mystery strips. With The Funnies, a collection of newspaper strips, published in tabloid size in 1929, the collection of such material also began.

A demand for such comic books quickly followed, and original material in the format was printed by publishers in 1938. Action Comics first introduced at this stage, with Superman being the cover feature. The character's popularity quickly enshrined the superhero as

American comic books ' defining genre. The genre lost popularity in the 1950s but regained from the 1960s to the late 20th century its form dominance.

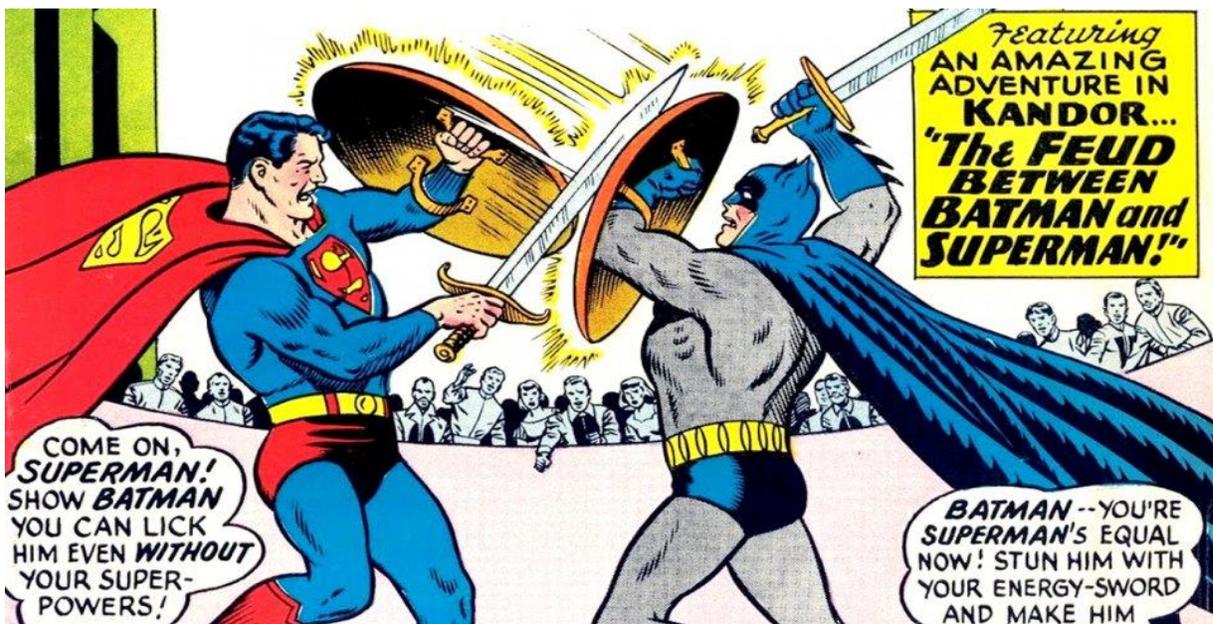
3. Comics' genres:

Comics have been published to fit every flavor in a number of styles and genres. Here are just a few of the many genres in the comics of today.

3.1. Superhero

Superhero comics, is one of the most famous genres of comic books, such as, Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and the X-Men where people often clothed in ,masks and capes and use their extraordinary abilities to protect humanity. Since Superman's first appearance in Action Comics in 1938, superheroes have caught the public mind. Superhero comics are often regarded a contemporary form of mythology, heavy on action, adventure and memorable, iconic characters.

Figure 01: A Picture of Superhero Comics



https://www.comicbookday.com/news_images/116248_1038634_1.jpg

3.2. Manga

Manga relates to an Asian comic book trade paperback style that lately reached latest heights of popularity in the U.S. Manga includes several genres that are sold to very particular reader kinds. Shojo (also spelled Shoujo) is a genre typically intended for young adolescent women, which generally involves drama and romance. Shonen relates to manga designed mainly for children and features humorous narratives and elevated action levels. To keep the authenticity of the original version, manga that is translated from Japanese is often printed to be read from right to left. Manga books are also often component of a multi-volume series and can be very addictive.

Figure 02: A Picture of Manga Comics



<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/manga.jpg>

3.3.Slice-of-Life

Many comics and graphic novels include thoughtful real-life conceptions. Among other contexts, these may take the form of autobiography, relationship drama, or historical fiction. Slice-of-life comics are often common among elderly adolescents and adults looking for a contemplative reading.

Figure 03: A Picture of Slice-of-life Comics



<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/sliceoflife.jpg>

3.4. Humor

From Mad Magazine to Simpsons Comics to editorial cartoons, there are many comics that fulfill the name "comic". Comics are an excellent way to exaggerate, satire, and just simply ridicule.

Figure 04: A Picture of Humor Comics

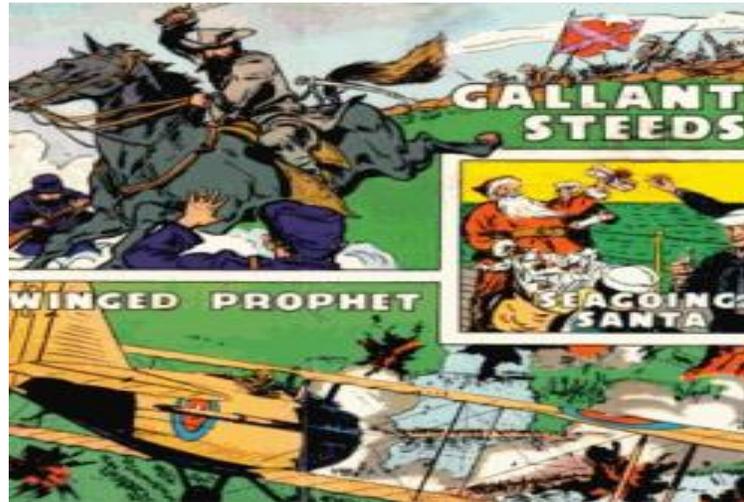


<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/humor.jpg>

3.5. Non-fiction

Comics have proven to be a great educational tool, and many have been created to explore such diverse topics as science, history, politics and biography.

Figure 05: A Picture of a Non-fiction Comics

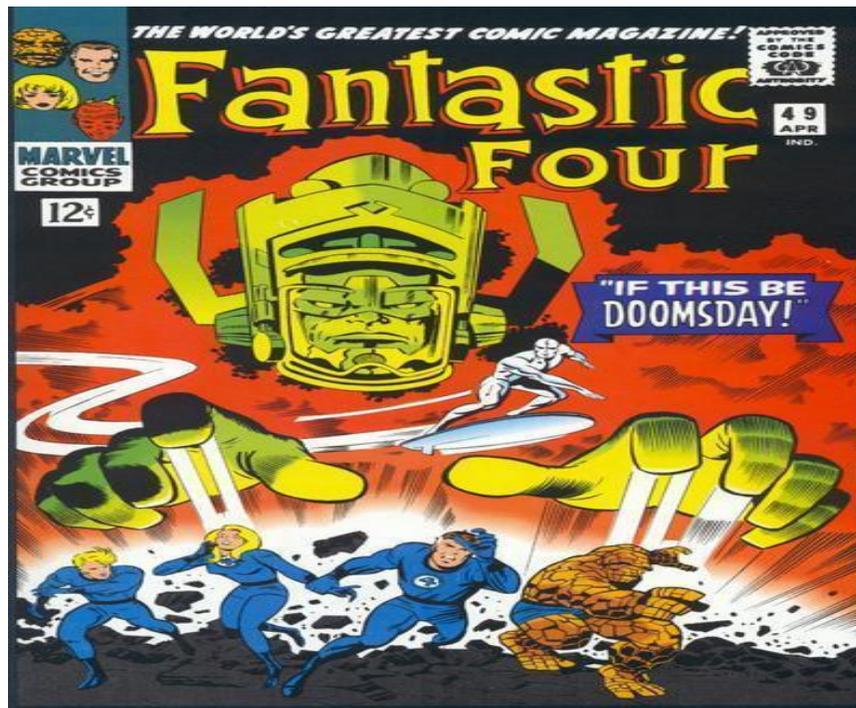


<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/non-fiction.jpg>

3.6. Science-Fiction/Fantasy

Those who enjoy imagining other worlds will discover in comics a variety of wonderful universes to explore.

Figure 06: A Picture of Fantasy Comics



<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/scifi.gif>

3.7. Horror

Frights, chills and excitement abound in comics with crazy illustrations and tales of suspense.

Figure 07: A Picture of Horror Comics



<http://www.comicbookday.com/SiteData/Images/horror.jpg>

4. Comics in teaching

Comic books have always been children's favorite. Because of its inspirational strength, comic books benefit education. Sherman & Wright (1996) introduced a teaching strategy to encourage higher-level thinking in elementary and secondary schools using newspaper comic strips. In the classroom, they use cartoons to help teaching and learning by generating debate, stimulating research, encouraging participation and motivating learners.

Comics can encourage learners to promote reading, especially those who don't really enjoy reading or are afraid of failure or disappointment. When a student is reading for fun, they feel a certain amount of control in the reading process. By contrast, when studying a

literary text, there's a little space for innovation and creativity which makes learners bored and not understanding what they're reading.

The key to getting these students read more actively is to engage their imagination and interest. Comics are a perfect tool; they divide the text into easy pieces which are supported by pictures. Berkowitz & Packer (2001) pointed out that comic books as motivational an educational tool can be used in a variety of teaching and training settings.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, we have seen the definitions and the history of comics as well as the different genres of comics. We have also seen comics in teaching. The information we provided in this chapter was very useful for the present research as they gave us insights about comics and the differences between the existing ones.

Chapter Two

Reading Fluency and Comprehension

Chapter two: Reading Fluency and Comprehension

Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills. It is a constructive process that can help students to acquire new knowledge of language, experience about life and so on. Simply, reading is an active process of understanding print and graphic text. In this chapter, we will introduce both terms reading and reading comprehension through stating different definitions by different researchers. It also deals with some methods of reading which are: extensive and intensive methods in addition to the reading purposes. As comprehension is one of the purposes of reading, definition and difficulties in comprehension were also mentioned in this chapter. Also, this chapter deals with reading fluency because it is a crucial element in addition to its relation with reading comprehension. Finally, we conclude our chapter by speaking about reading strategies which may help in solving problems of fluency and difficulty at reading comprehension.

1. Definitions of Reading

Researchers in the field of teaching and learning have proposed many definitions of reading. They consider reading as a complex cognitive process which involves many components students need in order to read effectively.

Reading is considered as to look at something printed or written and comprehend it. Broadly, reading is “to look at and understand something printed or written.” (Longman Dictionary, 1992, p. 863)

Traditionally, it was believed that reading is the process of decoding words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even the whole text to understand the contextual meaning. Recent research provides other definitions of reading as an interaction involving a reader and a text which leads to reading fluency and comprehension. According to Tesser (2005), this latter “requires not only the decoding of symbols (cognitive approach), but also the construction of meaning by the reader.” (p. 5). There is an interaction between the text and the reader in which he/she tries to interpret the meaning.

However, Davies (1995) provides a more precise definition of reading when he says that “reading is private. It is mental or cognitive process which involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from writer who is distant in space and time”. (p. 1). Hence, reading needs high cognitive actions for the reader to comprehend the author’s intended meaning. Vacca et al. (2000) have asserted that “reading is not a passive activity; it is an active thinking process that takes place behind the eyes.” (p.265) this means that reading goes beyond just decoding the written symbols. That is to say it is not considered as passive process in contrast to that, reading is an active and mental process that happens inside the brain of the reader to get the meaning of the text and understand effectively. Similarly, Alderson (2000) views reading as an interaction between the reader and the text while many actions happen: the reader does not move his eyes through the text, but decipher in some sense the symbols on the page, guess what they mean, and how they relate to each other (p.4).

It is clear from this chronological development that reading is a complex process. In this respect, Grabe (1991) states that, “many researchers attempt to understand and explain reading as a fluent process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills.” (p. 379).

Reading is a complex cognitive ability that is considered one of the basic language skills which can help students in learning foreign language; this in turn enables them to increase their knowledge in specific areas.

2. Types of Reading

There are two categories in teaching reading: extensive and intensive reading. Depending on the students' level and the text used, the teacher selects which type of reading to use either intensive or extensive reading to achieve the students' understanding.

2.1. Extensive reading

Bamford et al (2004) define extensive reading as “a language teaching procedure where learners are supposed to read large quantities of materials or long texts for global understanding, the principal goal being obtaining pleasure from the text.” (p. 1-4). This means that extensive reading refers to reading texts for pleasure and searching for a general understanding of the content. Extensive reading is also defined as “The reading of large amounts of materials in the second language over time for pleasure or interest, and without the addition of productive tasks.” (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989, p. 4). This means that Extensive reading means reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary. For example, take a book, a newspaper, or a magazine and enjoy reading without interruption.

In addition, extensive reading develops reading ability and independency for students in EFL classrooms. In the same direction, Hedge (2003) stated some of the advantages in using extensive reading. He argued that “learners can build their language competence, progress in

their reading ability, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning.”(p.204-205). This means that extensive reading is of a great importance in educational context in that it helps learners to develop their language, increase their reading comprehension and enriches their vocabulary.

2.2. Intensive Reading

In contrast to extensive reading, intensive reading refers to a high degree of understanding and retention over a long period of time, in other words, it is reading in depth or carefully to comprehend a given text. For example; Palmer (1964) contrasted extensive reading with what termed intensive reading, by which he means “to take a text, study it line by line, referring at every moment to our grammar, comparing, analyzing, translating, and retaining every expression that it contains.” (qtd. In Day and Bamford, 1998, p. 5) Intensive reading is a slow and concentrated reading that students pay much attention to vocabulary and grammar. Also they do it inside the classroom with the use of material that is teacher directed.

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004) have affirmed that “intensive reading is an activity in which students (usually in a class group, led by the teacher) carefully read and examine together a reading passage assigned by the teacher many times.” (p.257) this means that during such a type of reading, students usually read the passage in details and carefully to construct the meaning under a great attention with the guidance of the teacher. According to Nuttall (1982) the aim of intensive reading is to arrive at a profound and detailed understanding of the text, not only of what it means, but also of how the meaning is produced. The “how” is as important as the “what”, for the intensive reading is intended primarily to train student in reading strategies (p.23).

Furthermore, some reasons lead the teacher to use this type of reading in the teaching process. Paran (2003) states that “intensive reading is needed for four main reasons: to help learners comprehend written texts, to become more aware of text organization to better comprehend, to learn how to use and monitor effective reading strategies, and to develop literacy skills necessary to generate productive expressions in L2.”(p. 40). During this type of reading the students will be able to form critical analysis about the content, the arguments, the language used, the message, and will be able to focus more on the features of the text.

Thus, all these reasons contribute to better comprehending the written text and developing language study and accuracy.

3. Models of Reading

Reading models explain what happened in the process of reading, they describe how reader processes printed texts to construct meaning that means these models are concerned with how readers could be able to translate given printed words into meanings from the level of perception of the text by the eyes into analysis by the brain. This led us to shed a light on three main theoretical models of reading process that has been researched by many cognitive and behavioral scientists: Bottom-up, top-down and interactive models (Redondo, 1997. p, 140).

3.1. The Bottom-up Model

The Bottom up approach is known as *phonics*, which requires the learner to match letters with sounds in a defined sequence i.e. reading in linear process by which readers decode a text word by word, linking the words into phrases and then sentences (Gray and Rogers 1956, qtd. in Kucer 1987, p. 27-51). This model of reading is concerned primarily with the recognition of

individual letters, phonemes and words that means the meaning of the whole text begins from the word level, then the sentential level, and finally the text level (qtd. in Rumpitz, 2003, p.71).

Therefore, this model allows students to start with the perceptual processing of text and move upward through word recognition to comprehension, in other words, it is the process in which the reader begins with the smallest units of text (letters) and then move to the higher units of text (clusters) and finally get to words. So, readers derive meaning in linear manner, i.e. building letters into words, words into sentences, phrases and then proceeds to the overall meaning.

3.2. The Top- down Model

Richards (1990) defined the top-down model referred to “the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a given text that means readers make connection between their previous knowledge about a topic, situational or contextual knowledge, or knowledge stored in long term memory in the form of “schemata” and “scripts” (p. 50-51).

Grabe (1988) states also that reading in this model is not just extracting meaning from a text but a process of connecting information in the text with the background knowledge of the reader that is used in the act of reading. Reading, in this sense, is “a dialogue between the reader and the text” (p. 56). The more readers know in advance about the topic and text to be read, the less they need information from the text. So, this process is based on the interpretation of assumptions and drawing inferences.

3.3. The Interactive Model

It is the attempts to make connection between both models of reading; the bottom up and top down ones. In other words, it recognizes the interaction of both models simultaneously throughout the reading process. Similarly, Eskey (1988) sees that “the interactive model takes

into account the continuous interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing in the construction of the meaning of a text.” (p. 93-100). Rumelhart (1981) also views that it is “one in which data driven, bottom- up processing combines with top- down, conceptually driven processing to cooperatively determine the most likely the interpretation of input” (p.37). Additionally,Carell (1998) says: is a model of reading in which the reader starts with a linguistic surface encoded by the writer which is the language used and ends with constructing his own meaning from the print.(p. 240-254).

4. Teaching reading comprehension

A common agreement among reading researchers upon the interactive characteristic of the reading process is reached. Yet, there is still a debate among teachers about the type of knowledge and processing strategies that must be emphasized.

This debate gives birth to two major approaches to reading instruction,namely, Phonics and Whole Language. While advocates of the phonics approach place more importance on bottom-up processing to comprehension, advocates of the latter emphasise top-down processing instruction.

4.1. Whole Language Approach

This approach draws upon psycholinguistics and represents a top-down approach to reading instruction. Many reading researchers make it clear that “Whole Language is not a “method” or collection of activities, but a philosophy underlying all the teacher’s instructional decisions” (Hayes & Stahl, 1997, p.07). The basic principle of whole Language is that meaning develops “from whole to part” (Reid et al., 2003, p.13)

The core of the Whole Language approach is Goodman’s guessing game hypothesis.

In this regard, he contends that efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from selecting the fewest, most productive clues necessary to produce guesses (qtd. in Thompson, 1988, p.618).

Many reading scholars testify to the fact that Whole Language is difficult to define.

Yet, many principles are shared by most advocates of Whole Language. The most salient one is the fact that language is used for authentic purposes, so it is best learned if it is learned for authentic purposes (Stahl, 1997, p.06). The pedagogical implication of this principle is the use of authentic reading tasks using whole texts in the classroom, not looking at parts of language, such as symbol correspondences.

4.2. Phonics Approach

Phonics refers to the relationship between sound and spelling patterns which a reader may use to decode words (Rasinski et al., 2010, p.93). Phonics instruction focuses on the sounds produced by both vowels and consonants and blending of these sounds by also paying attention to root words (Pressley, 2006, p.96). This is in contrast to some whole-language proponents who discourage the emphasis on skills instruction. Pressley (2006) continues to say that phonics instruction lead to skilled reading and enable readers recognize words effortlessly and not mere sounding-out words. With phonics instruction, learners are able to use their new knowledge (phonics) to read words and text (p.96).

Rasinski et al. (2010) argue that, “it is not a question of whether to teach phonics or not, but rather to whom and how” (p.93). This indicates that phonics still do have a place in the teaching of reading comprehension. Therefore, the best is to balance the two approaches in order to cater for the various needs of learners in inclusive classrooms.

4.3. The Balanced Approach

After discussing the two approaches; whole language and phonics, it seems many researchers are in favor of combining the two in order to bring about effective reading comprehension instruction (Vellutino. 1991,qtd in Carver, 2000, p.323).

Many researchers think that an intermediate position between Whole Language and Phonics approaches must be established , an approach that would be more in line with the interactive view to reading (Carson 2002 in Reid, G. et al. 2003,p.10). According to Birch (2002), the balanced approach to reading with its focus on both bottom-up and topdown processes reflects the interactive nature of the reading process. She explains that reading is interactive in three ways:

-The different processing strategies, both top-down and bottom-up, along with the knowledge base, interact with each other to accomplish the reading.

5. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to extract the required information from a written text and interpret this information properly (Grabe&Stoller, 2002, p.17). Concerning reading comprehension, Grellet (1981) views that there are three main factors that have an impact on the comprehension of any text; the type of the reading text, the aim of

reading passage, and the strategy of reading the reader follows (p. 3-4). It is noticed that most students focus on knowing the type of the reading passage first where they mostly prefer stories and descriptive texts. Also when the reader has specific aim and he wants to achieve, comprehension will be easy and enjoyable. In addition to that, reading comprehension should not be taught and learned randomly but it should follow some techniques and appropriate

strategies and activities that enrich texts' understanding. To better comprehend a text, the instructor provide his learners with comprehension strategies that encourage a range of mental abilities in order to understand the text.

6. Purposes of Reading

It is clear that each one of us has his/her own reason to read. We may read to learn; to improve our abilities or to find information, etc. Harmer (2001) has considered two reasons of reading, Instrumental and pleasurable. The first one means that the reader should has clear purpose in his/her mind. In addition, the second reason means that the reader can read for entertainment or enjoyment (p .200). Also, Grabe and Stoller (2002) have suggested that before readers come to read they should have purposes. This purpose is a decision made quickly in order to reach the overall goal which is the general comprehension (p.13).

Rivers and Temperly have claimed that "reading activities from the beginning should have some purposes and should concentrate on the normal purposes of reading". (qtd. In Hedge , 2000, p. 195). Reading decisions that readers have before the reading activities are good thing for them to become aware and conscious of why they have decided to read and also how are going to read. It means the way of how they are going to select the significant information but not all the data that are presented in the text. For that Grabe and Stoller (2002) have classified reading purposes under three points. Which are: reading to search for the information that student need, to skim or scan the text quickly in order to determine the important elements to read, and to learn from the text .(p.13).

Based on these purposes, students are going to be aware and conscious about their reading, so they improve their abilities in a good manner without any complexity and ambiguity. In

addition, the more students have reading purposes; the more they read clearly without any difficulties or problems.

7. Types of Reading Difficulties

Wood (2001) stated that there are six major reading difficulties that students may encounter in reading such as: decoding, comprehension, language, topic genre, negative expectation and fluency (p. 29). They are as follow:

7.1. Decoding Difficulty

Before going to describe decoding difficulty we should first define the term decoding. According to Vacca, et al. 2000 “decoding process is based on learner’s attention by which he/she breaks down a word into individual phonemes and recognition based on those phonemes.”(p. 27). That is, decoding process is the reader’s ability to make a combination between sounds that represent letters.

However research in this field, have argued that students encounter difficulties to make a relationship between sounds and letters to get the right meaning. Wood (2001) states that, “failing readers with poor phonemic awareness are much less likely to discover letter-sound relationship.”(p.31). Students with this type of difficulty cannot progress better because decoding process is an essential part in learning to read that take a long period of time and this is what researchers called “Bottom-up” model difficulty. Wallace (1992) states that “students with this difficulty cannot initially make necessary connection between the language they hear and the language they see print.” (p.9) To explain this more take this example: the word "danger" is written like this but it is pronounced /deɪnʒə/, so students find difficulty to

combine and integrate what they hear (sounds) to what they observe (letters, words in the text) to get the meaning.

7.2. Comprehension Difficulty

Clearly, when we speak about comprehension we mean the way in which the words are related to get sentences and sentences with each other in terms of form, meaning, and function to get the comprehension. Thus, comprehension relies on the ability to recognize sounds and letters relationship that is represented in the words and also the ability to interact with the text. Wallace (1992,) states that “readers are helped in their interpretation of text both by their knowledge of the principals of words formation and by their ability to attributes an appropriate function of texts.” (p.14). However, some students have problems to comprehend the text because they are not able to decode sounds and letters relationship and also they are not able to communicate with the text and this is what Wood (2001) called “word-recognition” and “text processing difficulties.” He states that “whereas good language reader becomes fast and accurate at recognizing words without context, poor reader often remain dependent on text.” (p. 31).

Comprehension difficulty can be summarized in some points: trouble decoding, confusion about the meaning of words and sentence, inability to connect sentences with each other, problems to make difference between important ideas and less important ones, and lack of reading strategies.

7.3. Language Difficulty

It is so obvious that any language is made up of structures. These structures involved (letters, words, clauses, sentences...). If the text contains long sentences and ambiguous words it seems to be difficult by students to understand the general idea. In addition, this type of difficulty occurs because students have back ground problems especially in their memories. They find problems to remember what they have been read. This difficulty deals with both decoding and comprehension difficulties. They are not able to remember and

review the ideas presented in the text. This lack of ability is called (dyslexia). Wood (2001) asserted that “Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific language based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single word decoding, usually reflect insufficient phonological processing. In addition to, problems with reading are problem acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling.” (p. 35).

This indicates that dyslexia difficulty deals with words, so students cannot decode words because they have problems of phonological processing and also in comprehension. In general, there are several points which create the language difficulty. First, they have limited vocabulary. Second, they have trouble to remember or summarize what they read. Third, they have lack of phonological awareness. The next, difficulty will be discussed is inability to discover how language is build and related and also they are not able to connect what they read to their prior knowledge.

7.4. Topic Genre Difficulty

In certain times and when students dealing with new topics which they are not familiar with, they feel that the topics are not suitable and appropriate to deal with. This sense may occur due to the lack of engagement with the topics, so the reading difficulty might take place. Harmer (2001) points that “many receptive skills activities prove less successful than anticipated, because the topic is not appropriate, or because students are not familiar with the genre they are dealing with.” (p. 205).

7.5. Negative Expectation Difficulty

When students have low level in reading are not motivated to read. They feel that they are not going to read better and comprehend what the text is spoken about. Moreover, they always feel that the reading activity is too difficult and they always have bad attitude toward reading when they fail to read and comprehend effectively. Harmer (2001) states that “such attitudes, where they exist, are often due to previous unhappy or unsuccessful experience, if in the past; students have been given reading texts which are too difficult for them, that will color their view of the process.” (p. 208).

7.6. Fluency Difficulty

Good language reader characterized as a fluent reader in which he/she reads the text rapidly with a great attention to the intonation and punctuation. However, many students find it difficult to read fluently. They read several words without any attention to intonation. They are not able to read orally with speed. But Students with this type of difficulty cannot achieve better because they have a great difficulty to decode sounds and letters relationship, also they

lack practicing aloud reading, and also they have difficulty in linguistic rules. Micheal, et al. (2007) have stated that “non fluent reader can find reading punishment. They may be so unmotivated to read that they do not choose to read and, therefore, do not enjoy the benefits of reading such as increased vocabulary and fluency. This is a vicious cycle that can result in a trajectory of poor achievement that is difficult to reverse.” (p. 83).

8. Definition of Reading Strategies

There are many different views about the definition of reading strategies depending on different scholars that is why there is no clear cut definition. According to Garner (1987) defines reading strategies “as generally deliberate, playful activities undertaken by active learners, many times to remedy perceived cognitive failure.”(p. 95). Additionally, Barnett (2002) has used the term reading strategy to refer to “the cognitive operations that take place when readers approach a text with the purpose to make sense of what they read. In this sense, “reading strategies are as the comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read.” (P.1-14). So, Reading strategies are effective techniques that are used by EFL learners to succeed in reading comprehension. On the other hand, we cannot exclude the role of EFL teachers who should be both aware of the use of reading strategies and should teach learners on how to use these different strategies successfully.

8.1. Reading Comprehension Strategies

Some strategies used by EFL learners namely are; summarizing, scanning, inferring, and setting a purpose.

8.1.1. Summarizing

It is a way that enhances students' comprehension of texts. Duke and Pearson (2002) state that: "research suggests that instruction and practice in summarizing not only improves students' ability to summarize text, but also their overall comprehension of text." (p. 221) .Summarizing passages or text focuses on the fundamental concepts and ideas. Therefore, it develops students' comprehension and understanding of the read language.

8.1.2. Scanning

According to Grellet (1981) "scanning is a reading technique that requires reader to search for specific information without reading the whole text, through looking at its title, table of content and so on." (p.58). In addition, Wood clarified it as a strategy reader often use when looking for specific information by reading something quickly such as search for key words or ideas. In most cases, reader knows what he is looking for; therefore, he is concentrating based on finding a particular answer. It involves moving his eyes quickly down the page seeking specific words and phrases (Wood, 2001, p.1-2). In this way, we can say that scanning is reading quickly to locate specific information.

8.1.3. Inferring

Prezler (2006) said that "inferences are evidence-based guesses i.e. in case of reading; students use their prior knowledge to make inferences about the text." (P. 4). According to Zimmermann (2009) saw that inferences are often referred to as what you "read between the lines" that means the author wants the reader to make the same conclusion the author has made. He states also that "Drawing inferences from text is a technique which requires readers

to use their prior knowledge (schema) and textual information to draw conclusions, make critical judgments, and form unique interpretations from text” (p23). So, the inferences are the conclusions that a reader draws about the unsaid passage based on what is actually said by the author.

8.1.4. Anticipating

Anticipating what might be up-coming in a text on the basis of structure and content clues. At first sight, it seems that anticipating and predicting are similar. However, Grellet (1981) draws a significant distinction. For her, anticipation is a psychological sensation, means that, the aim is simply to create the need and wish to read as well as to familiarize the learners with some of the ideas they will come across in the text. And for prediction, she considers that it relates to more detailed guessing of the text content. (p. 58)

9. Reading Fluency

The importance of developing fluency in reading within English as a Second Language/ English as a Foreign Language learners has become an important issue for pedagogy in ESL/ EFL setting because one of the problems faced by these students is that the lack of reading. Since 1974 reading fluency has been the core of a number of researches where they find that fluent reading plays an important role in a successful reading comprehension. One of the main attempts of researchers in the field of reading fluency is to define this concept, but they have not agreed on a single definition. Rasinski (2006) argues that the reason behind that is the emphasis on what constitutes reading fluency has changed over time.(p.5).

The Collins Co build English Language Dictionary (1987) defines fluency as the ability to speak, write and read a language accurately with no hesitation. In addition, The Collins Dictionary provides the main characteristics of a fluent reader, writer and speaker. The fluent reader reads smoothly and rarely stops at unknown words. Similarly, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2001) defines fluency as smoothness, easiness and accuracy in speaking, reading and writing. However, according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's dictionary (2005), fluency is defined in relation to speech. It refers to the ability to speak a language easily, well and quickly. This means that, according to Rasinski (2006) fluency is viewed as being characterized by smoothness, easiness and accuracy in all the language skills speaking, writing, or reading, since reading fluency is considered as a new phenomenon (p. 5).

Researchers have failed to agree on one single definition. Rasinski, in his article A Brief History of Reading Fluency, (2006) finds that one problem with reading fluency lies in its definition because researchers have not agreed on one single definition, he points out the following:

“To some reading fluency is considered primarily an act of oral reading specifically the oral interpretation and expressiveness (prosody) associated with the oral production of a written text. To others, reading fluency has to do with accuracy and speed (automaticity) in word decoding. And yet to others, reading fluency has largely to do with understanding or comprehension that comes as a result of reading with appropriate decoding speed and accuracy.” (p. 4-5).

According to this quotation, the first view, reading fluency, is seen as an oral reading phenomenon where the oral production of the printed text has the same features of speech.

Rasinski (2004) states that “there is no distinction between fluency in speech and fluency in reading, since both speakers and readers use the same fluency characteristics in their two different tasks: speaking and reading. The fluency features -word accuracy, proper expression and appropriate speed, which speakers fixed in their voices, facilitate for the listener his understanding of speech as they may facilitate the reader's comprehension too.” (p. 2).

Another definition of reading fluency regards that this skill refers to the accurate recognition of words with an appropriate speed during the reading activity. Reading fluency, according to this definition, refers to the automatic word recognition. The influence of LaBerge and Samuels (1974) automaticity on the definition of reading fluency can be seen in Shanahan's (2006) definition to this concept. Reading fluency, according to him, is referred to as “the ability to read texts aloud with sufficient speed and accuracy.” (p. 30).

The last view, however, considers that reading fluency has to do with comprehension. Reading fluency is, then, defined as the ability to decode and comprehend at the same time. Samuels (2006) considers that reading fluency is the ability to perform simultaneously both decoding and understanding the written text. He states the following “the essence of fluency is not reading speed or oral reading expression, but the ability to decode and comprehend text at the same time.” (p. 9).

9.1. The Relation between Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension

Fluency, alongside decoding and comprehension, is one of the major pillars of reading instruction. Fluency refers to the rate, expression, and smoothness with which a student is able to read. Fluency is more than just reading quickly, though pacing is a part of it. Fluent readers read as though they are talking. They attend to punctuation, use different voices to represent

characters in dialogue, and change their tone and pace to reflect the mood or register of what they are reading.

Despite its significance, fluency often gets overlooked in reading instruction. For many readers, fluency comes naturally as a by-product of good decoding. However, some readers need help to become more fluent. Increasing a reader's fluency contributes to enhancing their comprehension, or ability to make meaning from text.

Hollingsworth (1993) discovered that there was a direct connection between students' fluency development and their overall reading comprehension. This research is solely based on the Oral Recitation Lesson which incorporates modeling and repeated reading for students. The use of repeated reading and modeling is proven to be effective in developing reading fluency, which then directly effects reading comprehension (p. 330). Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1993) claim that "there appears to be an effect of fluency training on the reading comprehension of second grade students" (p. 330). In other word, it is clear that when giving students the ability to practice reading fluency directly reading comprehension is improved.

Fluency is an important reading skill that is essential in the understanding of text. If readers are not fluent in their reading, they are unable to make connections and fully comprehend the reading. Reading fluency is an important skill to master as it creates a bridge to reading comprehension.

10. Variables Affecting Second Language Reading

Reading involves an interaction of a number of variables. Research of the process of reading has been divided according to the factors that affect it. The two factors that have been investigated are respectively the ones of 'reader' and the others of 'text'. What follows will shed light on the two types of factors affecting reading comprehension in second and FL

10.1. Reader Variables

It is true that reading comprehension involves the writer and the reader besides the presence of the text, but this is not sufficient. There are variables that are connected to and concern the reader him/herself. These include schemata and background knowledge, motivation, and purpose for reading. The following will describe all these variables.

10.1.1. Schemata and Background Knowledge

Comprehending a text involves an interaction of not only linguistic knowledge but knowledge of the world as well. This knowledge of the world, the background knowledge has

been dealt with under schema theory (qtd. in Carrell&Eisterhold, 1983, p.553). The latter stresses that any text does not carry meaning by itself, which means that another element comes into play so as to enable the reader to make sense of text (ibid: p.553). This element is referred to as the previously acquired knowledge or the reader's background knowledge, and the structures of this knowledge are called schemata (ibid: 556), as stated clearly: "Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. Comprehending words, sentences, and entire texts, involves more than just relying on one's linguistic knowledge" (ibid: 556-557).

According to Moreillon (2007), background knowledge is “what the reader brings to the reading event” (p. 19). Also, Krashen (2004) claims that background knowledge facilitate comprehension (p.17-19). Background knowledge according to Vitale and Romance (2007) is a very important factor in content-area reading comprehension (p.73-104).

According to schema theory, making sense of text is an interactive process between the readers’ prior or background knowledge and the text. In other words, the reader does not find the meaning of a text just in the sentences themselves, but s/he derives it from “the previous knowledge stored in her /his mind and the process through which the reader tackles it.” (Cook, 2008p. 121).

The process of interpretation, then, according to schema theory is guided by bottom-up (text-based) and top-down processing (knowledge-based). Put another way, once the content of a text is recognized by the reader, comprehension is much higher (Carrell&Eisterhold, 1983, p.556-573)

10.1.2. Reader Purpose in Reading

A number of researchers have found out that the purpose of reading plays a major role in the process and control of reading. Research findings have demonstrated that different readers read with different purposes. So, the way of reading depends on the reason of reading. For instance, if one is reading for getting the text content, they will not pay attention to the text details. Davies (1995) argues that there is a strong relationship between the reading purpose and the types of reading such as skimming, scanning, skipping details, etc (p.11). Grabe (2002) lists four functions for reading in academic settings:

a- Reading to find information: scan or search text for a specific topic, word, or phrase

b- Reading for general understanding: get the main ideas and at least some supporting ideas and information

c- Reading to learn: understand the main ideas and store meanings and supporting details in a coherent organizational frame

d- Reading to critique and evaluate: in addition, reflect on text content; integrate it with prior knowledge, and judge quality and appropriateness of texts in relation to what is already known about the topic

(qtd. in Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 157)

10.1.3. Reader motivation

Motivation has been of a great importance in learning in general and in reading in particular. Day and Bamford (1998) define motivation as “what makes people do (or not do) something” (p. 27). The L2/FL students’ commitment, enthusiasm and persistence, according to Dörnyei (2001), are “key determinants of success or failure” (p. 5). He argues that the lack of sufficient motivation may lead even the best learners fail at reaching their objectives to better acquire language (p. 5). Takeuchi et al. (2007) also argue that “learners who are more motivated tend to use a wider range of learner strategies and to use these strategies more frequently.” (p. 71).

A great body of research has taken place since the 1980s on the importance of motivation not only for understanding language learning, but maximizing its success as well (Ellis, 2004, p. 536).

10.2. Text Variables

The other factors that affect the reading process are those of text. It has been argued that a text includes many linguistic variables that either facilitate its comprehension or make it

difficult. We are concerned here with ‘text topic and content’, ‘text type and genre’, and ‘text organization.’

10.2.1. Text topic and content

It has been proved that text content will affect the way the readers process it. Interesting and concrete topics are judged to be readable. Moreover, familiar texts are likely to be easier to process.

10.2.2. Text type and genre

Genre is a conventionalized category and type of discourse. Martin (1984) defines a genre as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers [or writers] engage as members of our culture.” (qtd. in Davies, 1995, p. 91). In his book, ‘Genre Analysis’, Swales defines genre as it “comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes.” (p. 58). It is obvious that both definitions stress the importance of purpose. All in all, it has been claimed that different genres are characterized by different functions requiring different patterns of organization.

10.2.3. Text organization

Text organization assists readers to comprehend written texts. According to Grabe (2009) “texts convey a considerable amount of discourse information, at multiple levels.” He argues that this information assists readers in building “coherent representations of texts.” (p. 244). In their turn, Aebersold and Field (1997) point out that rhetorical structures “describe the organization of information in texts”, and they are conventional, including “description, classification, comparison, contrast, cause and effect, process, argument, and persuasion” (p. 11-12).

Conclusion

In section one, we have examined the reading skill by providing different authors' definitions, and we have discussed some related points such as: types of reading especially extensive, intensive, models developing learners' independence and autonomy. Our research has benefited from this literature that has shown the different aspects of EFL learners' understanding of a text.

Chapter Three

Field of Work and Data Analysis

Chapter Three: Field of Work and Data Analysis

Introduction

The current study deals with the impact of digital comics on EFL learners' reading comprehension. To fulfill the aim of the study, we administrated a questionnaire to second year EFL LMD students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. This tool aims mainly at collecting the needed data to reach our research goals. The current chapter analyses the sample of target students. It presents the analysis and the interpretation of the results obtained from the designed questionnaire and discusses the results then determines the findings revealed. Finally, it is concluded by the suggestion of some pedagogical recommendations for both EFL teachers and learners.

1. Review of Research Methodology

3.1.1. Research Method

The research approach that is used in this study is the quantitative approach in order to explore the effects of comics on EFL learners' reading comprehension which helps in providing insights about reading and teaching reading.

3.1.2. Population and Sampling

The population of the present research lies in a 380 second year students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra English Department. A sample of forty (40) students has been chosen randomly from a population of 380 students and will be assigned to the questionnaire. This choice had been made upon the assumption that these students are familiar with comics and practise reading in and outside classrooms.

3.1.3. Research Tools

According to the nature of this study, the used data collection tool in this research work is a questionnaire for students. The questionnaire will be used as a tool for gathering data. One questionnaire will be administered to a randomly chosen sample of second year LMD students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra in the hope of getting clear insights about the impact of comics on reading comprehension.

3.1.4. Students' Questionnaire

3.1.4.1. Aim of the Questionnaire

Students' questionnaire aims at collecting the necessary data in order to explore the impact of comics on reading comprehension. Also an attempt to see if comics is an effective technique in teaching reading tasks.

3.1.4.2. Administration of the Questionnaire

The present questionnaire was administrated to a sample which was randomly selected, all of them answered online.

3.1.4.3. Description of the Questionnaire

The population that we included in our study are 380 second year students from the department of English . The number of the randomly chosen sample among this population consists in a forty (40) students. The objective of this questionnaire is to provide us with insights about students' reading attitudes. We also wanted to gather information about students' familiarity with comics and their usage.

The students' questionnaire contains twelve questions which are divided into three parts. The first part deals with collecting general information of the student. The second part

deals with students' attitudes towards reading as well as gathering some information about their reading rates.

Concerning the third part, it covers the student's usage of comics. Including how much do they read comics and the genres of comics they prefer to read. Also we asked them if comics are easier to understand in comparison to other texts they read, and what they think of its implementation in reading tasks inside the classroom.

2. Data Description and Analysis

3.2.1. Part one: Background information

Q1: Students' gender

Table 01: Students' Gender Distribution

| Response | Male | Female |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Participants | 14 | 26 |
| Percentage | 35% | 65% |

From the results obtained about students' gender, we noticed that females have participated more in our survey. More than half of the students who participated in our questionnaire are females.

It appears that females are the majority among second year students of English.

Q2- Students' level in English

Table 02: Students Levels in English

| Response | Poor | Average | Good | Excellent |
|---------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| Participants | 3 | 18 | 13 | 6 |
| Percentage | 7.5% | 40% | 32.5% | 15% |

The results obtained shows that the majority of the participants have between average and good level in English. Students who have average level in English are 40% while 32.5% have a good level. This is very useful to our study because most of target sample have an average level in English which makes us measure based on average students.

3.2.2.Part two: Regarding Reading Comprehension

Q3- How often do you read outside the classroom?

Table 03: Students Reading Rate Outside Classroom

| Response | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Participants | 11 | 23 | 5 | 1 |
| Percentage | 27.5% | 57.5% | 12.5% | 2.5% |

According to the statistics shown on the table, we noticed that the majority of students read outside the classroom from time to time. It is that the students have an average rate of reading outside the class.

Q4- Do you enjoy the time you spend on reading?

Table 04: Students Attitude towards Reading

| Response | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Participants | 17 | 11 | 7 | 5 |
| Percentage | 42.5% | 27.5% | 17.5% | 12.5% |

The statistics displayed on the table shows that students rarely enjoy the time they spend on reading.

It seems that the students don't always enjoy reading; this could be due to the lack of interest or lack of motivation.

Q5- Which of the following tasks is difficult to you?

Table 05: The Tasks Difficulties for Students

| Response | Reading | Writing | Listening | Speaking |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Participants | 14 | 7 | 16 | 3 |
| Percentage | 35% | 17.5% | 40% | 7.5% |

According to this statistics, we noticed that passive skills are more difficult for student than active skills. Listening and reading appear to be the most difficult tasks for the target sample, forty percent of the students claim that listening is the hardest task while 35% view that reading is the hardest skill. Only 7.5% of students claimed that speaking is a hard skill and 17.5% of the students said that writing is hard.

Q6- Do you consider reading as a difficult task?

Table 06: Students' Opinions on Reading Difficulty

| Response | Yes | No |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Participants | 24 | 16 |
| Percentage | 60% | 40% |

Relying on obtained answers, more than half of the target sample consider reading as a difficult task. Reading appears to be a difficult task for the many students.

Q7- Why do you think reading is a difficult task for novice EFL learners?

Table 07: Why do students think that reading is difficult

| Response | They don't read actively | Lack of vocabulary | Lack of concentration |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Participants | 22 | 8 | 10 |
| Percentage | 55% | 20% | 25% |

The table displays that more than half (55%) of the students think that reading is a hard task for EFL learners' because they don't read actively. The rest half think that reading is hard due to the lack of vocabulary (20%) and the lack of concentration (25%).

Q8- Which kinds of text do you prefer to read? (You may choose more than one option)

Table 08: Students Preferred Types of Text

| Response | Articles | Short Stories | Novels | Comics |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Participants | 4 | 16 | 5 | 15 |
| Percentage | 10% | 40% | 12.5% | 37.5% |

According to this statistics, we noticed that students prefer to read short stories and comics rather than articles and novels. 40% of the students prefer to read short stories while 37.5% of them prefer comics.

Q9- How often do you read comics?

Table 09: How often do students read comics

| Response | Never | Sometimes | Always |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| Participants | 8 | 30 | 2 |
| Percentage | 20% | 75% | 5% |

The statistics gathered shows that the students read comics from time to time.

3.2.3. Part Three: Regarding Comics

Q10- Which genres of comics you would like to read? (You may choose more than one)

Table 10: Students' Preferred Comics Genres

| Response | Superhero | Manga | Slice-of-life | Humor | Non-fiction | Sci-fiction/ Fantasy |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Participants | 1 | 8 | 20 | 25 | 5 | 10 |
| Percentage | 2.5% | 20% | 50% | 62.2% | 12.5% | 25% |

The table shows that Humor and Slice-of-life comics are the most preferable genres. This is very useful for our survey in order to get insights about what genres of comics could be used in reading tasks. It also shows that students tend to read funny comic stories and stories that reflect the everyday life.

Q11- “Comics stories are easier to understand”, to what extent do you agree with this statement?

Table 11: Student's reaction on “Comics are easier to understand”

| Response | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Participants | 1 | 3 | 0 | 14 | 22 |
| Percentage | 2.5% | 7.5% | 0% | 35% | 55% |

According to this statistics, Most of the students have agreed that comics are easy to understand. This was very important to our survey as it supports what have been hypothesised in this research.

Q12- Do you think that implementing comics in reading tasks, inside the class room, will enhance student's reading comprehension?

Table 12: Students' Opinions on Implementing Comics in Classroom

| Response | Yes | No |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| Participants | 27 | 13 |
| Percentage | 67.5% | 32.5% |

The statistics shows that the majority of students think that implementing comics in reading tasks, inside the classroom, will enhance students' reading comprehension.

3. Discussion of Finding

3.3.1. Part One: Regarding Students' General Information

The findings show that females have participated in our questionnaire more than males; in addition, the majority of the participated students has an average level. This is useful for our survey because it helped conducting the study based on the average student and which make the results and findings capable of being more generalised on the students' population, since the majority of the students of English at Biskra University are females and also the majority of Students of English at the same University have an average level.

3.3.2. Part two: Regarding Reading Comprehension

Most of the students practise reading outside the classroom from time to time, it is perhaps they don't enjoy reading or they lack a good reading atmosphere. In addition, the statistics shows that students do not really enjoy the time they spend on reading what makes us conclude that the average rate of reading that the students have is because that students do not always enjoy when they read.

Giving the fact that reading was the second most difficult task for the second year students after listening, many of second year students consider reading as a difficult task for several reasons they have proposed. There were no remarkable shared opinions among the participants, however, more than half of them agree on the lack of reading actively is the reason why reading is a difficult task for EFL learners.

3.3.3. Part Three: Regarding Digital Comics and Comics

Among the most familiar types of texts for EFL learners, comics were unexpectedly famous among the second year students of English in Mohamed Kheider Biskra University. The statistics shows that comics were preferred to be read for more than the quarter of the students, however, students who do read comics do not read them frequently. This shows that comics are familiar to the second year students but it is not frequently read by them.

Statistics has also shown that the students tend to read funny comic stories and stories that reflect the everyday life. This gives us an idea about the type of comics that is the most suitable in our research.

In addition, according to the obtained statistics, most of the students have agreed that comics are easy to understand in comparison to other types of texts. This goes with our hypothesis. More precisely, if EFL learners read comics, they find it easy to comprehend the meaning of the text they are reading. Furthermore, the majority of the students think that implementing comics in reading tasks, inside the classroom, will enhance students' reading comprehension. This doesn't only show that comics are welcomed among the students, but also that comics is a technique can be used in both learning and teaching to enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension.

3.4. Summary of Findings

The results obtained from the students' questionnaire are crucially important to reach the goals of the present study. After analyzing and interpreting the responses, we draw the following conclusions:

- Reading is a difficult task for many students.
- Reading is a difficult task for EFL learners due to the lack of active reading
- Students tend to read funny and realistic stories
- Comics make EFL learners read actively
- Comics are easier to understand than normal texts for EFL learners
- Implementing comics in reading task, inside the classroom, can improve EFL learners' reading comprehension

Conclusion

After gathering data and analysing it in this questionnaire, we have found that students find it difficult to read because they don't read actively; however, comic strips have a positive impact on EFL learner's reading comprehension. In addition, many of students believe that if comics are implemented in reading task inside the classroom, their reading comprehension will be improved.

General Conclusion

Reading is not a simple process of understanding the words that are written on the page. It is a complex problem solving where the reader works to make sense of a text not only from the words and phrases on the page, but also from the ideas, memories and knowledge evoked by those words and phrases. Meanwhile, comics seem to be providing a motivating reading atmosphere for reading as they reinforce the written text with visuals and explaining details.

The research is partitioned into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview about comics. It is for having a clear concept about comics and their uses as well as getting insights about comics in teaching. The second chapter is dedicated to understanding reading, in which we attempt to define reading and explain its elements and aspects. The third chapter concerns the work field, it is for describing and analyzing the data supplied by the questionnaire and then discussing them afterwards, after that, generating the most feasible findings from the study.

After analyzing and interpreting the data, we found out that Reading is a difficult task for many students especially novice EFL learners due to the lack of active reading. In addition, we found that comics are easier to understand than normal texts for EFL learners for the motivating and supporting atmosphere they provide. Indeed, comics have positive effects enhancing EFL learners reading comprehension. Moreover, implementing comics by teachers in reading task, inside the classroom, can also enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension.

In conclusion, the present study provided answers to our research questions. In addition, this study achieved the intended aims. The research tools confirmed the research hypothesis throughout the investigation.

Recommendations

The following are some recommendation given to both teacher and students

For teachers

- Teachers should give more importance to the reading skill.
- Teachers should be creative when they come to teach reading tasks
- Teachers may use comics to enhance their student's reading comprehension
- Teachers should encourage students to read actively
- Teachers should encourage EFL learners to read digital comics.

For students

- Novice EFL learners should pay attention to the way they read
- EFL learners should give big importance to reading
- Comics can be a very helpful tool for EFL learners' to enhance their reading comprehension
- EFL learners can read digital comics instead of normal stories in order to have a better reading comprehension

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Appendix

Students' Questionnaire

Introduction

The present study is designed to investigate the effects of comics on EFL learners' reading comprehension .Therefore, we found it necessary to involve our second year students of Mohamed kheider University in this study in order to include their opinions concerning the subject under investigation. Learners' answers were gathered in the form of questionnaire administered to them. I would appreciate your collaboration if you could fill in this questionnaire.

Please, tick (×) the appropriate answer .

Part One: General Information

Q1- Specify your gender

A- Female

B- Male

Q2- Specify your level in English

A- Poor

B- Average

C- Good

D- Excellent

Part Two: Regarding Reading Comprehension

Q3- How often do you read outside the classroom?

A- Rarely

B- Sometimes

C- Often

D- Always

Q4- Do you enjoy the time you spend on reading ?

A- Always

B- Sometimes

C- Rarely

D- Never

Q5- which of the following skills is difficult to you?

A- Reading

B- Writing

C- Speaking

D- Listening

Q6- Do you consider reading as a difficult task?

A- Yes

B- No

Why,

.....

Q7- Why do you think reading is a difficult task for novice EFL learners?

A- They don't read actively

B- They lack the vocabulary

C- They lack concentration

Part Three: Regarding Digital Comics and Comics

Q8- Which kinds of text do you prefer to read? (You may choose more than one option)

A- Articles

B- Short Stories

C- Novels

D- Comics

Q9- How often do you read comics?

A- Never

B- Sometimes

C- Always

Q10- Which genres of comics you would like to read? (you may choose more than one option)

A- Superhero

B- Manga

C- Slice-of-life

D- Humor

E- Non-fiction

F- Sci-fiction/Fantasy

Q11- “Comics stories are easier to understand”, to what extent you agree with this statement?

A- Strongly Disagree

B- Disagree

C- Neutral

D- Agree

E- Strongly Agree

Q12- Do you think that implementing comics in reading tasks inside the class room will enhance student’s reading comprehension?

A- Yes

B- No

Why.....

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة دور القصص المصورة في تحسين الفهم القرائي لدى طلاب اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية. هذا البحث جاء نتيجة ملاحظة وجود صعوبة لدى طلاب اللغة الانجليزية في فهم النص. كما توجد مشاكل في القراءة والفهم القرائي خاصة بين المتعلمين ذوي الكفاءة اللغوية المنخفضة. ترجع هذه المشكلات في الغالب إلى قلة الاهتمام فضلاً عن ضعف القدرات اللغوية؛ في المقابل قمنا بافتراض أنه إذا مارس متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية مهام القراءة باستخدام القصص المصورة، فسيتم تحسين فهمهم للنص. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة آثار القصص المصورة الرقمية على فهم القراءة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية خاصة المبتدئين منهم لكي يقرؤوا بشكل أكثر فعالية. كما أنه يعطي فكرة واضحة عن القصص المصورة كتقنية يمكن استخدامها في تدريس القراءة وكذلك يعطي فكرة عن كيفية استخدام القصص المصورة بفعالية من أجل تحسين فهم القراءة للمتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الدراسة تستهدف طلاب السنة الثانية من اللغة الإنجليزية بمجموعة متنوعة من الجنس والوضع الاجتماعي في جامعة محمد خضر في بسكرة. من أجل جمع أكبر قدر ممكن من المعلومات، يتم تقديم استبيان لطلاب السنة الثانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خضر في بسكرة. نتيجة لهذه الدراسة، تبين أن القراءة مهمة صعبة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وفي الوقت نفسه ، أظهرت الدراسة أيضاً أن القصص المصورة تجعل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يقرؤون بشكل أكثر فعالية.