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Investigating the Difficulties of EFL Students' Reading Comprehension:

The Case of L1 Students at the English Department of Biskra University

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Declaration

I, Aya **DAOUDI**, do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information. This work was certified and completed at Mohammed KHEIDER University of Biskra, Algeria.

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Dedication

Every challenging work needs self-efforts as well as guidance especially from those who are close to our hearts. To the ones whose approval I have always sought, I dedicate this research to my dear parents - the ones closest to my heart.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my family, Housem, Seif, Sadjed, and my dear sister Chaima for their pivotal role in my success, as their unwavering support, encouragement, and kind wishes have been invaluable.

To the esteemed Dr. Saihi Hanane, I extend my sincerest gratitude for your invaluable help. I am truly blessed to have been granted this opportunity, and offer a thousand thanks to your kind heart and generosity.

To my friends my second family

Faty Manel Zineb Rayan Djo Oumaima Rabab Romaisa Yousra Malek And Okba

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guiding me, lighting my path and granting me the patience and strength to accomplish this

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I would like to pay my special regard to the teachers who accepted to take part in the

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Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the anonymous first year license who responded to

the questionnaire.

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore the reading comprehension difficulties first-year students at the English department of the University of Biskra face and to pinpoint some of the underlying causes. a sample of 23 students and 3 reading comprehension teachers were purposefully chosen as the sample of this study. To collect the relevant data, a students' questionnaire as well as a teachers' interview were designed and administered to, respectively, first-year license students and reading comprehension teachers at the department of English of Biskra University. The results suggest that first-year students struggle with reading comprehension, which is mostly because of their limited vocabulary and lack of practice, motivation and concentration.

Keywords: reading comprehension, reading comprehension difficulties, limited vocabulary.

List of Abbreviation

EFL: English as a foreign language

ESL: English as a second language

Q: Question

RQ: Research questions

ER: Extensive reading

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General Introduction

1. Introduction and statement of the problem

Learning English is very important nowadays especially with the globalization whereby English is used internationally in almost every aspect of human life. However, learning a foreign language presents itself with numerous challenges, one of which is mastering the four language skills, namely the writing, listening, speaking, and reading skill. The latter (i.e. reading), although classified as a receptive skill, poses a number of challenges and difficulties especially to English as a second language (henceforth ESL) and English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) learners.

The reading skill is considered a key skill especially for learners of higher education as it is necessary for the attainment of knowledge. Books, articles, studies and such are all reading materials that require higher reading comprehension abilities. However, learners at the department of English, namely first year license students, seem to display numerous challenges and difficulties with regard to the reading comprehension module. These difficulties may reflect the learners' difficulties with the target language itself or with other cognitive and psychological, and/or other unknown factors.

Although the research on reading and reading comprehension has been abundant, teachers, researchers, and pedagogists have failed to provide us with a clear-cut conclusion regarding the roots of the reading comprehension difficulties, or more specifically, the EFL reading comprehension difficulties.

Based on the researcher's observation, we came to notice that first year licence students at the department of English at Biskra university suffer from various reading comprehension difficulties especially in the reading comprehension module. In light of the

conflicting conclusions and in an attempt to identify the underlying EFL reading comprehension challenges, this research aims to explore and describe the reading comprehension difficulties faced and experienced by English as a Foreign Language first year license students at the department of English at Biskra University.

2. The Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the reading comprehension problems/difficulties/challenges experienced by the students?

RQ2: What are the teachers' views and perceptions with regards to the students' reading comprehension difficulties?

3. The Research Aims

The general aim of this study is to explore and describe the reading comprehension difficulties faced by the EFL students. More specifically, this research work aims to:

● Identify and describe the reading comprehension difficulties faced by the first-year

License students as well as those observed by the teachers.

● Identify teachers and students' perceptions and views regarding the employed reading

Comprehension methods and techniques inside the classroom.

4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will be redounded to the benefit of EFL learners considering that reading in general and reading comprehension in particular play a significant role in

shaping academic success. Identifying the difficulties that impair reading comprehension

is thus considered pivotal for improving the teaching methods and techniques used inside the

EFL classrooms. Thus, teachers and syllabus designers may become more sensitive and

informed in designing and implementing reading comprehension teaching methods and

techniques. Furthermore, this study may encourage future researchers to undertake further

research with the aim of finding workable solutions for the current difficulties in the local

circumstances.

5. The Research Methodology for this Study

The researcher will adopt a Qualitative Approach due to the nature of the study which

aims to identify and describe the reading comprehension difficulties/ challenges faced by the

targeted EFL students. A Case Study will be opted for as a research design because it comes

under the qualitative approach. A semi-structured questionnaire to the students as well as

interview with the reading comprehension teachers will be administered to obtain the

necessary qualitative data.

First year License EFL learners and teachers of reading comprehension at Biskra

University will be the population for the present study. The said population is thought the

most convenient because the reading comprehension course has been recently introduced to

the department of English, specifically in the academic year 2022/2023. Taking into

consideration the recent implementation of the course as well as the relatively low language

proficiency level of first year licence students, the respective population is fairly considered

the most optimal to serve the research purpose. Consequently, this study will be based on

non-probability purposive sampling.

6. Structure of the dissertation

The present dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter one: the first chapter provides a literature review on reading comprehension, including its definitions, models and processes. It also briefly discusses reading comprehension strategies and difficulties.

Chapter two: The third chapter is divided into three sections. The first one focuses on explaining the reatioanle behind the research methodology used in this study. The examination of the study's data's findings is covered in the second section. Finally, the results are summarized in the third section in relation to the research objectives and questions.

Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Reading is a very important aspect of our lives so much so that one cannot imagine how modern life would be if writing and reading did not take place in the history of human evolution. Despite its preconceived importance, more and more people are reading less and suffering more of what is known as reading comprehension difficulties. With this regard, the present chapter tackles the notion of reading in a foreign language as well as disccuses the different dimensions of reading comprehension difficulties encountered by the EFL learners.

1.1 Definition of Reading

Reading is a significant skill that learners should seek to develop. Reading in general and reading comprehension in particular had been defined and re-defined by numerous scholars.

Unlike the traditional belief about the reading skill, the latter is an active skill rather than a passive one. In fact, Grabe & Stoller (2002) as cited in kevin (2014) defined reading as the ability to actively decode and understand what we read where words have context and texts have meaning. In order to be able to decode and understand the intended meaning of a reading material, a reader should apply some reading comprehension skills which allow him or her to read proficiently, learn effectively and to comprehend the text. Without developing these reading skills, students will continually focus on decoding letters and words, rather than progressing to meaning and understanding.

Similarly, Snow (2010) determines that reading is the process of interacting and engaging with print in order to simultaneously create and extract meaning. A successful comprehension event requires a solid match between the reader's abilities, the text's

difficulty, and the task's specification. Put another way, reading encompasses various cognitive processes that a reader has to go through using his background knowledge and other comprehension strategies in order to decode, comprehend, and derive meaning from the text which is the ultimate goal of reading. In addition, another definition is put forward by Kusumarasdyati & Ramadhani(2018) when they defined reading comprehension as" the process of constructing meaning from the printed text, involving cognitive and social factors". Along the same path the same authors portrayed reading comprehension as the process of making sense of written language, through the incorporation of socio- cognitive elements.

Furthermore, (Winch & Holliday, 2010) said that "The meaning of reading comprehension is to understand written text". Reading is therefore one of the gateways to knowledge. In order to construct meaning, readers and reading materials (written text) engage in an active process. In a more sociocognitive view, Ramadhani & Kusumarasdyati (2018) defined reading comprehension as the sociocognitive process of deriving meaning from text.

With that being said, synthesising from the above cited definitions, one could say that reading as a language skill is more than a receptive skill but rather an active communication which involves a mental process as well as the readers' active participation in creating meaning from a written text. It is an interactive language skill in which the reader builds meaning dynamically from the text. This dynamic process involves the readers' background knowledge, the context of the reading, the reading strategies and the reading material itself.

1.2 The importance of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills a person can have , and

this importance has been demonstrated from several points of view.

First, Kendeou & Spanoudi (2015) determine that reading comprehension is premordial for society to function successfully. Uncovering the meaning or message of the text is almost always the main purpose of reading. In order to successfully convey the content to the student's mind, reading comprehension is absolutely crucial. In addition, Sabouri (2016) said that reading comprehension aids students in text analysis, explanation, and the expression of their own opinions regarding written materials. Learning to read and comprehend written information is a skill that students need to master in order to succeed in the academic work that their teachers assign them; so,the goal of reading comprehension is knowledge acquisition. Reading the text contributes to the success of the student's analysis of the text since correctly reading a text without running into problems is a talent that allows the student to succeed in sufficient areas, particularly in the area of academic work. Moreover, reading in general and reading comprehension in particular helps develop their critical abilities; in other words, it promotes their critical thinking and analytical and evaluation skills.

It also goes without saying that reading develops vocabulary and grammar dexterity. Naturally, long exposure to instances of written language helps learners acquire new words and phrases in context as well as grammatical structures which can help them comprehend the language and use it more accurately and fluently. Along the same path , Chenc (2021) beleives that reading is a reliable source of language information as reading supports language learning.

Another key point in the importance of reading comprehension is that learning language skills has become essential for understanding information because doing so is one

of the most crucial requirements for a student to be successful in comprehending what they read, and failing to do so hinders the educational process as a whole. In a similar note, Al-Jarrah & Ismail (2018) said that reading is one of the most important ways to receive knowledge, especially that of educational purposes. It aslo goes without saying that language proficiency consist and is built on the four language skills proficiency, that is reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Thus, a high language proficiency requires a high reading comprehension proficiency which is a skill particularly needed in the academic and scholarly arena.. It is in fact one of the most often used language competency skills worldwide.

In summary, reading is an essential skill in language learning that plays an instrumental role in language learning, vocabulary development, enhancing grammar, promoting critical skills and knowledge.

1.3 Reading comprehension strategies

There do exist various of strategies that readers use in order to get a better understanding of a text. Among of the most commonly used reading strategies are the ones listed below.

- Activating prior knowledge

- Asking and answering elaborative questions about the reading material

- Previewing through scanning and skimming

- Summarising

- Rereading and concentrating

- Selectively reading

● Translating vocabulary from target language to mother language

● Employing graphic organisers (Bakke, 2010).

The process of reading allows readers for the application of numerous reading methods. The said methods or techniques would then help the reading's first and foremost objective: comprehension and interpretation of meaning. Nadea (2021) provides a number of pre-reading, reading, and post-reading strategies that a reader may employ to support this claim. Before beginning to read, he advises setting reading objectives, considering what is previously known about the subject, and examining the text's structure (Nadea ,2021). Then, during the reading stage, readers employ strategies such as asking questions which in turn helps them chanel their attention on the key points of the text or the point they want to focus on depending on the purpose of the reading.

Readers could also use strategies such as scanning and skimming when looking for specific chunks of information. Finally, in the post-reading stage, readers supposedly reflect on ideas and pieces of information present in reading material, thus relating it to their prior knowledge, and evaluating the information critically through summarising the read text (Nadea, 2021).

Effectively, research and studies have demonstrated that strategic readers, who are known as experts in reading, are motivated to read and shape their readings to their desired goals. That being said, teaching reading strategies should take part in every academic curriculum, especially that of the EFL curriculum.

1.4 Reading skills Versus Reading Strategies

More often than not in the literature on reading, the two terms reading strategies and reading skills are used interchangebly; in other words, they are used to refer to the same thing. However, some scholars have refered to reading strategies as reading approaches/ methods or techniques that readers employ to get a better grasp or understanding of a reading material (i.e. a text) (Bakke, 2010). Similarily, Reading strategies refer to actions that aid students or casual readers in looking at words and interpreting their meaning, which aids in understanding the meaning and improving reading skills generally. Reading strategies help students and ordinary readers develop their reading skills more effectively and efficiently.

In contrast to reading skills which are automatic and driven by prior experience and exposure, strategies are 'delebrately selected sets of actions' to attain a specific goal. Therefore, "an emerging skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally… a strategy can go underground and become a skill"(Bakke, 2010).

In addition, reading strategies include things like using prior knowledge, making connections between key concepts, overcoming comprehension difficulties, making notes in the margins, and underlining key passages. Post-reading techniques include things like skimming the text, going over key parts again, and summarising the piece.

1.5 Reading Processes

1.5.1 Lower-level Processes

The automatic linguistic processes, known as the lower-level processes, are mainly considered as skill-based processes. These processes are essential for fluent reading comprehension and include three main components: lexical access (word recognition), which activates word meanings in the lexicon rapidly and automatically; syntactic parsing, which involves storing words to extract basic grammatical information to support clause-level

meaning; and semantic proposition, which combines word meanings and structural information to form basic clause-level meaning units (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). When functioning correctly, these processes work together seamlessly in working memory, which is the network of information and related processes being used at a given time. During this period, the accessed words, grammatical information, and emerging meaning are all active in working memory for a brief time (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

1.5.2 Higher-level Processes

The higher-level processes involved in reading comprehension rely heavily on the reader's background knowledge and inferencing skills. Skilled readers go beyond merely understanding and interpreting the text; they also establish a purpose for reading, utilize reading strategies, make inferences, draw upon their background knowledge, monitor comprehension, form attitudes about the text and author, and critically evaluate the information presented (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). These processes include the text model of comprehension, which involves coordinating ideas to form a meaning of a text; the situational model of reader interpretation, which involves interpreting the text in terms of the reader's own goals, feelings, and background expectations; background knowledge use, which involves using prior knowledge to interpret a text; and executive control processes, which represent the way readers assess their understanding of a text and evaluate their success (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

However, these processes do not operate seamlessly when readers encounter texts that are too challenging for them. Difficulties may arise due to inadequate background knowledge, insufficient linguistic resources, or lack of reading experience in the language. It is only through extensive exposure to meaningful print that texts can be processed efficiently,

and students can develop into fluent readers (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

1.6 The importance of Reading Comprehension Strategies

the reading comprehension strategies are of significant importance because of the following reasons

- Strategies help them understand the text

- Decoding existing words and solving various reading comprehension issues

- Establishing reading objectives such as comprehension and interpretation of meaning

- It aids readers, whether they are students or general readers, in understanding the meaning of words and improving their reading skills in general.

1.7 Reading Models

1.7.1 Definition of Reading Models

Numerous models have been examined to study the concept of reading models to explain the relationship between the reader and the text, the tactics used by the reader to comprehend the meaning, and the factors that influence the reader's comprehension.

According to Sadoski and Paivio "models characterise theories of reading, providing ways to represent a theory or part of a theory; they explain what reading involves and, in more detailed versions, how reading works" Sadoski and Paivio (as cited in Bakke, 2010).

1.7.2 The Bottom-up Model

One of the methods employed in data processing and knowledge organization according to Grabe, (2009), Hudson,(2007) as cited in Bakke (2010) declared that the

Bottom-up is predicated on the notion that our human brain identifies the text's basic building blocks, the letters, and assembles them to produce meaning. According to Hudson, the essential characteristic is the phoneme-grapheme relationship. Similarily, according to another researchers Nadea & Jumariatti& Nasrollah state that the method of Bottom-up This method is described as a process that combines perceptual precision, auditory perception, and the capacity to identify a number of texts, words, spelling patterns, and other linguistic components. By building meaning from the smallest to the largest parts, readers strive to understand the text. Bottom-up reading does not cover all the reading steps necessary for accurate comprehension.

Bottom-up reading, which is frequently utilized in the lower-level reading process, is the approach of interpreting letters, sounds, words, and structures until the complete text is decoded to comprehend the content of the text. This may help to explain why a large number of students have developed their vocalized and subvocalized reading abilities. Moreover,According to this model, the first step in reading is accurate visual perception and complete knowledge of the letters, followed by knowledge of the sounds associated with them, knowledge of the words and sentences, and finally, the ability to recognize the relationships between words and sentences in order to understand the full meaning of the text.

1.7.3 The Top-down Model

A technique used in processing is the exploration of the system in order to gain insight of its structural components. Nadea, 2021 described top-down as a reading technique or guessing game in psycholinguistics. Top-down reading techniques highlight the value of schemata, or prior knowledge and experiences, in comprehending a literary work. Top-down

reading tactics require the reader to possess knowledge, comprehension, and linguistic abilities that are crucial for deciphering the meaning of the text . Just as an important according to this model reading just needs intend the text that the reader wanted to interact with and get, not operations with each letter or each word.

These models state the reader starts with his prior knowledge and compares what he reads to what he understands; instead of emphasizing sub-skills and literal comprehension, this model concentrates on developing a cognitive background and linguistic experiences.

1.8 Process of Reading

Reading is an integral part of language learning and is heavily emphasized by language learning experts and Developing understanding is achieved through engaging with the text in a reading process .Grave (1991) as cited in Ithawi (2010) declare that Despite the fact that reading has been the subject of many literature, there are still many unanswered questions on this subject. Reading is not just taking in information word-by-word from the page as a receptive process.Instead, it is referred to be a procedure to activate understanding and is optional. This denotes a dialogue between the reader and the text that promotes reading fluency.therefor, Reading is a mental process that involves familiarizing yourself with textual symbols and concepts that must be understood in order to acquire reading comprehension.

(The process of reading : the three key processes to note) as cited in (n.d) said that The cognitive process of absorbing, comprehending, evaluating, and recalling what is written in a book follows a sequential pattern called reading.

As a student read a text, he first take in the words and comprehend it before giving it an assessment and evaluation. After a while,student remember what he has read, at which

point he finally shift his focus to the subsequent content. Students employ a combination of actions and cognitive abilities to decode text. To comprehend the material, word recognition, comprehension, and fluency are required. Recognization and comprehension are the main steps in the reading process. Students are expected to recognize words from a book and interpret their meanings.

1.9 Types of Reading Comprehension

Throughout the long history of researching reading, only two main types of reading were distinguished by scholars.

1.9.1 Extensive Reading

Going through an extensive reading is to read through a considerable number of materials, texts and books for pleasure and general understanding in a solitary manner, furthermore you must determine which books you would like to read by yourself and autonomously (what is extensive reading) as cited in (n.d) said that a strategy to reading in a second language is called extensive reading (ER). As students read widely, they choose books that are fun and easy to read in order to improve their reading fluency and speed. To put it another way, reading is the best approach for students to learn how to read, not looking at books and studying the vocabulary, grammar, and phrases. It is useful to contrast Extensive Reading (ER) and Intensive . This means ,Reading every word and every sentence, concentrating on vocabulary, examining grammar while seeking new words, concentrating on how sentences are put together, and dissecting every part of the book tends to be a deep study rather than merely reading anything for enjoyment or knowledge and The term "intensive reading" refers to reading that is in-depth and narrowly focused, much like you

might study significant pages or chapters. After skimming the material and closely to identify any ambiguities, it's time for more thorough reading.

According to Hedge, the extent of reading varies depending on the students' motivations and available resources at the school. A teacher who is enthusiastic and well-trained will be able to select appropriate handouts and activity books for the class.Because this strategy will motivate the students to comprehend well what they read.

Additionally, he claims that significant reading should be incorporated into EFL/ESL classes provided the texts chosen are legitimate, i.e. Hedge 2003 (As cited in Ithawi 2010). According to Hafiz and Todor as cited in Ithawi (2010) said that The educational value of extensive reading is predicated on the idea that exposing students to a lot of purposeful and fascinating content will, over time, have a positive impact on their command of L2. (1989, P.5). Suwarso & praseno (2022) state intensive reading is crucial for students to acquire since it aids with their understanding of grammatical structures and the overall context of a work, including both explicit and implicit meanings.

Research conducted by Renandya in Mart (2015)The benefits of the ER approach include its flexibility in being used with English learners of any proficiency level as well as its potential to have a beneficial impact on language learners' abilities(as cited in Muchtar (2019).

According Umam (2013) declare that Four abilities are required to learn a language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in the order in which they are learned and taught. Reading is one of the most crucial language abilities and, as is now commonly acknowledged, a fundamental component of research. The paper will first examine what reading is before talking more about prolonged reading. At the same path Rashidi & piran

(2011) as cited in Muchtar (2019) stated that One benefit of Extensive Reading is that it is a particularly effective medium for giving learners as much input as possible in the form of reading.

Muchtar (2019) stated that The Extensive Reading is a strategy that works well with the emotive components of students. In fact, it should be noted that the qualities that provide learners a pleasant first impression are crucial to Extensive Reading's success. The four English skills are interwoven into many topics in Extensive Reading through the use of enjoyable and interesting components, which are psychologically highly important.

In another side , Nation (2005) as incited in (The Free Encyclopedia) as cited in (n.d) declare that Focusing on the meaning of the English text, understanding the type of learning that can result from such reading, having interesting and engrossing books, encouraging learners to read extensively at an appropriate level, and ensuring that learning from reading is supported by other types of learning are all requirements for learning from extensive reading. To fulfill the prerequisites for extended reading instruction at the students' level of competency

1.9.2 Intensive reading

To read extensively, it is necessary to concentrate .paying attention to each word and each sentence, understanding the vocabulary, scrutinizing the grammar, searching for unfamiliar words, and taking note of the way sentences are formed. According to Hedge as cited in (Ithawi 2010) "only through more extensive reading thatlearners can gain substantial practice in operating these strategiesmore in dependently on a range of materials''. Ibid (p202). Paran (2003) as cited in Ithawi (2010) describes in detail the kinds of texts and instructional strategies that teachers should concentrate on in intense reading programs to

maximize the well-known pre-during-and post-reading phases with improved language preparation, retention, and activation strategies to boost learning. Intense reading deliberately places a greater emphasis on the basic vocabulary, text organization patterns, and text processing styles required to comprehend the text

According to Day and Harsh (2008) as cited in Muchtar(2019) stated that three things can be inferred from the actuality of reading instruction using the standard approach (intense reading):

A/ Students who are learning to read in English don't read English-language texts;

B/ Students dislike reading;

C/ Students rarely read.

Koay (2015)as cited in Khazaal (2019) state that " Intensive reading refers to the way of reading through every word of a text from beginning to end very thoroughly and deeply. It is the way of reading short texts thoroughly and with clear goals". Palmer (1921) as cited in Muchtar (2019) chracterized that :

The following traits define the intensive reading strategy:

1. It is distinguished by being deliberate and sluggish. Student used his dictionary and read the material line by line

2. Classroom-based intensive reading is typically used.

3. It promotes the growth of reading abilities.

4. The goal is to increase linguistic knowledge rather than rely solely on reading practice.

5. When reading an article demands focus and attention, it is employed.

And at the same path , Macalister (2011) (as cited in khazal 2019) confirmed that Intensive Reading has many goals :

1. It focuses on learning a new language, including grammar and vocabulary

2. It assists students in building a large number of new vocabularies and linguistic structures that enable them to employ practical expressions.

3. It enables the pupil to pick up new abilities like drawing inferences and recognizing primary ideas.

4. A smooth transition from one word to the next, from one sentence to the next, and from one paragraph to the next aids the pupil.

5. It enables the student to retain the lesson's ideas and understand its significance.

6. students will learn additional reading techniques like skimming, scanning, and figuring out the key points of texts and paragraphs.

1.10 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Intensive Reading

1.10.1 The Advantages

1- Intensive reading is typically done using challenging books that contain a lot of unfamiliar terms and necessitate the use of a dictionary by the student.

2. Intensive reading improves student collaboration.

3- The quickest technique to pick up and absorb language is through intense reading.

4- It increases the power of expression.

5- Intensive reading is the strategy that is most frequently used to teach reading and reading comprehension.

6. It aids the pupil in drawing conclusions.

7 – The pupil benefits from learning sentence construction. Scrivener(1994)as cited in khazal 2019)

1.10.2 The Disadvantages

1 . It has a minimal impact on honing critical thinking abilities.

2 . It doesn't aid vocabulary growth as much as focused reading,

3 .It can be exhausting and distracting.

4. It takes a lot of time.

5. It interferes with your ability to concentrate.

6. It does not encourage attention to detail.(Basmo, (n.d))

Therefore, the intensive reading is a crucial component of learning a language, but it should follow the students have completed comprehensive reading. Only then can it be turned into something positive and enjoyable.

1.11 The importance of Extensive and Intensive Reading

1.11.1 Extensive Reading

1 . Students become independent in their learning thanks to this kind of personalized, self-directed approach, which is crucial for success.

2. Through independent reading, students can learn to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases from the context. (Umam 2019)

3.permits students to interact with the language in its natural setting and observe how it functions in dialogue outside of the context of textbooks.

4 .increases vocabulary. Students who read a lot become familiar with thousands of words and lexical (word) patterns, which helps them learn them and anticipate what vocabulary and grammar might come next.

5. aids students understanding how grammatical patterns function in context. Textbooks and other study resources present language patterns, but usually they don't do so frequently enough in a range of circumstances to allow for a thorough comprehension of how the patterns function. (Umam 2019)

1.11.2 Intensive Reading

1. helps students build a large number of new words in their language composition, which makes it easier for them to employ beneficial expressions.

2. The ability to smoothly transition from one word to another, from sentence to sentence, and from paragraph to paragraph, assists the student .

3. It facilitates the student's comprehension of the lesson's purpose and helps them retain its ideas.

4. Students will learn additional reading techniques like skimming, scanning, and figuring out the key points of texts and paragraphs. According to (Macalister,2011) as cited in khazal (2019) Intensive reading and extensive reading are tools at their core. Students may make the most of their study and advance their language skills by knowing which of these tools to use

whenever they read in the target language.

1.12 Reading Comprehension Difficulties

One of the most prevalent learning difficulties that students face is reading comprehension, and this is because this challenge breeds other challenges that affect the student's ability to learn in all courses.Chawwang (2008 as cited Aljarrah & Ismail 2018) said that reading comprehension is a major focus of the difficulties listed under the umbrella of academic learning difficulties. As a result, the student often experiences unstable self-image,frustration, a lack of motivation and ultimately anxiety, as well as the realization that he or she lacks the ability to interact with people (Aljarrah & Ismail 2018).

Because comprehending a reading material affects in a way or another the student's state of being (i.e. his mentality, self-image, and overall mood), he or she feels stuck in understanding one sentence and thus being unable to move on to understanding another.

The survey discovered that the majority of students have trouble reading literature written in English. One of the major problems was acknowledged to be inadequate vocabulary knowledge ,Reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge have long been known to be closely connected (, Davis, 1944, 1968; Thorndike, 1973) .

Researchers (al Mansour & al-Shorman, 2011) reviewed that identical results, where the surroundings and a lack of basic vocabulary are the biggest obstacles to learning to read.as cited in (Raja Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan,1* Muhammad Shahbaz,2 Tribhuwan Kumar,3 Imran Khan 2020) .

A strong vocabulary is necessary for understandingthe context, and it can be acquired through memorization or daily experiences. The reader must comprehend the majority of the

words in the text for avoiding any obstacle faced by the student. Tumerbek (2011) in his article said that While it is true that vocabulary is crucial to learning a foreign language, it is also thought to serve as the foundation for improving nearly every other linguistic skill, including writing, listening, speaking, spelling, and reading comprehension in particular.

In the same article Laufer (1992) emphasized that the importance of vocabulary by understanding what words imply in their context, you can better understand the text's main points.Text complexity affected reading scores negatively, Hamza aljarrah &Ismail (2018) declare that reading comprehension is impacted by text complexity.Meaning that a learner's language proficiency permits them to comprehend a text more thoroughly. And that's means linguistic proficiency helps learners comprehend texts more thoroughly.

As a result, oral ability is important for assessing a reader's proficiency because students learn new words by hearing. A sufficient vocabulary aids students in deciphering unfamiliar words by connecting them to the context in which they are used , therefor reading is increasingly more than just deciphering symbols; it also involves information acquisition beyond reading comprehension because text complexities is the reader side and as a result this problem will affect negatively upon the student's motivational side meaning that in order to help students' efforts to understand the context, it will destroy their motivation. Besides, the most common causes of reading comprehension idifficulties for students are complicated noun groups, nominalizations, coordinating conjunctions, participial phrases, and prepositional phrases because they make texts complex and challenging to understand. Nuttall, 2000; as cited in Chawwang 2008).

A sentence is a fundamental building block of a text; it is made up of words and letters and contributes to the text's overall meaning, and here another problem facing EFL

learners is ability to understand complex sentences in reading comprehension and this problem plays a big role in getting in the way of understanding , complex sentences are the sentences with many clauses that occasionally include the conjunctions although, because, and furthermore (Scott 2009) , while in a vocabulary term according to crave & Ryder, 1998; Richardson & Morgan 2003; Nuttall, 2000) said that The issue concerns verbal communication issues.

Problems with technical language, superordinates, synonyms, antonyms, and terms with multiple meanings are some of these challenges.as cited in Chawang (2008) similarily , Soemontri (2011) state that One of their reading speed's limitations is their lack of key word vocabularies. Therefor there are students get new vocabularies from reading carefully and the key to get the meaning of the text by how many vocabularies in English that students pick it up and over here we conclude that the poor reading comprehension is limited vocabulary. Similarily Asraf &Ahmed (2003) found that word difficulty was the biggest issue ESL/EFL students faced.(As cited in chawang (2008)

Other factors influencing reading comprehension skills according to Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant (2000) beleive that because of poor recall, a lack of reading comprehension skills, and failure to automatically recognize words and phrases, students struggle with reading comprehension and have trouble understanding the ideas in the text. Such students might experience difficulties with their restricted reading comprehension strategies. (as cited in hassan and deweik 2021) .Using strategies for making the context more easier to understand is a good way to avoid those causes that lead to the failure to comprehend . (as cited in hassan and deweik 2021)

In another study Alyucef (2015) investigated that the areas of difficulty in six

categories, including automatic recognition abilities, vocabulary, and structural knowledge, formal discourse structure knowledge, synthesis and evaluation abilities, strategies, metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring, and content or global background knowledge, (As cited inhassan & deweik 2021) . (Aebersold &Field, 1997; Hudson, 2007; Vacca, 2008) as cited in Aljarrah & Ismail 2018)Having background information is crucial for developing reading comprehension skills. It is vital to text comprehension, and its absence can harm readers' ability to understand what is being read.

For others , according to (Laing &Kamhi, 2002; Anmarkrud & Bråten, 2009) as cited in Aljarrah &Ismail (2018)determine Language or cognitive deficits may be the cause of understanding issues. Additionally, motivation and focus might affect comprehension because some readers struggle to comprehend larger sentences despite being able to understand simple words or expressions.

In addition , chawwang (2008) state that Decoding skills are also required for reading for meaning. Reading for meaning can be compromised for a reader who struggles with precise word pronunciation. He is struggling to fully comprehend the content.Consequently,, this slows down the student's ability to comprehend the text quickly . along the same path,Gilakjani & Sabouri as (2016) as cited in Abu_ablesh &Alghazo (2021) in their article indicate that The ability to decode or recognize words affects students' reading comprehension. It is more challenging for readers with decoding issues to understand the meaning of passages than it is for readers without decoding issues.

Students who have a sufficient vocabulary can understand texts more quickly than those who must infer the meaning of unfamiliar terms from context clues.thus decoding or word recognition linked by the sufficient vocabulary so as a result The difficulty of being

unable to decode is reduced as vocabulary increases.,

Koda (2005), as cited in Aljarrah & Ismail (2018) The degree of grammatical proficiency among EFL students affects their reading comprehension. Less-than-sophisticated grammar learners frequently struggle with reading comprehension. Because of this, EFL students need to understand grammar to understand the meaning of passage expressions thence , the text is the starting point in reading comprehension It is crucial that students possess the abilities to comprehend the text. These abilities are rated on a scale, such as grammar, which plays a fundamental part in understanding the meaning of passage phrases.

Grammatical comprehension skills are an important aspect of reading. When the students read,they try to understand and extract meaning for a better general awareness of what you are reading. By learning and implementing reading comprehension skills, you can improve your abilities to make reading easier and more useful to you as a researcher.

Another problem facing students according to Alkhawaldeh (2012) state that state that The memorization of reading passages and the questions they were associated with posed a significant challenge for students in reading comprehension because of the difficulty of the passages, the unfamiliavocabulary rity of the words, the disconnect between some reading materials and students' real-world experiences, and the ineffectiveness of some teachers' teaching strategies. This may demonstrate the significance of reading teacher education, reading teacher in-service training, and the reform and redesign of the reading curriculum for secondary school EFL students.

1.13 Teaching Reading Comprehension in EFL Classes

among the major factor affecting students reading is ineffective teaching of reading.

The teacher's ability to teach reading plays a decisive role in students' language skills and ultimately in the success of learners.

the international Reading Association(2000) stated that the teacher's knowledge that makes a distinction in learning outcomes. The teacher's responsibility in the reading practice is to create situations and a setting that expand students' capacity to connect with the text. This implies that educators employ explicit instruction, which entails demonstrating, building, aiding, and participating. Thus, reading is an essential part of the teaching and learning process for most educational institutions of all levels, as it has been assigned specific ways and methods that the teacher implements to teach and cultivate their students.

The teacher here is the critical factor in the reading teaching and learning process, and is one of the most significant elements in deciding its success or failure with regards to reading comprehension, forming a connection between the student and the educational material. Another significant element in deciding the success or failure of reading reading comprehension is the selection of the reading material.

1.14 Importance of Reading Comprehension

We have thus far established the fact that reading constitutes of reading plus the comprehension and interpretation of the intended meaning(s). In other words, reading encompasses the decoding of letters into words and words into sentences as well as interpreting what these sequences of words and sentences mean together i.e. comprehending and interpreting the message. It is in fact a dynamic process of building understanding. In fact, this ability to actively construct meaning

They know that motivation and a variety of texts are crucial components of teaching and learning, and they differentiate their instruction accordingly. Additionally, they possess

extensive understanding of the various facets of literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Additionally, they make use of the data gained from formative assessments of each learner's needs and strengths. Additionally, they monitor student progress and modify instruction as necessary to guarantee the success of all students.

1.15 Expected Reading Comprehension Difficulties According to Previous Research Findings in Algeria

Reading comprehension issues are one of the most frequent learning difficulties faced by students, as this difficulty can generate other difficulties with the student's learning process in all academic subjects. The more severe the difficulty, the greater the chance of student failure and academic delay.

In a study conducted by Benkhanouche (2021) where she used a questionnaire administration to 4th year middle school EFL teachers in order to reveal the learners reading difficulties . result showed that lerners face reading comprehension problems related d to the students' lack of reading habit and their limited vocabulary as well as lack of concentration .

Through an other survey conducted by Mime (2020) where a questionnaire was administered to 4th grade 27th February 1962 school EFL students, the reading difficulties of the learners were revealed.Findings indicated that learners experience issues with reading comprehension that include the different sources bad selection of texts,short devoted time,an inadequate approach .

In another attempt to highlight the the common reading comprehension difficulties experienced by fourth year middle school students from the point of view of their respective English teachers, a study was conducted by Yaakoub & Lemzeri (2020), whereby a questionnaire was employed to collect the necessary data. The findings of this study clearly

state that fourth year middle school students suffer from problems entailing both reading comprehension questions (i.e. they are unable to understand and answer the reading comprehension questions correctly) and problems relating to the reading material itslef (i.e. the unfamiliarity with subject of the text and the lack of vocabulary).

Conclusion

This theoretically-based chapter tries to provide a general overview understanding of reading ability, throwing light on the definition of reading ,it's importance and it's strategies based on various scholars Additionally, it identifies the diffrent models and types used by readers to facilitate reading.In addition it identify the reading comprehension difficulties . it also tackles with Teaching reading comprehension in EFL classes . Finally, it highlights the expected reading comprehension difficulties.

3. Chapter Two: Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter overviews of the rationale for selecting the key elements of this research study. The study's methodology is briefly explained in connection to the research approach and design used. Furthermore, it offers the study's population and sample methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. It effectively reports the study's findings along with its analysis.Finally, the results are summarized in relation to the research questions that this study aims to address.

2.1 Reasearch Methods and Procedures

Research methodology allows considering the rational behind the chosen methods and procedures used in a research study's particular context. In this concern, Kaouthari (2016) argues that a rigorous and a transparent research methodology is primordial for the production of a research that is valid, credible, and reliable, and that can inform and inspire future researchers and policy makers.

2.1.1 Research Design

The researcher's choice of the present study's research design depended mostly and primarily on the aim of the study which is identifying and describing the EFL learners' reading comprehension difficulties of first year license students at the department of English in the University of Biskra. According to cresswell & Creswell (2018), there do exist three common research approaches; namely, the qualitative, the quantitative and the mixed research design. In this instance, i.e. this study, the used research design is a qualitative case study design. Two data collection tools were implemented in order to provide detailed information about the particular phenomenon or case of L1 students' reading comprehension difficulties. Therefore, the results obtained from this study are not to be generalised and thus the generated hypotheses need further research in order to explore the different dimensions

of this phenomenon.

2.1.2 Sampling

The target population of this research study is first year license students of English as well as teachers of the reading comprehension module at the department of English at Biskra University. The choice of the students was in accordance with the research questions the present study seeks to answer, the latter are concerned with the major problems these students face in reading comprehension. As far as first year license students are concerned, they were chosen because their limited exposure and low language and reading comprehension proficiency, furthermore, the module of reading comprehension is a relatively new added module in the department of English at Biskra university. Therefore, and due to the limited period of time, 23 first year license students comprised the sample for current research work in addition to three teachers of the reading comprehension module.

2.1.3 Data Collection Tools

Data collection methods or tools refer to the instruments used by the researcher in order to collect the relevant and necessary data needed to address and answer his or her research questions. While the data collection tools are plenty, those adopted in this study were chosen based on the nature of the research, which is qualitative and descriptive. In light of this, a semi-structured teacher interview as well as a semi-structured questionnaire formed the data collection tools of this study.

2.1.3.1 Teachers' Interview

For the sake of answering the present study's research questions, which involve getting an overview on L1 students' reading comprehension difficulties at the department of English in Biskra University, an online semi-structured teachers' interview was conducted

with three reading comprehension teachers of the same department. The interview encompassed seven semi-structured questions within which teachers were urged to deliver answers elaborately.

Due to the lack of reading comprehension teachers at the department of English in Biskra University, the piloting stage of the interviews; instead, the researcher settled for the comments made by the supervisor which were accordingly taken into consideration.

2.1.3.2 Students' Questionnaire

Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used survey methods in research studies . A Questionnaire according to Brown (2001) refers to "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers." (Brown, 2001, p. 6).In order to conduct this study,we decided on the semi-structured questionnaire due to the qualitative nature of the study.The questionnaire was distributed to the first year of English within the Biskra University via emails

2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

2.2.1 Research Results

2.2.1.1 Results of the Students' Questionnaire

Section one: reading comprehension and reading habits

Q1- How would you rate your English language proficiency?

Table 2.1

Students' English Language Proficiency

Option	Number	Percentage
Advanced	2	8.7%
Upper-Intermediate	13	56.5%

Intermediate	5	21.7%
Beginner	3	13%
Total	23	100%

As noted in the theoretical section of this study, language proficiency reflects, in a way or another, the reading comprehension proficiency. This question was asked in order to figure out how well students perform linguistically. In other words, this question allows both the researcher and the reader to understand the level of fluency and comprehension of the individual, which can help them to gauge whether or not the individual will be able to perform effectively in reading.

Effectively, the results revealed that the majority of the students classified themselves as upper-intermediate (13 out of 23 students), whereas 2 out 23 students regarded themselves as advanced in English, 5 out of 23 as intermediate and a remaining 3 out of 23 students believed that their English language proficiency is still of a beginner level.

Q2- Rank the four language skills from most difficult to easiest.

The second question was posed in oder to provide insight into the individual's language learning experience and to help identify areas of difficulties and challenges that they face during the process of learning the English language. Surprisingly, the listening skill was ranked the one most difficult language skill, followed by speaking, writing, and then finally reading. The results of this question strike as unusual because the traditionally labeled receptive skills (listening and reading) are commonly regarded and classified as less challenging than the productive skills (writing and speaking).

Q3- How often do you read?

Figure 2.1

Students'English Reading Frequency

Q3 How often do you read?
23 responses
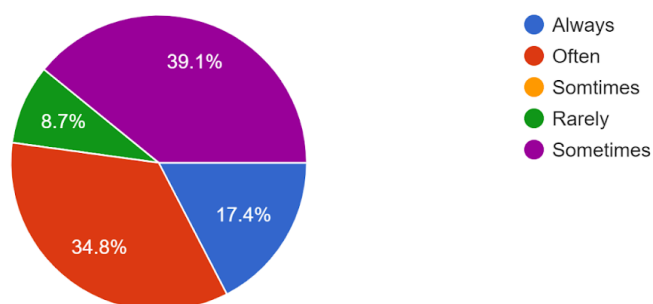
This question was posed in order to gain some insight on the participants' reading habits which in return reflect their level of motivation and their overall reading proficiency.

As displayed in **Figure 2.1**, the vast majority of the respondents declared that they either read sometimes or often (39.1% sometimes and 43.8% often). Conversely, only 17.4%

proclaimed that they do read always and a minimum of 8.7% admitted that rarely do they engage in the reading activity.

Q4- What is your preferred reading material?

Figure 2.2

Studentds' Preferred Reading Material

Q4 What is your preferred reading material?
23 responses
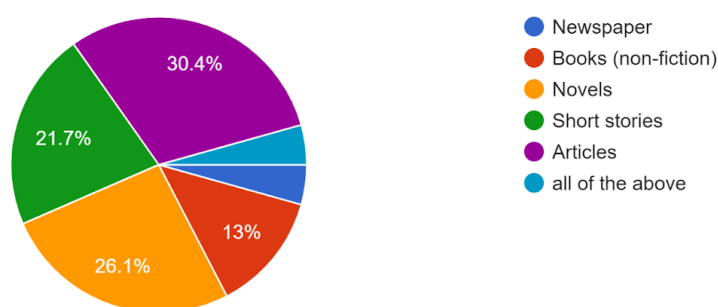
As an extension to the previous question, question four aims to gauge the students' reading habits and preferences. Asking this question can provide insight into the types of reading materials that the individual enjoys and whether they have a diverse range of interests or are focused on specific genres. This information can be useful in designing tailored reading programs or recommendations that are more likely to engage the learners. As shown in **Figure 2.2**, the majority of the respondents (30.4%) stated that they read articles,

26.1% reported that they read novels, 21.7% read short stories, 13% read non-fiction books, 4.3% stated that they read newspaper and another 4.3% reported that they read all of the genres mentioned.

These results show that these students' reading preferences are heavily influenced by their field of study, which is the English major, where they are required to read both intensively and extensively about different content material such as linguistics, literature, social sciences and humanity, and civilization among other content materials. One of the respondents reported that he or she reads self-development books such as Rich Dad Poor Dad and Atomic Habits, which are, in the meantime, well-known mainstream self-development books.

Section Two: Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners

Q5- What is your primary goal of reading?

Figure 2.3

Students' Primary Goal of Reading

Q5 what is your primary goal of reading?
23 responses

- Khnowledge
- Pleasure
- To enrich vocabulary
- Academic needs
- Knowledge
- all of the above

8.7% 17.4% 47.8% 21.7%
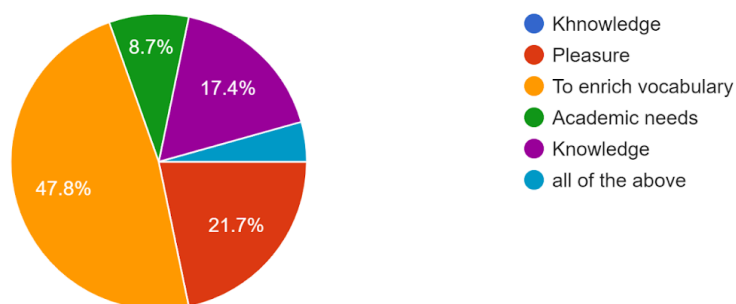
The goal behind reading usually influences or even determines the type and genre of the reading material students choose. Knowing the 'why' helps teachers and policy makers get a closer look and more understanding of students' motives and tendencies. As demonstrated in **Figure 2.3** , nearly 48% of the students read to enrich their vocabulary. This demonstrates that students put so much time and effort on expanding their vocabulary repertoire as well as developing their overall language proficiency. Moreover 21.7% of the respondents proclaimed that they read for pleasure, 17.4% read seeking to expand their knowledge, and only 8.7% read to fulfil their academic needs.

The data obtained from this question highlights a rather significant fact which is: people read to fulfil or meet their needs, be it a need for knowledge, a need for pleasure, a need for developing personal skills, to mention a few. In light of this, one of the students commented that "sometimes I force myself to read novels just so I would not forget or make grammar mistakes", and another one added,

> Before I used to read for knowledge and pleasure but now since I am an English student I started to focus more on this skill in order to ameliorate my level (learning new vocabulary, the style of writing,getting some knowledge about the famous books and novels , culture …).

Q6- Do you find reading comprehension difficult?

If your answer is yes, please state why.

As far as this question is concerned, 8 out of 23 students believe that reading comprehension does not create an issue to them, because, as they claim, they have the language skills necessary to understand the reading texts and materials presented to them. On the other hand, 15 students reported that they do in fact face various kinds of reading

comprehension difficulties. Some of them attributed this underlying difficulty to their lack of vocabulary, others reported that they find difficulty in making inferences about the intended meaning of the reading texts, other students indicated that they find different unfamiliar genres, such as scientific articles, challenging to understand (i.e. they do not have enough background knowledge of such reading materials).

Q7- According to your experience with reading in English, what is the source of reading difficulties?

Figure 2.4

Students' source of reading comprehension difficulties

Q7 According to your experience with reading in English, what is the source of reading difficulties?
23 responses

- Lack of background knowledge about the reading
- Ambiguous or unfamiliar words
- Complex sentences (containing several clauses)
- Difficulties in pronunciation
- Lack of motivation and concentration
- Unpleasant past experiences with reading
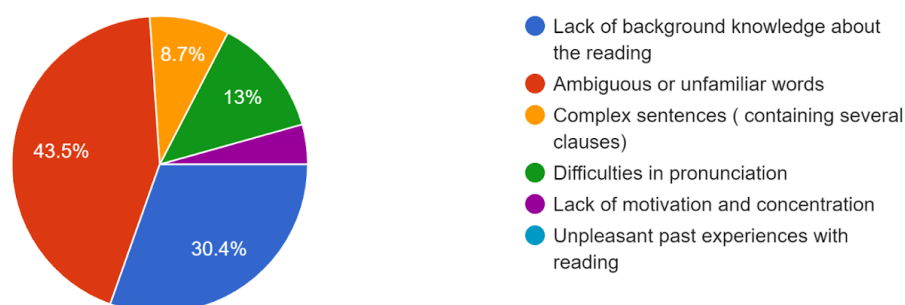
Although the Q6 sought to gauge students' sources of reading comprehension difficulties, Q7 was designed in order to triangulate the data obtained from the previous

question.

As shown in **Figure 2.4**, 43.5% of the students attributed their reading comprehension difficulties to unfamiliar and ambiguous words; in other words, lexical or vocabulary deficiency. 30.4% of the students implied that lack of background knowledge about the reading text is what creates reading challenges for them whereas 13% of them assert that pronunciation is the source of this difficulty and a minority of 8.7% imply that complex grammatical structures compromises reading comprehension.

Q8- Among these strategies or techniques, which one or ones do you use to overcome the said reading comprehension difficulties?

Figure 2.5

The Reading Comprehension Strategies Used by the EFL Students

Q8 Among these strategies or techniques, which one or ones do you use to overcome the said reading comprehension difficulties?
23 responses

- Relying on prior knowledge
- Asking and answering questions about the reading text
- Summarizing the main ideas of the text
- Rereading
- Translating ambiguous words to Arabic
- None of the above
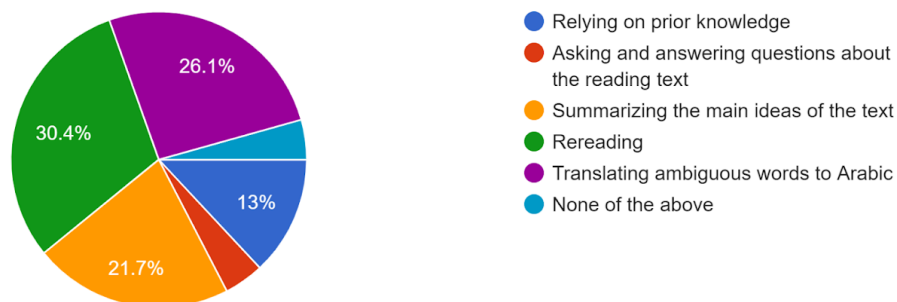
We have tackled in the theoretical part of this study the different reading comprehension strategies used both by learners and teachers to ameliorate comprehension and alleviate the various reading comprehension challenges EFL students encounter. Question 8 aimed to discover the most commonly used reading comprehension strategies among these students.

As demonstrated in **Figure 2.5** , 30.4% of the students rely on rereading as a strategy or technique to better comprehend the reading material. In addition, 26.1% of the students turn to translating ambiguous chunks or the text into their mother language Arabic. Furthermore, 21.7% of the respondents make use of summarising the main ideas of the text to make the comprehension process easier and efficient whereas 13% of them conjure their background knowledge of the reading topic, a strategy which would help them construct a better understanding of the written texts' context.

Contemplating these results, we come to the conclusion that EFL students experience similar reading comprehension difficulties; however, each one of them uses different reading comprehension strategies which would help him/her mitigate the reading challenges they face.

Section Three: Attitudes and Perception Towards the Reading Comprehension Module

Q9- Are you satisfied with the syllabus or the content tackled in the reading comprehension module? Please justify your answer.

After having tackled the reading habits of the students and the underlying reading comprehension difficulties and the strategies used to overcome them, the research wanted to capture students' viewpoint and attitude towards the reading comprehension course. These perceptions are significant to the researcher because it will provide the reading comprehension teachers as syllabus designers in tailoring lessons and activities that address s

tudents needs, requirements, and preferences.

First, Question 9 sought to describe the degree of students' satisfaction with the type of reading content tackled inside the classroom in the reading comprehension module.

The answers on this question varied extremely from students who were not satisfied with the content to others who found it "beneficial" and "useful", to those who suggested some recommendations to ameliorate the content and the teaching methodology. Overall, 6 out of 23 students openly explained that the content tackled in the reading comprehension course is not useful, boring, or out of date. In this matter, one of the students commented, "In a way, I don't find it very useful, especially since we don't read much during class and we are rarely asked to read".

Conversely, the others expressed their satisfaction with the content, the methodology used to deliver that content, and even went on to suggest some recommendations to make the reading comprehension module more inclusive in terms of students' content interests and preferences. In light of this, one of the students provided an interesting remark on content selection, s/he stated that, "To me, reading comprehension content should depend on the individual preferences more than the curriculum prescribed for everyone". Similarly, three students mentioned that their reading comprehension teacher did well in designing reading materials that appealed to their needs and interests, one of them attested,

> I really like the reading material that our teacher provides us with,
> because they are well prepared. It contains questions about the text
> and then grammar part, vocabulary part, oral discussion part, we learn
> many things, even idioms and some Proverbs.

To sum up, students' needs and preferences differ, and, naturally, their level of satisfaction with any prescribed syllabus material and content differ accordingly. Therefore,

teachers should always seek to observe and listen his students' actions and reactions to the type of content he or she delivers.

Q10- To what degree are you satisfied with the method of instruction (i.e. the teaching method) with which the reading comprehension module is carried out?

Figure 2.6

Students' Satisfaction with the Method of Reading Comprehension Module Instruction

Q10 To what degree are satisfied with the method of instruction (i.e. the teaching method) with which the reading comprehension module is carried out
23 responses
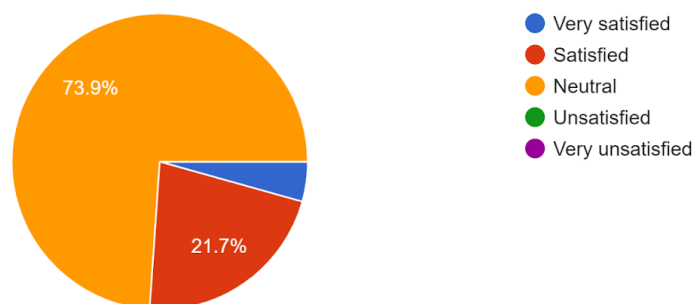
As displayed in **Figure 2.6** , 73.9% held a neutral stance with regard to their level of satisfaction with the teachers' method of instruction of the reading comprehension module;

whereas 21.7% proclaimed that they are satisfied with the instruction method, and only 4.3% (1 of the 23 students) maintained that he or she is very satisfied with the instructional method.

Synthesising **Q9** and **Q10** results, one can say that students are generally satisfied with the teaching methods employed; however, this does not nullify the fact that there is always room for improvement.

Q11- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements

A- The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my reading comprehension.

2 out of the 23 students strongly agreed with this statement, 13 of them agreed, and 8 kept a neutral position.

B- The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my vocabulary

5 students strongly agreed that the reading comprehension module has improved their vocabulary, 14 agreed, and 4 held a neutral stance.

C- The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my reading habits.

2 students strongly agree with the above statement, 9 agree with it, 8 keep a neutral position, 3 disagree, and 1 strongly disagrees. As one may notice, students' perspectives with regards to this statement differ considerably and that may be due to other factors influencing students' learning and reading habits.

D- The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module are interesting and engaging.

As far as the statement is concerned, 1 strongly agrees that the reading comprehension

module content is appealing and interesting, 8 agree that the materials are engaging, 12 reserve a neutral stance, 1 disagrees that the content and material of the module is engaging and another one strongly disagrees. The considerable difference in the students' responses highlights the idea that different content appeals to different learners. Therefore, content selection should be more learner-centred.

E- The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me perform better academically.

4 students agreed with the statement, 12 agreed, 5 reserved a neutral position, and 2 disagreed that the content of the reading comprehension module has helped them perform better academically.

In synthesis, observing the results of **Q11**, students' responses varied significantly in every statement. This, if anything, demonstrates that students receive and perceive knowledge and experiences differently. A given material or content could, for example, be beneficial and appealing to someone while it could be the exact opposite to another person. Accordingly, students' needs and preferences should be considered more in tailoring reading comprehension syllabi.

Q12- What would you like to add and /or change in the reading comprehension module to ma ke it more efficient?

This question was posed in order to discover how students think the reading comprehension module could be changed to be more efficient in terms of teaching and learning.

The following were some of the students remarks and suggestions regarding the amendments they would like to make in order to render the reading comprehension module more efficient:

- "I would like to have 2 sessions a week of the reading module rather than just one session , it is not sufficient."

- "It would be better if the teacher uses some technology like videos, some games grp works to change the classical boring way of teaching."

- "Giving the students some space let them choose their favourite topic it would be more interesting."

- "More class-discussion of the material we have read."

The statements above were the most recurrent ones. They all revolve around the idea that more in-class time should be dedicated for the module as well as the idea of using technology and adjusting the teaching methods to be more learner-centred. Conversely, some students expressed that they would not change anything about the module and that it is quite convenient as it is.

Q13- Would you like to add anything?

The students did not add anything significant.

2.2.1.2 Results of the Teachers' Interview

Q1- What are the most recurrent and significant problems facing students in reading comprehension?

This question was posed in order to find out the reading comprehension difficulties facing students that the reading comprehension teachers notice. Teacher A reported the following difficulties:

- Lack of vocabulary

- Difficulty to comprehend complex sentences

- Multisyllabic words

- Words with different meanings

- Understanding the idioms

Simlilarly, teacher B stated that lack of vocabulary, difficulty of some text words were the most remarkable reading comprehension difficulties that students often face. In the same line, teacher C demonstrated that the lack of vocabulary is what hinders students' reading comprehension most of the time. These results go hand in hand with the ones obtained from the students' questionnaire, which highlight the central role of vocabulary knowledge in comprehending written texts.

Q2- Based on your observation, what do you think are the common reasons behind the students' poor reading comprehension ?

When asked to point out the probable reasons behind students' low levels of reading comprehension, teachers A, B, and C provided a multifold of observed reasons. Teachers A and B attributed the low level of comprehension to the lack of reading practice and focus from the students' part. They claim that lack of extensive and intensive reading inevitably causes lower levels of reading comprehension because students must read to develop the skills aand knowledge necessary for comprehension.

Teacher B on the other hand reported that one of the most significant causes of students' low levels of reading comprehension is their inability or ignorance of choosing topics which match their level of language proficiency. Teacher C also bring into our attention that students over-relliance on using the dictionary (especially the English-Arabic dictionary) hinders students from reading smoothly which leads to them feeling bored and stopping reading.

Q3- Based on your observation, what are the strategies used by students to overcome an instance of a reading comprehension difficulty (i.e. what are the techniques used by them to comprehend an ambiguous reading material)?

According to teacher A, the strategies mostly used by the studentsto overcome reading comprehension difficulties are: guessing the meaning from contexual clues, using the dictionnary, asking others for help, and skipping over 'vague' words. Similarly, teacher B and C reported that the most commonly used reading comprehension strategies are using dictionnaries and contexual clues (i.e, guessing the meaning of word(s) from the context).

Q4- As a reading comprehension teacher, how do you help students improve their reading comprehension and /or overcome their reading comprehension difficulties (methods, techniques, or strategies)?

As it has been discussed in the theoretical section of this research, reading comprehension instruction plays a significant role in molding students' reading skills and reading comprehension strategies. This question was asked in order to find out how teachers react and deal with their students' reading problems. Teachers' responses revealed that they consistently urge and advice their students to use reading comprehension strategies.

Teacher A for example stated that he or she ask his or her students to read intensively ''since reading is the main source of new vocabulary''. In the same vein, teacher B mentioned that he illicites students' prior knowledge of the reading topic to help them link and construct their prior knowledge with the new information. Similarly, Teacher C mentioned that he or she advices his or her students to use reading comprehension strategies '' like skimming, scanning, guessing, inferring, extensive reading and intensive reading''.

As it is made clear in the teachers' responses, teachers mainly advice and urge students to use the different reading comprehension strategies both inside and outside the classroom.

Q5- As an EFL teacher, what are the challenges facing you in teaching the reading comprehension module to first year licence English students ?

The aim of this question is to illicit teachers' views and experiences with regards to the reading comprehension instruction, more specifically, the difficulties that accompanies teaching this skill or module. It appears from the teachers responses that the most prominent difficulty that teachers face when teaching the module is strongly related to students motivation.

Teacher A, B, and C complain from students unwilligness and lack of motivation to read. The teachers argue that students find reading in general and the reading comprehension module in particular to be unintersting and boring. This feeling often rises when the level of the reading material is not pertinent to the student's language proficiency and/or when the topic of the reading material does not match with the interests of the student

In a different note, Teacher A brings to our attention that students now have became slaves to Arabic dictionary during the reading session, which slows the reading comprehension process.

Q6- As an EFL teacher, what are sub skills and strategies you find hard to implement while teaching reading?

The three teachers stated that they do not find any strategy difficult to implement.

Q7- Do learners appreciate the reading comprehension session?

As it has been declared by the reading literature and the interviewed teachers, motivation is a central aspect in students' reading comprehension. For one thing, the student or the learner would not even engage in a reading activity if the motivation aspect was absent. In light of this, this question was posed. All three teachers proclaimed that some students do indeed appreciate the readong comprehension session.

2.2.2 Discussion of Results

The following subsection aims to synthesize the findings reported in the preceding one. As previously noted, the current study sought to identify and describe the reading comprehension difficulties and challenges confronting first-year license students at Biskra University's Department of English. The ultimate goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the students difficulties with reading so as to offer recommendations and suggestions for future students, teachers, and syllabus designers. We presented the results in connection to the study questions they supported in order to emphasize the main findings of the qualitative data gathered. The first question that we tried to address was:

RQ1: What are the reading comprehension problems/difficulties/challenges experienced by the students?

In oder to answer the first research question, we conducted a students' semi-structured questionnaire as well as a teachers' semi-structured interviews with first-year license students and reading comprehension teachers. The obtained results revealed that students suffer from these key reading comprehension difficulties:

- Lack of vocabulary

- Inability to understand ambiguous words that are either unfamiliar or that hold different meanings

- Difficulty in making inferences and understanding the intended meaning of the written texts

- Limited background knowledge

- Difficulty to understand complex sentences

Although the reading comprehension difficulties appear numerous, the one that reappeared in the respondents answers was the difficulty of lack of vocabulary (i..e. lexical deficiency). Vocabulary knowledge seemed to be the number one reason why students read in the first place, which is to enrich their vocabulary reportoire. Although background knowledge is both a factor in determining reading comprehension and a difficulty facing students in comprehending content-based readings, it did not seem to be a hindering factor based on the students'responses.However, most of their reading comprehension difficulties seemed to stem from one common problem: vocabulary deficiency.

RQ2: What are the teachers' views and perceptions with regards to the students' reading comprehension difficulties?

In order to evoke the reading comprehension teachers' views and perception regarding their students' reading comprehension difficulties, a teacher's interview was designed and held with 3 reading comprehension teachers at Biskra University's English Department.

The results demonstrate that students are well aware of their students reading comprehension difficulties and that they too face some significant difficulties in teaching this module. The three teachers attribute their students' lower levels of reading comprehension skills to the students' low levels of motivation, dedication, and lack of reading practice inside and outside the classroom. In light of this, these teachers' urge and advice students to practice more the habit of reading, both intensively and extensively. They also advice these EFL students to make better decisions in choosing reading materials that match their interest and their language proficiency in order to maintain motivation and concentration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data analysis presented in this chapter, based on the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews, has provided valuable insights into the research aim and questions of the current study project. The qualitative study employed has facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the topic, using qualitative data to capture both the breadth and depth of the research findings. The findings contribute to the broader field of study and have implications for educational practice and future research endeavors.

General Conclusion

This case study started off from the researchers' observation and experience as an EFL student struggling and facing reading comprehension difficulties of many types. Although the issue of reading comprehension difficulties has been largely discussed in the literature, our aim was to get a better understanding of what constitutes these difficulties for the case of EFL students at Biskra University's English Department.

Two research questions were raised in an attempt to achieve the study's aim and objectives which revolved around the description of the underlying reading comprehension difficulties that first-year license EFL students of Biskra University English Department face. A qualitative research approach was used to study the issue at hand because it was the best option for our research questions and objectives. A case study research approach was chosen because of the qualitative nature of this study and because it allows for a thorough examination of the study's research question. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, data was collected via questionnaires and interviews. The descriptive method was used to analyze the acquired data.

In light of the study questions that drove the current study, the key findings obtained were that students face reading comprehension difficulties of various types and because of

similar reasons: lack of reading practice and lack of motivation and concentration. The respondents answers seemd to revolve around one prominent reading comprehension difficulty which pertains to lack of vocabulary or lexical deficiency.

In light of these results, the research recommends that more reading practice opportunities should be made available through alloting more weekly in class hours for the reading comprehension module as well as urging and encouraging students into practicing reading both extensively and intensively which would potentially help them minimise or overcome these underlying difficulties.

Implications and Recommendations

On the basis of the data obtained through this study, the recommendations offered in this section were created. The former's objective is to highlight the adjustments that must be made in order to enhance the reading comprehension teaching and learning situation and to help students overcome their reading comprehension difficulties and develop their reading comprehension skills.

● Raise teachers and students' awareness of the objectives behind teaching and learning reading comprehension.

● Encouraging a more learner-centered classroom approach.

● Encouraging students to using English-English dictionaries instead of the Arabic dictionaries while reading.

● Raise students' awareness of the importance of intensive and extensive reading in developing reading comprehension skills.

● More weekly hours should be alotted to the reading comprehension module.

- Students should aim to create reading opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any research work, we were faced with certain challenges during the course of the current study. Challenges were encountered due to limited time, unavailability of participants, and insufficient resources.

Second , we started collecting data during the second semester period when students and teachers were most of the time unavailable. Because of a shortage of time in the second semester, it was challenging to find teachers who could respond to the inetrview because they were busy throughout the period of assignments and controls

Another limitation concerns time constraints and difficulties in collaborating with first year students despite the convenience of online questionnaires, it took a long time to get the answers from students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Q1- How would you rate your English language proficiency?

- o   Advanced
- o   Upper-intermediate
- o   Intermediate
- o   Beginner

Q2- Rank the four language skills from most difficult to easiest.

- o   Writing
- o   Speaking
- o   Listening
- o   Reading

Q3- How often do you read?

- o   Always
- o   often
- o   sometimes
- o   rarely

Q4- What is your preferred reading material?

- o   Newspaper
- o   Books (non-fiction)
- o   novels
- o   short-stories
- o   Articles

Q5- what is your primary goal of reading?

- o Knowledge
- o Pleasure
- o To enrich vocabulary
- o Academic needs

Q6- Do you find reading comprehension difficult? If your answer is yes, please state

why.

Q7- According to your experience with reading in English, what is the source of reading

difficulties?

- o Lack of background knowledge about the reading
- o Ambiguous or unfamiliar words
- o Complex sentences (containing several clauses)
- o Difficulties in pronunciation
- o Lack of motivation and concentration
- o Unpleasant past experiences with reading

Q8- Aong these strategies or techniques, which one or ones do you use to overcome the

said reading comprehension difficulties?

- o Relying on prior knowledge
- o Asking and answering questions about the reading text
- o Summarizing the main ideas of the text
- o Rereading
- o Translating ambiguous words to Arabic
- o None of the above

Q9- Are you satisfied with the syllabus or the content tackled in the reading

comprehension module? Please justify your answer.

Q10- To what degree are satisfied with the method of instruction (i.e. the teaching

method) with which the reading comprehension module is carried out ?

- o Very satisfied
- o Satisfied
- o Neutral
- o Unsatisfied
- o Very unsatisfied

Q11- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements : « The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my reading comprehension. »

- o Strongly agree .

The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my vocabulary

- o Agree .

The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me improve my reading habits.

- o Neutral.

 The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module are interesting and engaging.

- o Disagree .

The materials and readings used in the reading comprehension module have helped me perform better academically.

- o Strongly disagree

Q12- What would you like to add and /or change in the reading comprehension module to make it more efficient?

....

....

Q13- Would you like to add anything?

....

....

Appendix B: Teachers' Interview

Teachers' Interview

Investigating EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Difficulties: The Case of First Year Students of English at the University of Biskra.

Dear teacher,

You are kindly asked for a face-to-face or online interview. This interview is conducted in order to collect data concerning the major reading comprehension difficulties experienced by the EFL students. Your responses will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only. Your contribution to this work is highly appreciated.

The researcher.

Researcher Contact Details:

Daoudi Aya

Email: ayadaoudi60@gmail.com

University Mohamed Khider of Biskra.

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages.

Department of Foreign Languages and English Literature.

I have read and clearly understood the researcher request. I consent to the participation in a recorded interview for the research work undertaken by Ms. **Daoudi** Aya.

Background Information

Name:..

Present Occupation: ....

Degree:..

Email Address: ....

Signature: ....

The Interview Questions :

1. What are the most recurrent and significant problems facing students in reading

comprehension?

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....

2. Based on your observation, what do you think are the common reasons behind the

students' poor reading comprehension ?

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....

3. Based on your observation, what are the strategies used by students to overcome an

instance of a reading comprehension difficulty (i.e. what are the techniques used by

them to comprehend an ambiguous reading material)?

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4. As a reading comprehension teacher, how do you help students improve their reading

comprehension and /or overcome their reading comprehension difficulties (methods,

techniques, or strategies)?

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5. As an EFL teacher, what are the challenges facing you in teaching the reading

comprehension module to first year licence English students ?

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6. As an EFL teacher, what are sub skills and strategies you find hard to implement

while teaching reading ?

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7. Do learners appreciate the reading session?

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....

8. Would you like to add anything ?

....

....

ملخص الدراسة

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو استكشاف صعوبات الفهم القرائي التي يواجهها طلاب السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة وتحديد بعض الأسباب الكامنة وراء ذلك. تم اختيار عينة من 23 طالبًا و 3 مدرسين لفهم القراءة بشكل هادف كعينة من هذه الدراسة. لجمع البيانات ذات الصلة ، تم تصميم استبيان الطلاب وكذلك مقابلة المعلمين وإدارتهم ، على التوالي ، لطلاب ترخيص السنة الأولى ومعلمي القراءة والفهم في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة. تشير النتائج إلى أن طلاب السنة الأولى يعانون من صعوبة فهم المقروء ، ويرجع ذلك في الغالب إلى محدودية مفرداتهم وقلة الممارسة والتحفيز والتركيز.