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MASTER DISSERTATION

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An Investigation into the Challenges Facing English Language Classes of Biskra University in the course of Reading:

The case of first and second year license students of the departement of English language and literature.

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of English language and literature as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Science of Language

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Declaration

I, **Boudraa Chahra**, declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted for any other degree. I confirm that all sources are cited and acknowledged. Moreover, I assert that this research was conducted and completed at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra.

Ms. Boudraa Chahra

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work

To my parents, whose love and encouragement have been the foundation of my journey.

Thank you for your unconditional love and support, thank you for being always there for me thank you for being my world.

*To my sisters and brothers **Malek, Assil, Imad, Ayoub** and **Mohamed** thank you for being in my life, I love you so much.*

*To my dear friends and classmates, **Messaouda, Feriel, Ferdaoues, Rahma,** I would like to say that I am proud to graduate along with such a bold and special class. You all have influenced and impacted me in a special way. Thank you for the strength you bring to my life, thank you for love, friendship and support.*

*My special thanks go to **Fatiha, Zahra, Salsabil, Amel, Samia, Abir, Salma** and **Safa.** We shared so much together, thank you for being good friends I wish you all the best.*

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in language learning. Recently, reading is offered as an independent course within the curriculum of English Language and Literature department at the University of Biskra. This course aims to enhance students' language mastery. However, teaching reading skills presents some challenges in Foreign Language context. Thus, the current study aims to explore the primary challenges in reading classes; more specifically, to understand undergraduate learners' difficulties in reading comprehension and to describe teachers' challenges in teaching reading course. Consistently, the research seeks to answer the two questions: 1) what are the difficulties that EFL undergraduate learners face in reading comprehension? And 2) what are the challenges that EFL teachers encounter in teaching reading skills? To achieve this purpose, the research adopted a mixed method research approach. The population of the study was first year and second year license students of English Language and Literature department at Biskra University. Thirty students were chosen to participate in this investigation and answering the semi-structured questionnaire, and five teachers of reading course were requested to participate in the interview. The findings of the study revealed that first and second year students face several challenges in reading such as limited background knowledge, difficulties concerning vocabulary, grammar, types of text. Additionally, the results indicated that teachers struggle with multiple difficulties such as students' lack of motivation, difficulties in selection texts, the techniques used, some challenges related to the curriculum of the course, in addition to time constraints. Consequently, overcoming these challenges is essential to improve reading skills and master the language.

*Keywords***:** Challenges, Reading skills, EFL learners, Teachers of the reading course.

List of Tables

List of Figures

Table of contents

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER TWO

General Introduction

Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language aims to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language, both verbally and in writing. Teaching English as a foreign language prioritizes the four essential skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, these skills can be divided into two categories receptive skills and productive skills. Speaking and writing are classified as productive skills, while listening and reading are regarded as receptive skills. Reading, in particular, is a receptive complex language process that involves recognition, comprehension and interpretation of printed texts. This means making sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with the language. However, most of students at Biskra University struggle with reading comprehension as they must handle a large amount of books, chapters and articles. As University` students they need not only to read but also to understand, synthesize, and critically evaluate those materials.

1. Statement of the problem

Recently, teaching reading skills at the department of English language and Literature at University of Biskra becomes applicable in order to help students improving their reading skills and mastering the language. As a results, teaching reading as an independent course requires a multifaceted approach that consists of several comprehensive strategies such as questioning, scanning, skimming and summarizing. These strategies could enable students engaging deeply with the material and developing critical thinking. The process of teaching-learning reading skills can be considered a challenging task that presents some obstacles in EFL context. Based on observation, research contact and the available literature, we aim to conduct a research study to investigate the challenges of reading comprehension in EFL classes of Biskra University.

2. The research questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the difficulties that EFL undergraduate learners face in reading comprehension course?

RQ2: What are the challenges that EFL teachers encounter in teaching reading skills?

3. Aims of the Research

This research investigation aims to explore the primary challenges in EFL reading skills classes

More specifically:

-To understand undergraduate learners ' difficulties in reading comprehension.

-To describe teachers ' challenges in delivering reading skills.

5. The significance of the study

This research aims to explore the primary challenges related to reading skills encountered by EFL teachers and learners at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University. Additionally, the findings can help learners to overcome their difficulties in reading and be more aware about it. Moreover, the study could be useful for teachers; thus, raising educators' awareness of learners' difficulties in reading comprehension and helping them refine their approaches to reading instruction. Furthermore, the results gained can inform policymakers and educational leaders about the systemic issues affecting reading instruction, leading to informed decisions that enhance curriculum design.

6. Research Methodology

As the present study aims to explore and describe the primary challenges of reading skills in EFL classes, a qualitative descriptive research design will be elected to ensure more comprehensive data collection and analysis.

7. Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection instruments consist of semi – structured questionnaire and structured interview. The selection of the tools is not random, choosing semi – structured questionnaire and interview provide a balanced approach to data collection that combines flexibility with focused inquiry. These tools allow researchers to ask predetermined questions while also encouraging respondents to elaborate on their answers, resulting in more detailed data. Therefore, the combination between the two could facilitate methodological triangulation and enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings.

8. Population and Sampling

The participants will be selected purposely, following non probability purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire will be administered to 30 second year EFL students at the University of Biskra. Thus, the selection of participants justified by students ' current enrollment in the reading skills module, their established linguistic competence in the target language and their ability to effectively communicate their perspectives and experiences. The following instrument involves structured interview with 5 teachers of reading course at the same department. The selection of teaching staff participants is specifically targeting educators with current experience in teaching reading skills. This methodological choice is based on the assumption that the selected practitioners can provide in-depth insights into pedagogical practices, methodological approaches, and the various challenges encountered in the EFL reading classroom.

9. Data Analysis Procedures for the study

As the data analysis procedures should be selected based on the nature of the data gathering tools; content analysis will be considered the suitable type for analyzing the semi – structured questionnaire. Moreover, for the structured interview thematic analysis will be selected.

10. Structure of the Study

This study will be composed of two main parts; theoretical part that will contain one chapter, which will be devoted to cover reading skills in terms of definitions, importance, components, types and strategies. Additionally, it will discuss the notion of teaching reading, containing models of the process of reading, theories underlying reading instruction, phases in reading lesson and techniques in teaching reading comprehension. The field work will comprise the second chapter.

CHAPTER ONE: READING SKILLS

Introduction

This chapter examines some relevant prior knowledge on reading skills and reading comprehension. The first section introduces reading skill providing a comprehensive overview of definitions, importance, components, types and strategies. Moreover, the second section discusses the notion of teaching reading, including models of reading process, schema theory and background knowledge; additionally, the chapter outlines the phases of a reading lesson and various techniques for teaching reading comprehension.

I.1. Reading Comprehension

I.1.1. Definitions of reading

Reading is a requisite receptive skill and crucial competence in learning English as a foreign language. Thus, multiple definitions of reading have been provided by different scholars. According to Yasar (2013), reading is an individual activity that needs guidance to develop initial reading abilities. In other words, reading skill is seen as an individual action that can be enhanced through some external support. Additionally, Yukselir (2014) describes reading at its surface level as one of the important, central skills that students have to master (as cited in Kasim & Raisha, 2017). This may highlight the idea that mastering the basic elements of reading is essential for students to progress, as it enables students to engage with different texts which facilitate learning and comprehension.

Moreover, Osman and Hayati (2022) define reading as "the process of making sense from texts and symbols, to be effective, it must be handled as a fluent, sense-making, strategic, motivation-based, and lifelong process" (p.23). This may suggest that reading is a type of interpretation and effective explanations of texts. Similarly, Grellet (1999) adds that "reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it" (p.7) Furthermore, Bui (2023) states that "reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that involves the interaction between readers and text" (p.7223). This means that reading is a mental activity and a dynamic cognitive process that requires readers' engagement with the text and understanding its meaning using their prior knowledge. This

interaction may allow readers to build meaning by integrating their background knowledge with the information presented in the text.

I.1.2. Importance of reading

When it comes to the importance of reading as a skill, Harmer (1998, p.68) highlights its significance in some key points:

- Reading is effective for language acquisition, in which interesting and appealing texts could promote successful acquisition.

- Reading texts might supply virtuous models for English writing. For instance, in teaching writing, students need to have some patterns of texts as models to know what they are encouraged to do.

- Reading materials can also offer opportunities in language learning, in terms of vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the construction of sentences, paragraphs and texts.

- Good readings may introduce different captivating topics and themes stimulating discussions and enhancing the acquisition of new knowledge.

In this sense, Harmer (1998) emphasises the critical role of reading in language acquisition, and describes this in different points. First, engaging with interesting texts may enhance successful learning. Additionally, providing models of writing can help students to develop their styles and writing skills. Furthermore, diversity of texts might develop vocabulary acquisition, grammar understanding and punctuation. Moreover, reading can stimulate discussions and encourage critical thinking. These points illustrate the importance of reading and its vital role in language development.

In the same context, Hedge (2003, as cited in Alyousef, 2006) adds that any reading course should include such learning goals:

- Developing knowledge of language which will support different reading competencies.

- Building formal comprehension and developing conceptual understanding.
- The capacity of tailoring and adapting reading styles according to reading purposes.
- Taking an analytical perspective toward the contents of texts.

This passage describes the multifaceted nature of reading instruction by underlining the essential learning goals. The development of language knowledge, enhancing critical thinking and promoting comprehension, adapting reading styles and adopting an analytical perspective; these goals emphasize the need for reading instruction in order to develop students' reading abilities.

I.1.3. Components of reading

As reading is an important skill and crucial when it comes to mastering a foreign language, it is fundamental to keep in mind the core components of the skill which include phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, prior knowledge and comprehension. Developing these components could provide learners with the needed tools to engage with texts effectively.

I.1.3.1. Phonological Awareness

One of the important components of reading is phonological awareness, it enables individuals to understand the sound structures of language. "Phonological awareness refers to the ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning. Studies of both alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages show that phonological awareness is highly correlated with reading ability" (Pang et al, 2003, p.9). Similarly, phonological awareness is a vital skill in language development. It refers to the capability to detect individual speech sounds within words and understand them.

I.1.3.2. Reading Fluency

In *"A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components of Effective Reading Instruction"* (2004), the author explains fluency as the ability to quickly recognize words and being able to read text rapidly and accurately giving more energy and capacity for comprehension (p.17). In other words, fluency is an important component in reading that is closely related to comprehension more than word recognition; it is a critical skill that encompasses the ability to

quickly recognize words. In addition, Pang et al (2003, p.11) claim that fluency is vital because it is highly related to comprehension; it may refer to the ability to read quickly and accurately. Fluent readers can understand the meanings of words effectively. This may highlight the idea that they are able to focus on the context and concepts within the text, these abilities may lead to better understanding and deeper engagement with the material.

I.1.3.3. Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension, as it refers to the number of words a reader understands and uses. Strong vocabulary could help the reader interpret texts and enhance comprehension. According to Pang et al (2003), vocabulary can be explained as follows "Good readers have good vocabulary knowledge. To understand a text, readers need to know the meanings of individual words. They construct an understanding of the text by assembling and making sense of the words in context. Vocabulary knowledge is difficult to measure; however, it is important in learning to read and in future reading development" (p.12).

Additionally, in *"A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components of Effective Reading Instruction"* (2004), the study reveals that vocabulary can refer to the words we use to communicate with the world. It can be classified into four types: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening Vocabulary might describe the couple of terms that we understand when conversing with others, while speaking vocabulary it may refer to the words we use in communication. Reading vocabulary often represents the terminology we encounter in print and can decode; writing vocabulary can be related to the lexis we produce when we write (p.22).

I.1.3.4. Prior knowledge

Generally, prior knowledge represents the different set of skills, perceptions and experiences that an individual has. It substantially influences the reader's understanding and the way how new information is processed. In this context, Sase (2014) confirms the importance of prior knowledge in which the results of his study revealed a highly significant connection between prior knowledge and reading comprehension. It indicates that good prior knowledge leads to improved reading comprehension.

When readers engage with a text, they use their prior knowledge along with hints from the text itself. This may help them to make predictions and enhance comprehension. (Collins &

Smith, 1982 as cited in Afflerbach, 1990). In other words, prior knowledge could significantly influence readers' understanding and interpretation as it helps them to make connections, to fill gaps and to predict content.

I.1.3.5. Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate objective of the reading instruction, it entails constructing precise and logical meaning because of making connections between the text and the reader's prior knowledge (*A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components of Reading"*(2004). In other terms, comprehension is an active process of building meanings in which readers construct meanings by synthesizing new information from the given material with their existing knowledge.

Reading comprehension entails a complex process where the reader actively interacts with the text and builds understanding based on their existing knowledge. This interaction requires the reader to engage deeply with the text and reflect on the ideas presented. This reveals that understanding a text refers to how the reader can connect the new ideas to what is already known. (Kasim & Raisha, 2017, p.311). In other words, comprehension is an active, engaged and reflective process that relies on the ability of the reader to interact with the text using the background knowledge.

I.1.4. Types of Reading

Reading is a complex activity and extensive and intensive reading are two fundamental approaches. Each type serves distinct purposes and cognitive engagement.

I.1.4.1. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading refers to reading for understanding general ideas rather than details; it can also refer to reading for pleasure rather than reading for a purpose. According to Grellet (1981), extensive reading might be defined as "reading longer texts, usually for one's pleasure. This is a fluency activity mainly involving global understanding" (p.4). Additionally, in this context, Halfield and Halfield (2008) assert "when we read longer texts, such as novels, nonfiction, academic books, we may use a variety of the above ways of reading; reading some parts rapidly and others in greater detail. It is important to give learners extensive reading, where

they read long texts only for pleasure, as well as intensive reading when they read a short text and practice reading skills" (p.93). Extensive reading emphasises reading actively long texts only for the sake of understanding and making general conclusions.

The main goal of the extensive reading approach is to involve learners in a significant amount of second language input with specific tasks related to the material. (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989, p.5 as cited in Pan, 2009, p.114). The idea is that when learners regularly encounter interesting and meaningful texts, they will be able to improve their language skills through their focus on the reading experience. Harmer (2007, p.283) adds that successful extensive reading requires providing students with accessible materials to read in which they can understand. To illustrate, students need to engage with suitable texts that they can work on it easily.

I.1.4.2. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is considered a classroom-oriented activity where students emphasis on grammatical or semantic details of a passage. Intensive reading calls students' focus towards linguistic structures, discourse markers, and other details of the text's surface to understand meanings and different relations (Brown, 2000, p.312). Moreover, Grellet (1981) explains intensive reading as "reading shorter texts to extract specific information" (p.4). In other words, it refers to the process of reading short texts to get specific information or specific answers. Halfield and Halfield (2008) add that "intensive reading means doing a series of tasks on a short text, usually in class time, where the teacher is on hand for questions and feedback" (p.96). It involves completing different tasks related to inadequate content (text) mainly in the class where the teacher is there for questions, feedback or any clarifications.

Intensive reading involves focused engagement with a text guided by the teacher and some specific tasks, the essential aim is to understand both the content of the text and the methods used to convey that meaning (Yasar, 2013, p.36). This demonstrates that intensive reading is a structured process that aims to enhance the analytical skills of readers; it can help them to go beyond the surface meaning and grasp the intended messages in addition to analyze the different techniques used by the author.

I.1.5. Reading Strategies

I.1.5.1. Scanning

Scanning is a reading skill that requires getting specific information or certain answers. It is about setting a target and searching the text to gain the needed information; this may require the reader to identify the keywords in the search item until getting the references. Scanning can be improved by practice (Glendinning and Holmstrom, 2004, p.18). Additionally, in simple explanation, Grellet (1981) defines scanning as "quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information" (p.4). This means that scanning is a reading strategy that is used to find specific information within the text without reading everything presented.

Moreover, Halfield and Halfield (2008) add "we also often scan a text to find a particular piece of information. To do this we move our eyes quickly over the text and only stop when we see the word or Information we are looking for" (p.92). In other words, it is about searching only for the specific needed information. Scanning is about finding a relation among what is sought and what is already provided in a text, processing very little information for long-term retention or even for immediate comprehension (Pugh, 1978 as cited in Yazar, 2013). It can be explained as a process of extracting relevant information by connecting the information needed and the details presented in the text.

I.1.5.2. Skimming

According to Grellet (1981), skimming might be described as "quickly running one's eyes over a text to get the gist of it" (p.4). It means that skimming is a way of reading to get the main idea of the content. Furthermore, skimming can be done when a reader aims to get the general idea of what the text is about, this may involve their focus on some terms and words per line, possibly captions or a few sentences in a given paragraph. These are the ones that mainly contain the core points (Halfield and Halfield, 2008, p.92). "The text is quickly processed to find important information that can be read more carefully later. Purposes of using this strategy might include:

- To establish a general sense of the text
- To fast set up a macro propositional structure as an outline summary
- To define the relevance of texts to established needs" (Urquhart and Cyril, 1996, as cited in Yazar, 2013, p.37).

The above purposes highlight the effectiveness of using a scanning strategy for quickly processing texts to identify the key information. Additionally, it helps readers to establish a

general understanding of the text, to create a suitable outline of the main ideas and to evaluate the content.

I.1.5.3. Predicting

In the process of reading, predicting is considered a skill more than a technique. It is the faculty of guessing what can come next using different grammatical, logical and cultural markers (Grellet, 1981, p.17). Michelle (2009, p.147) confirms that predicting is another important skill in the process of reading. They claim that it could be referring to the ability to understand what has happened so far and guess what next. Predicting is the ability of the reader to fairly get what the content presents and guessing what the text transmits indirectly. In addition, Harmer (1998) states the following:

> When we read texts in our language, we frequently have a good idea of the content before we read. Book covers give us a hint of what is in the book, photographs and headlines hint at what articles are about and reports look like reports before we read a single word. The moment we get this hint, the book cover, the headline the word-processed page, our brains start predicting what we are going to read. Expectations are set up and the active process of reading is ready to begin. Teachers should give students hints so that they can predict what is coming too. It will make them better and more engaged readers (p.70).

The excerpt emphasizes the importance of setting expectations before reading, suggesting that some hints, like the book cover, the headlines, could activate the reader's abilities.

I.1.5.4. Summarizing

According to Michelle (2009), summarising is "a valuable skill for students, a summary explains or shows what the whole text is about but in brief way. You can have them do it verbally, in the form of a diagram or in writing. Even children can summarize by drawing a picture based on what they have read" (p.147). Summarizing is an effective reading strategy in which explains and shed light on the main ideas without extra details, it helps readers to achieve

a general understanding, highlight the important content in short manner and organize the main ideas in their own style.

I.1.5.5. Previewing

"Unlike predicting, previewing is a very specific reading technique which involves using the table of contents, the appendix, the preface, the chapter, and paragraph headings to find out where the required information is likely to be "(Grellet, 1981, p.18). Previewing is a reading technique that requires some attention to the bold titles in the material such as the table of contents or the paragraph headings. It may be useful when the reader aims to obtain precise information.

I.2. Teaching Reading

I.2.1. Models of Reading Process

The models of the reading process provide basic frameworks for understanding how individuals cooperate with texts; the most notable models are the bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. Each approach depicts a different aspect of how readers generally work with texts.

I.2.1.1. Bottom-Up Model

The Bottom-up model of the reading process regards reading as essentially a translating, decoding, or encoding activity. In this approach, the reader begins with letters or larger units, and as they attend to them, they start to predict the word they spell. Once the words are recognized, they are interpreted into internal speech from which the reader obtains sense in the same way as listening. The followers of these models argue that reading is substantially the translation of graphic signs into an approximation of spoken speech. (Harris and Sipay, 1984 as cited in Ngabut, 2015, p.25-26).

According to Browne (1998), this model defines reading is an organized system that begins with the recognition of sounds, letters, and words to construct clauses. This model is also known as the part-to-whole model because it moves from part to the entire knowledge. (as cited in Baha, 2017, p.44). In simple terms, this model may rely on the recognition of individual parts

of speech to make meanings. It begins with the smallest units such as phonemes and morphemes, until the larger units, like words.

I.2.1.2. Top-Down Model

The top-down model explains reading as a systematic process of building meaning, as it involves the understanding and comprehension of large units rather than individual words. This model is often called the psycho linguistic model; the advocates of this paradigm include Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith. (Dubin and Bycina, 1991 as cited in Cahyono and Utami, 2006). Briefly, this model emphasizes the role of prior knowledge and the ability of the reader to form some expectations about the text; it gives a priority to understanding the general meaning instead of focusing on decoding individual words.

I.2.1.3. Interactive Model

Stanovich (1980) argues that the interactive model combines the features of both bottom-up and top-down approaches, in which the reading process becomes more meaningful and readers are more involved. In this model, readers could use their knowledge of the subject theme, their experiences and expectations to make predictions about the text (as cited in Baha, 2017, p.44). Furthermore, Brown (2000) adds that:

> A half-century ago, perhaps, reading specialists might have argued that the best way to teach reading is through bottom-up methodology: teach symbols, grapheme-phoneme correspondences, syllables, and lexical recognition first and then comprehension would be derived from the sum of the parts.   More recent research on teaching reading has shown that a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing, or what has come to be called **interactive reading**, is almost always a primary ingredient in successful teaching methodology because both processes are important (p.299).

In this passage, Brown (2000) highlights the different methodologies in reading instruction, presenting the idea of combining the two processes to become the interactive model. This model may be considered successful because it combines both top-down and bottom-up methodologies.

I.2.2. Harmer's Basic Methodological Model for Teaching Receptive Skills

The process of getting students to read a written text or listen to a recording includes both types of tasks. Type one requires students to read or listen for general understanding rather than looking for details, while in type two students examine the text to consider more specific information. The procedure for teaching receptive skills generally initiates with a "lead-in". This is where students are engaged with the reading material, trying to stimulate their schema (pre-existing knowledge). The receptive skills teacher should encourage students to activate and get in touch with that knowledge, so that they can predict what the content is likely to be. This kind of prediction can be induced by providing students with different hints or signs such as pictures, headlines, or a few words or phrases from the text and ask them to predict what these hints may indicate concerning the content. Additionally, the teacher should boost a general discussion of the topic or ask students to ask their questions. Once they are ready to read, some comprehension tasks should be prepared to encourage students to extract a more general overview of the topic. Finally, after reading, the teacher has to provide direct feedback to their students. (Harmer, 2007, p.271).
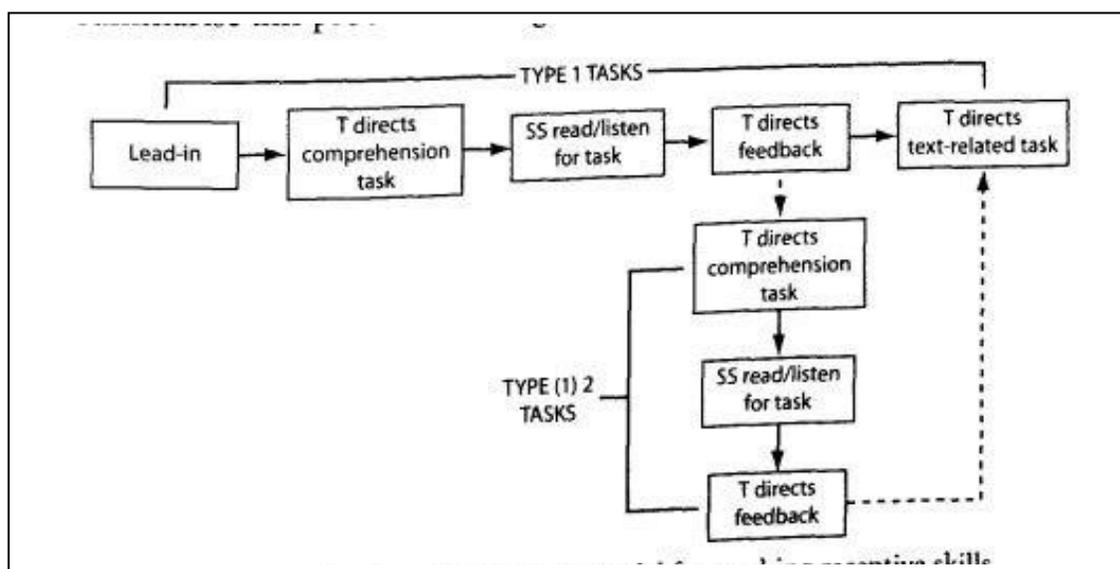
 Figure: A basic methodological model for teaching receptive skills. (Source: Harmer, 2007).

I.2.3. Principles behind Teaching Reading

There are several key foundations underlying effective reading instruction that contribute to successful reading literacy, Harmer (1998, p.70-71) presents a comprehensive framework discussing the main principles behind teaching reading, which could help both teachers and learners to create effective reading instruction. These principles are listed as follows:

I.2.3.1 Reading is not a passive skill

Reading is an active process, it can be done successfully when students understand the meaning of the words and understand the given arguments. This deeper level of comprehension could help them to make the information more meaningful and memorable; otherwise, they only scratch the surface of the text and forget it quickly. Which may limit students 'ability to engage in critical thinking and analysis.

I.2.3.2 Students need to be engaged with what they are reading

Engaging students with their reading is crucial for deeper understanding. When students connect with the text, their comprehension will be improved significantly. This engagement could enhance their critical thinking skills and their ability to analyze.

As with everything else in lessons, students who are not engaged with the reading text – not actively interested in what they are doing – are less likely to benefit from it. When they are fired up by the topic or the task, they get much more from what is in front of them (Harmer, 1998, p.70).

This statement describes the important role of students' engagement with the reading materials in enhancing their understanding and retention of information.

I.2.3.3 Students should be encouraged to respond to the content of a reading text, not just to the language

While it is important to study the reading text in terms of the language used, the number of paragraphs or the use of relative clauses; it is more important to focus on the content and the message of the text. It is necessary to give students a chance to respond to that message in which they can express themselves and their attitudes towards the topic.

I.2.3.4 Prediction is a major factor in reading

When we read a text in our language, we usually have a good idea about what the content is likely to be before we read it using some hints such as the book cover, titles, and headlines**.** The moment we get these hints our brain begins predicting what is coming, our expectations are set up and the process of reading starts. Giving these hints to students could help them to predict what is coming and make them good readers.

I.2.3.5 Match the task to the topic

When it comes to reading a text, it is essential to select good reading tasks, good questions and useful puzzles. The imaginative and challenging tasks could make the commonplace passage more interesting and engaging. Selecting good tasks and meaningful questions could transform the typical passage into an inviting and interesting experience.

I.2.3.6 Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full

Involving students in discussions is important to enhance their understanding of the reading material. "Any reading text is full of sentences, words, and ideas. It does not make sense just to get students to read it and then drop it to move on to something else. Good teachers integrate the reading text into interesting class sequences, using the topic for discussion and further tasks, using the language for study" (Harmer,1998, p.70). Simply, it is important to engage students in discussions and related tasks.

I.2.4. Schema Theory and Background Knowledge

The concept of schema refers to the mental structures that help individuals to interpret new information based on their prior knowledge. It highlights the significance of background knowledge in shaping our interpretations. Because of the development of research in cognitive science; the notion of schema appeared where the importance of background knowledge exists (Ngabut, 2015). Yule (1996) explains "our ability to arrive automatically at interpretations of the unwritten and the unsaid must be based on pre-existing knowledge structures. These structures

function like familiar patterns from previous experience that we use to interpret new experiences. The most general term for a pattern of this type is **schema**" (p.85).

Rumelhart (1980, p.34) states that a schema theory mainly refers to a theory about knowledge; it is about how the existing knowledge can be represented and how it can be useful in particular situations. A schema could be described as the data structure to represent the generic concepts stored in memory (as cited in Ngabut, 2015). Additionally, schema is a crucial concept in cognitive science; it is a theory of how language is acquired, processed and retrieved. It is a technical term used to represent the process of how humans process, organise and store information (Widdowson, 1983 as cited in Al-Issa, 2006). Moreover, Mark Clarke and Sandra Silberstein (1977, p.136-137) capture the essence of schema theory:

> Research has shown that reading is not only incidentally visual. More information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. That is, readers understand what they read because they are can take the stimulus beyond its graphic representation and assign it membership to an appropriate group of concepts already stored in their memories…..Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world(as cited in Brown,2000.p.299-300).

I.2.5. Phases in Reading Lesson

Teaching reading requires a structured approach to accommodate various learning styles and abilities. According to Brown (2000, p.315), a useful formula to keep in mind for teaching reading is the following three-part skeleton:

I.2.5.1 Before Reading: in this stage, the teacher should spend some time in introducing the topic to students, encouraging them to practice some techniques such as skimming, scanning or predicting. At this moment, students can activate their schema and bring their knowledge to the given text.

I.2.5.2 While Reading: during reading, students are required to take notes of some facts or rhetorical devices. This may show that they have a purpose of their reading not just because they have been ordered to read.

I.2.5.3 After Reading: in post reading phase, students have to do some comprehension activities related to what they have read. They also have to consider the purpose of the author, vocabulary used, and grammatical structures. The teacher may direct students to finish this stage by some kind of written exercises.

I.2.6. Techniques in Teaching Reading

Successful reading instruction requires developing some strategies and techniques to enhance students' reading abilities. According to Halfield and Halfield (2008, p.93), there are some sub skills that teachers use and practice with students in order to help them to focus their reading:

I.2.6.1. Brainstorming

It is an effective technique that involves thinking quickly about anything related to the topic; it helps the reader to draw a general picture about what they are reading in which they use what they have already know concerning the topic. Brainstorming requires readers to activate their brains trying to remember any related information.

I.2.6.2. Mind-mapping

"Mind-mapping involves putting ideas into some sort of order, for example into separate categories. Doing this kind of activity before a reading task helps to activate any vocabulary learners already have and gives them a chance to add this by putting together words and phrases from other members of the class" (Halfield and Halfield, 2008, p.93). Mind mapping is a tool that helps in organizing ideas and activating learners 'prior knowledge in addition to building vocabulary.

I.2.6.3. Guessing new words

This can be another useful sub skill to practice with learners, here; learners can guess the meaning of new terms and vocabulary even if they are not essential for understanding the text and can be understood only from the context. This strategy encourages active reading and critical thinking as it also enables readers to expand their vocabulary and comprehension skills.

2.6.4. Using linkers

Linkers are words that act as hints that present the coming content to the reader and describe the structure of the text. The teacher can help their learners to be familiar with these signals that will be useful to highlight the main ideas of the given text. Effectively using linkers could improve reading comprehension and make texts more accessible.

Conclusion

The chapter has presented a relevant overview about reading skills; it has attempted to describe reading skills through shedding light on different scholars' definitions, the core components, types and strategies. In the second section of the chapter, the researcher has tried to discuss teaching reading in which the different models, phases, techniques and principles have been reviewed. We can conclude that reading is a fundamental skill in teaching-learning process that learners should develop in their careers.

CHAPTER TWO

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The current chapter aims to report the findings of the present study, which encompasses the analysis of the data that were collected from students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. In this chapter, the researcher intends to analyze each instrument using the suitable analysis procedures. Additionally, the chapter attempts to present a comprehensible discussion aiming to answer the main research questions. Moreover, the chapter ends with some recommendations for both teachers and students.

II.1. Research Methodology

II.1.1. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the main data collection methods in research; it is a tool for gathering and recording information about a certain interest. According to Cohen et al (2018, p.471), questionnaire is a widely used instrument to collect data from respondents without the presence of the researcher, they can be cheap, valid, and easy to conduct. Questionnaire is a research method that consists a series of questions about a specific issue; it can be conducted in various ways such as paper- based or online. Moreover, Denscombe (2010, p.155) adds that questionnaires can be described as written information delivered immediately by people in response to questions asked by the researcher. The structure and the arrangement of the questionnaire are also vital to research design; the goal is for the questionnaire to be easy for respondents to understand and for the researcher to later process the data (Ruel et al., 2016 as cited in Leavy, 2017). Different procedures are better suited to different circumstances, and questionnaires are no exception. Although they can be used, perhaps skillfully, across a wide scale of research situations, questionnaires are at their most productive: when used with large numbers of participants in many situations, when what is required tends to be fairly direct information, and when the social atmosphere is open enough to allow full and honest answers. Questionnaires can take a variety of forms such as open and closed questions; open questions

could leave the respondent to decide the wording of the answer in which the answers can be longer than the questions. Closed questions are more limited because they have certain answers where the respondents choose only from the range of options that the researcher provide. (Denscombe, 2010, p.165-166).

Questionnaire is an effective data collection method, easy to administered, economical in the sense of materials, money and time, and it can be useful in collecting large amount of data about the people perceptions and attitudes. It eliminates ambiguity and ensures consistency by using prearranged response options. The possible drawbacks of questionnaires often coordinate closely with their benefits; for instance, pre-coded questions can be annoying for respondents, which may discourage them for participating. While this format provides an easier way for researchers to analyze responses, it can also feel limiting for respondents. (Denscombe, 2010, p.170).

II.1.2. Interviews

As Kvale (1996, p.14) remarks, "an *interview*, an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data" (as cited in Cohen et al 2018 ,p.506). The interview serves as a flexible tool for gathering data allowing for the use of multi-sensory channels: verbal, non-verbal, visual, spoken or written forms. It can do more than what surveys do, in which the interview could explore issues in depth, to see how and why people shape their ideas (Hochschild, 2009 as cited in Cohen et al 2018, p.506). Additionally, interviews can have different types as it can be face-to-face, one-on-one, focus group, or E-mail internet interview. These interviews involve a small number of unstructured and generally open-ended questions designed to elicit views and opinions from the participants. It is usually a useful instrument in qualitative research designs when participants cannot be directly observed. (Creswell, 2009, p.167-168). Effective interview research relies on establishing rapport with your participants through active listening. Eye contact and gestures can significantly demonstrate to participants that the researcher is engaged in what they are saying (Leavy, 2017, p.140).

While interviews can provide a rewarding experience for the informant compared with questionnaires, observation and experiments, analyzing the data could be challenging and time-consuming in which the interviews often produce non-standard responses due to their relatively

open format. Furthermore, the reliability of the interview results is limited, because the participants' responses are based on their personal views and perspectives. (Denscombe, 2010, p.193-194).

II.1.3. Research Participants

The participants were selected purposely, following non-probability purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was administered to 30 undergraduate EFL students at the University of Biskra; 10 first-year license students and 20 second-year license students. Thus, the selection of participants was justified by the students' current enrollment in the reading module, their exposure to reading materials and tasks and their ability to contribute to the study findings.

The structured interview was conducted with 5 teachers of the reading course at the same department; the selection of teaching staff participants was specifically targeting educators with experience in teaching the reading course. This methodological choice assumes that the selected participants would provide in-depth insights into pedagogical practices, methodological approaches and the various challenges encountered in the EFL reading classroom.

II.1.4. Research Tools

As it has mentioned before, two instruments have been used in this study: a questionnaire for first and second year students and a structured interview for reading course teachers at the same department of Biskra University.

II.1.4.1. The Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions, which were divided into three sections. Practically, these questions were developed based on the theoretical part of the study aiming to address the challenges that undergraduate EFL students encounter in the reading course. The questionnaire had ten closed-ended questions and three open ended-questions. The first section of the questionnaire, entitled "personal information", was intended to gather some background information about the participants. This section had questions concerning the year of the study, the level in the English language and the years of studying the reading course. Additionally, the

second section under the title of "reading challenges" contains seven questions that seek to collect information about students' challenges in reading. Finally, the third section was about two questions that open the door for students to share any experiences or thoughts related to reading challenges. The questions were either Likert scales or multiple-choice in addition to open questions.

II.1.4.2. The Teachers' Interview

The interview was conducted with five teachers of the reading course at the Department of English of Biskra University. The main objective of the interview was to collect exact and detailed information about the teachers' challenges in teaching reading course. It contained nine questions that have been developed based on the research questions and the available literature. The teachers were chosen randomly based on their availability and commitment.

II.2. Research Results and Analysis

This section presents the results and the analysis of the investigation; it provides a summary of the main results derived from students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. The questionnaire responses were analyzed in terms of the number and percentage. Moreover, the interview' results were analyzed thematically and were organized in tables.

II.2.1. Analysis of Questionnaire' results. This part presents the analysis of the questionnaire.

II.2.1.1 Personal Information. The personal questions were designed to explore students' information related to level of study, level in English, duration of a reading course, and difficulties in reading materials.

II.2.1.1.1 Students' Current Level of Study:

Options	Number	Percentage
L1	10	33.3
L2	20	66.7
Total	30	100

Table 1: Students' Year of Study

According to the results obtained from this table, we can notice that 20 respondents are second-year students (66. 7%), while 10 of them are first-year students (33. 3%). This indicates that second year respondents are more than first year respondents.

II.2.1.1.2 Students' Level in English

Level	Number	Percentage
Beginner	1	3.3
Pre-intermediate	3	10
Intermediate	22	73.3
Upper-mediate	2	6.7
Advanced	2	6.7
Total	30	100

Table 2: Students' Level in English.

Based on the results presented in the table above, 73. 3% (22) of the participants had an intermediate level in the English language. 10% (3) of the respondents were just pre-intermediate. 6. 7% (2) of them had an upper-intermediate level. 6. 7% (2) of the students saw themselves to be advanced, and only 3. 3% (1) of the respondents had a beginner level. This indicates that the majority of students have intermediate level in the English language.

II.2.1.1. 3. Duration of Reading Course Study

Years	Number	Percentage
One year	10	33.3
Two years	17	56.7
Three years	3	10
Total	30	100

Table 3: Duration of Reading Course Study.

The results showed that (33. 3%) of the respondents were studying reading for the first time (one year). Whereas, most of the students (56. 7%) were studying a reading course for two years but only 10% of them were studying a reading course for three years. This may indicate that three students have repeated the year.

II.2.1.1.4 Difficulties in Reading Materials

Reading materials	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	63.3
No	11	36.7
Total	30	100

Table 4: Difficulties in Reading materials

Apparently, through the responses, 63. 3% (19) of the respondents answered yes while 36. 7% (11) replied no. This indicates that the majority of students struggle with understanding and engaging with reading materials.

II.2.1.2. Reading Challenges. This section aims to identify students' challenges in reading.

II.2.1.2.1. Reading Challenges

Options	Number	Percentage
5a. vocabulary comprehension	12	40
5b. understanding idiomatic expressions	13	43.3
5c. grasping grammar and syntax	10	33.3
5d. difficulty with text types	10	33.3
5e. limited background knowledge	14	46.7
5f. lack of reading strategies	5	16.7
5g. lack of interest	6	20
5h. difficulty in concentration	7	23.3
5i. time constraints	2	6.7

Table 5: Reading Challenges

From the results obtained in the table, items E and B (46. 7% and 43. 3%) are the specific challenges that students face in reading in which Students reported that they mostly struggle with limited background knowledge and understanding idiomatic expressions, followed by (40%) who have difficulty with vocabulary comprehension. Moreover, (33. 3%) faced difficulties with grasping grammar, and an equal percentage struggled with difficulty in different text types. Furthermore, (23. 3%) of the informants experienced challenges with maintaining concentration.

Additionally, (20%) of respondents struggled with lack of interest in the text while only (6. 7%) of them faced challenges with time constraints. This data suggest that EFL undergraduate learners encounter a variety of challenges during the reading process.

II.2.1.2.2. Frequency of Encountered Challenges

Option	Number	Percentage
Always	1	3.3
Often	3	10
Sometimes	23	76.7
Rarely	3	10
Never	0	00

Table 6: Frequency of Encountered Challenges.

As the table demonstrates, we notice that (3. 3%) 1 of the students always encounter these difficulties. Whereas (76. 7%) 23 of the respondents sometimes face these challenges and which a more substantial rate. An equal percentage (10%) was reported for items 2 and 4 (often, rarely) while none of the participants chose item 5(never). This information suggests a significant existence of reading difficulties among the participants.

II.2.1.2.3. Most frequent challenges

Option	Number	Percentage
7a. Encountering unfamiliar words	13	43.3
7b. The need to reread passages	10	33.3
7c. Struggling with text structure	6	20
7d. Forgetting what have been read	15	50
7e. Connecting ideas across different texts	8	26.7
7f. Identifying the main ideas	4	13.3

Table 7: Most Frequent Challenges.

As the data shows, (50%) 15 of the respondents mentioned that they frequently forget what they have read shortly after finishing a text, and this is the most frequent challenge for them. (43. 3%) 13 of the students claimed that they usually struggle with unfamiliar words in

academic texts. Another finding is that (33. 3%) 10 of the informants frequently need to reread passages to understand them fully. Furthermore, (26. 7%) 8 of the students mentioned that the most frequent challenge is to connect ideas across different texts. For (20%) 6 of the respondents, understanding the structure of academic articles is a challenging task that usually encounter while (13. 3%) 4 of them found it difficult to identify the main ideas in reading passages.

The results above indicate that EFL undergraduate learners encounter a wide range of challenges and complex experiences with reading process, these can highly include the frequency of forgetting what have been read shortly after finishing a text and encountering unfamiliar words while reading academic texts.

II.2.1.2.4. Most challenging types of questions

Option	Number	Percentage
8a. Suggesting a title	2	6.7
8b. Making predictions	13	43.3
8c. Drawing logical relations	14	46.7
8d. Finding the general theme of the text	7	23.3

Table 8: Most Challenging Types of Questions.

In the table above, we can notice that (46. 7%) 14 of the respondents claimed that item (8c) is the most challenging type of question, in which they have difficulty in drawing logical relations and connections. (43. 3%) 13 of the students mentioned item (8b); they found it challenging to make predictions about the text. Moreover, (23. 3%) 7 of the informants argued that item (8d) can be a challenging type of questions; they find it difficult to highlight the general theme of the text. Furthermore, only (6. 7%) 2 of the students found it difficult to suggest a title for a text.

The data reveal that EFL undergraduate learners have a higher level of difficulty with questions related to making predictions and identifying key themes of the text, this could be justified by their limited background, lack of analytical skills or other factors.

II.2.1.2.5. Most Challenging Type of Texts

Option	Number	Percentage
9a. Academic articles	13	43.3
9b. Short stories	6	20
9c. Novels	15	50
9d. News articles	11	36.7

Table 9: Most Challenging Types of Texts.

The data collected demonstrates that (50%) 15 of the students mentioned that novels are the most challenging type of texts to read; this may relate to the complex language used or the length of the novels compared to other types of reading. Additionally, (43. 3%) 13 of the respondents claimed that academic articles are the most difficult genre of texts; students may struggle with complex language, specialised terminology or the formal style of writing.

Furthermore, (36. 7%) 11 of the participants found it difficult to read news articles; this was due to some factors such as sentence structure, lack of background knowledge or lack of engagement. Finally, only (20%) 6 of the students argued that short stories are a challenging type of text. According to these results, we assume that the majority of participants struggle with reading novels and academic articles.

II.2.1.2.6. Accessibility of Reading Materials

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	21	70
No	1	3.3
Somewhat	8	26.7
Total	30	100

Table 10: Accessibility of Reading Materials.

The majority of students (70%) answered yes and mentioned that the reading materials provided in the course are accessible. (26. 7%) 8 of the informants responded with somewhat, while only (3. 3%) 1 of the participants argued that the reading materials are unreachable. The findings indicate that the reading materials used in EFL classes are accessible and practical.

II.2.1.2.7. Impact of Challenges on Performance in EFL Classes

Positive Impact	. Determination: students become more determined to overcome these difficulties. .Identifying Aims: students set personal goals to improve reading skills.
Negative Impact	. Low Motivation: students' lack of participation, lack of interest. . Poor Comprehension: poor understanding of texts. . Low Confidence: anxiety about discussing texts. . Time Constraints: students struggle to keep up with reading assignments, affects on overall grades.

Table 11: the Impact of Reading Challenges on Students' Performance**.**

Overall, these results highlight that reading challenges in EFL classes can significantly hinder students' performance; it could affect students' motivation, comprehension and confidence. However, some participants argued that these challenges can also encourage them to improve their reading skills and enhance their language learning process. To overcome these challenges teachers should help their students by providing support guidance while students should work on these challenges.

II.2.1.3. Final thoughts. This section seeks to explore students' thoughts related to their experiences towards reading challenges and their suggestions to improve the skill.

II.2.1.3.1. Students' Experiences Related to Reading Challenges

. Language Proficiency	. Students mentioned the impact of vocabulary knowledge on comprehension, complexity of sentence structure and complex language.
. Reading Strategies	. Students' lack of reading strategies and its effect on their performance in reading classes.
Cultural References	. Students have difficulty in reading some cultural references that impact their understanding.
Language Skills	. Students claimed that reading challenges have an impact performance in other skills such as listening and speaking.

Table 12: Students' Experiences Related to Reading Challenges.

The findings above represent that students' experiences are closely related to their language proficiency, in which the lack of vocabulary, the structure of sentences impact students' language level. It is also linked to reading strategies, as participants mentioned their lack of reading strategies and their impact on their performance. Some participants reported that reading challenges have a significant impact on other language skills; it could affect their performance in listening and speaking. Briefly, the results indicate the need for collaboration between teachers and students to overcome these challenges.

II.2.1.3.2. Suggestions for Improving Reading Skills

The majority of students suggested that reading skills can be improved by practising reading. Extensive reading can highly enhance reading abilities; students could increase their vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, critical thinking and cultural awareness. As readers engage with a variety of texts, they could encounter new vocabulary, grasp more complex ideas and structures, and be familiar with multiple genres. Moreover, readers could be able to analyze and reflect on the content. The suggestions provided by students indicate their awareness of the importance of reading skills in language learning.

II.2.2 the Analysis of Interview Results. The following part presents the findings of the interview.

II.2.2.Question 01: How many years have you taught a reading course?

This question aims to understand teachers' level of experience trying to determine how they familiar they are with the course. Additionally, years of experience could provide insights into teachers' background.

Teacher	Response
1	I have been teaching reading for two years.
2	In fact, this is my first year.
3	For four years.

| 4 | For one year. |
| 5 | I have been teaching reading for four years. |

Table 13: Years of Teaching a Reading Course**.**

The responses to the first question regarding teachers' experience in teaching reading indicate that the five teachers have different backgrounds and experience levels, varying from one to four years. Two teachers are new to the course, while three of them are more experienced and more familiar with the module. This could represent their awareness of the current situation and their ability to share their experiences and different challenges in addition to the opportunity to provide a broader perspective on teaching practices and methodologies.

II.2.2.2. Question 02: How many sessions do you generally teach in one semester?

Inquiring about the number of sessions teachers teach in one semester is important to draw a clear picture about the context and teachers' workload.

Teacher	**Response**
1	I generally teach twenty sessions, I mean two sessions per week.
2	We do not count the number of sessions but the number of weeks. we have thirteen weeks, and this course supposed to be taught two Sessions a week.
3	Two sessions per week.
4	Generally, two sessions per week.
5	In one semester, there are more than twenty sessions.

Table 14: Number of Sessions for a Reading Course.

Based on the given answers, the interviewees agreed that the standard of teaching a reading course is two sessions per week, totalling twenty sessions in a semester. This consistency of sessions could indicate an interactive learning environment.

II.2.2.Question 03: Can you share your approach to teaching reading?

The major aim of this question is to know more about teachers' methodologies in teaching reading course, as it helps to understand the different approaches of reading instruction.

Teacher	Response
1	I often use a guided-reading approach, I select the texts and instructions, and I guide students through their reading practice.
2	I usually try to vary the methods and techniques, sometimes I ask students to read, sometimes I ask them direct questions, sometimes we work on the question of vocabulary.
3	Use a student-centred approach with active participation. Focus on critical thinking, comprehension and analysis of texts.
4	It depends on the time constraints and course objectives. I sometimes use skimming, scanning, and extensive reading, but not intensive.
5	-Modelling reading -Shared reading. -Asking questions and group discussions, summaries. -Letting students choose the book they read to encourage exploration and a deeper relationship with literature. -Encouraging students to read the same content multiple times.

Table 15: Teachers' Approaches to Teaching Reading.

When it comes to the approach used to teaching reading, interviewees provided varied answers from different perspectives. Guided reading, asking questions, student-centred approach, critical thinking, different reading skills, modelling reading and shared reading are the different approaches used by teachers in teaching reading. As the answers are somehow different, all of them are based on critical thinking, asking questions, and active participation and classroom discussions. Using a multifaceted approach to teaching reading could be beneficial for targeting learners' individual needs, in which each approach can address various learning

styles and skills. Incorporating multiple pedagogical approaches, such as shared reading or guided reading, might help learners to engage more effectively in the course.

II.2.2.Question 04: What teaching strategies do you use to teach reading?

The reason behind asking about the strategies used is to gain insights into the specific strategies and teachers to teach reading currently use techniques.

Teacher	Response
1	I often use the BDP strategy (before, during and post-reading).
2	I usually use varied classroom activities.
3	-Pre-reading activities (contextual background, vocabulary preview). -Guided reading sessions with discussions and questions. -Close reading techniques to analyze themes and arguments.
4	-Answering questions. -Generating questions. -Summarizing. -Graphics and semantic organizers.
5	-Comprehension monitors strategies. -Direct explanation. -Guided practice. -Application.

Table 16: Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Reading.

Concerning this question, most of the interviewees agreed about using the BDP strategy, they guide students in their practice before, during, and after reading. They focused on using guided practice strategies, and asking questions in order to enhance students' understanding and engagement. Additionally, teacher 02 shed light on the significance of varying the activities for improving students' reading and encouraging participation and discussions. Moreover, teacher 04 highlight their interest in using graphics, summaries and story structure aiming to make the material more accessible, improving comprehension and critical thinking.

II.2.2.Question 05: What problems do you usually face in teaching reading?

This question seeks to identify the specific difficulties that teachers encounter in the course. This could help to highlight common themes and categorize challenges.

Teacher	Response
1	-The appropriate selection of texts. -The techniques used sometimes do not workable. -Time allocated to each reading phase (difficulty in making balance between the different phases).
2	-Students usually feel shy and do not read during class. -Lack of motivation.
3	-Varied reading levels. -Lack of motivation. -Poor vocabulary and background knowledge affect comprehension. -Limited critical thinking skills in analyzing texts.
4	-Students' vocabulary misuse. -Students' lack of motivation. -Lack of awareness of the importance of reading leading to seriousness.
5	- Lack of motivation.

Table 17: Teachers' Obstacles in Teaching Reading

For the problems faced in teaching reading, interviewees tackled this point from different perspectives. They agreed about students' lack of motivation, which demonstrates the importance of it in the learning process specifically in reading classes. Additionally, teacher 03 and 04 mentioned the problem of vocabulary misuse, which would significantly affect students' comprehension. Teacher 02 also added shyness as a serious problem in which students do not be able to read effectively during classes. Moreover, teacher 01 mentioned the difficulty of selection the texts, the techniques used and time constraints. Therefore, reading teachers face multiple challenges in classrooms.

II.2.2. Question 06: How do you manage varying reading abilities within a single classroom?

The purpose of this question is to gain insights into the methods used by teachers to teach reading for diverse learners; this could identify the common practices to enhance reading instruction.

Teacher	Response
1	I often assign one text to the entire class with exercises for all students. In the case of different abilities, I ask students to join students with good reading abilities.
2	I rely on varying the techniques of teaching and activities to be able to reach the different reading styles.
3	-Use of differentiated instruction (levelled questions. -Providing extra support for weaker readers. -Encouraging peer collaboration.
4	-Managing with few students. -Encouraging group work. -Reading aloud (selecting students to read).
5	Offering a variety of materials in class taking into account that students are with different abilities and interests.

Table 18: Management of Varying Reading Abilities in the Classroom.

Regarding this question, the interviewees mentioned different strategies to manage the varying reading abilities within a single classroom. Teacher 01 declared that they usually join students with low reading abilities with those who have good reading skills; this strategy may help students to work collectively. Teacher 02 focused on varying the techniques and the activities aiming to reach different styles and abilities. For teacher 03, they added some ideas concerning peer collaboration and diversity of instruction and questions in order to target those differences. Moreover, teacher 04 highlighted the usefulness of the reading aloud strategy that depends on selecting students to read. Teacher 05 added the idea of providing different materials during class aiming to cover the different levels. Thus, the management of varying reading abilities within a single classroom is a challenging task for teachers.

II.2.2.Question 07: What are the obstacles you face in tracking students' reading process?

The question above aims to highlight the practical difficulties teachers face in assessing students' reading process.

Teacher	Response
1	-Overcrowded classes. -Inconsistency in students' attendance. -Distinct reading preferences and abilities.
2	-Lack of reading habits.
	-Difficulty in measuring deep comprehension beyond surface-level understanding. -Limited students' participation in discussing. -Inconsistent reading habits outside the classroom.
4	-The use of artificial intelligence tools during class.
5	-Poor reading comprehension. -Lack of fluency. -Limited vocabulary knowledge. -Difficulty and lack of motivation and engagement.

Table 19: Teachers' Difficulties in Assessing Students' Reading Process

The interviewees mentioned different obstacles when it comes to evaluating students' reading process. Teacher 01 highlighted different key problems: overcrowded classes, inconsistent attendance that may disrupt the learning process, in addition to the distinct reading preferences and abilities among students. Teacher 02 mentioned one major challenge, which is the lack of reading habits, which can make it difficult for the teacher to assess the true abilities of students. Teacher 03 also demonstrated the difficulty in measuring students' deep comprehension and limited participation in discussions. For teacher 04, the main obstacle is the use of ChatGPT in doing classroom tasks. Finally, teacher 05 focused on the problems of students' poor reading comprehension, lack of fluency, limited vocabulary and lack of motivation. As a result, these obstacles should be treated to create more effective reading instruction.

II.2.2.Question 08: What challenges do you encounter with the existing reading curriculum?

The question seeks to describe the challenges teachers encounter with reading curriculum, which can provide valuable insights to enhance teaching practices aiming to create a relevant curriculum.

Teacher	Response
1	-The absence of a detailed description of the course. -No clear statement of the objectives.
2	-No clear curriculum of the course.
3	-Rigid structure that does not cater to different reading levels. -Limited diversity in text selection.
4	-No clear program. -Time allotted.

Table 20: Teachers' Challenges with the Reading Curriculum.

Discussing the problems that teachers face with the curriculum of reading course, the interviewees agreed that there is no clear curriculum for the course. Additionally, teacher 03 mentioned the challenge of limited diversity in texts selection where the variety of texts available for reading is narrow. Moreover, teacher 04 highlighted the problem of time allotted. Teacher 05 did not like to answer this question. Thus, these claims suggest the need for a relevant curriculum for the reading course.

II.2.2.Question 09: What are your suggestions for enhancing reading skills and overcoming reading comprehension difficulties?

The purpose of this question is to address teachers' experiences in the classroom aiming to identify practical solutions that may enhance reading skills.

Teacher	Response
1	-Extensive reading. -Faculty reading clubs.
2	-Reading.
3	-Encouraging active reading strategies. -Incorporating multimodal texts (videos, audio books...)

	-Promoting a culture of reading through book clubs.
4	-Reading should be refined; we should have a unique program.
	-Workshops.

Table 21: Teachers' Suggestions for Improving Reading Skills

The interviewees mentioned different suggestions for improving reading skills, teacher 01 suggest extensive reading and faculty reading clubs which can create a collaborative environment. Teacher 03 proposed different strategies such as active reading strategies, incorporating multimodal texts, and promoting a culture of reading; this may help to make reading more accessible and engaging as well as it can be an important contribution to encourage a culture of reading. For teacher 04, there were suggestions about refining a reading curriculum in addition to the need for some workshops. Finally, Teacher 05 did not suggest anything for this. Therefore, these suggestions could be useful to enhance reading skills and overcoming these challenges.

2.3 Discussion of the Results

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the challenges of reading skill in EFL classes of Biskra University, aiming to describe the difficulties that both teachers and undergraduate learners encounter in reading classes. Based on the data collected from students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews, the following part aims to provide a summary of the main results.

Firstly, the data obtained from the questionnaire shows that EFL undergraduate learners struggle with several challenges in reading classes. One of the difficulties is limited background knowledge, the participants pointed out that they struggle with reading comprehension due to limited background knowledge. As we know that background knowledge refers to what the reader knows about the topic, comprising prior experiences and information, and it plays a vital role in the reading process. Thus, there is a connection between reading comprehension and background knowledge in which high prior knowledge leads to high reading performance.

Another challenge that the respondents mentioned is vocabulary comprehension, which significantly affects their reading performance. Vocabulary is a crucial aspect in the reading process and one of the essential components of the skill; struggling with unfamiliar words is

directly impacts the reader's comprehension. As a result, enhancing vocabulary knowledge is essential for improving reading comprehension. Additionally, EFL learners have a difficulty with grammar. As grammar is an important aspect in language learning, any difficulties in grasping grammar can lead to misunderstanding of ideas. This struggle can be a result of inconsistent practice or lack of basic knowledge. Moreover, the respondents highlighted their difficulties with the text' types. They face challenges in understanding different types of texts which may refer to their lack of familiarity with text structures and genres. Reading comprehension is linked to the types of text and their organization, in which each type has its specific structure that influences how the information is presented and understood.

Secondly, the data collected from teachers' interviews indicate that EFL teachers of reading course encounter multiple challenges. Starting with lack of motivation, teachers focused on the problem of students' lack of motivation during reading classes and considered it as a significant challenge. This lack could significantly affect the teaching process in different aspects, making it difficult for teachers to focus on delivering content effectively. Furthermore, the participants reported their difficulties in selection of texts. Teachers may find it difficult to select texts that are accessible for all learners. Moreover, the results show that teachers often struggle with the techniques used in reading classes. It is difficult for many educators to implement effective techniques that suit varying reading levels and backgrounds within the same classroom. Another challenge could be the curriculum of the reading course, many teachers face challenges due to the absence of a detailed description of the course and objectives. Additionally, time constraints in which teachers face significant difficulties in discussion time, feedback and assessment.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

As any other research, our study faces some limitations related to time constrains, students' participation and teachers' availability and resources. Firstly, time plays a vital role during the distribution of the questionnaire and conducting teachers' interview. Secondly, students' participation was limited because not all students agreed to collaborate in the questionnaire. Thirdly, it should be acknowledged that not all reading teachers were available to participate in the interview. Finally, the lack of resources. Thus, the findings of the study could be affected by these factors.

Conclusion

The second chapter discussed the fieldwork; the first section was about research methodology in which the researcher provided a theoretical framework. In the second section focused on analyzing the findings in which the researcher has analyzed and discussed the findings obtained from the data that is gathered from students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. Additionally, this chapter ended with limitations of the study and some recommendations for teachers and students. We can conclude that both teachers and undergraduate students encounter different challenges in EFL reading classes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in the analysis of data, the researcher suggests some recommendations:

For Teachers:

- ❖ Teachers need to collaborate to share effective practices and strategies for teaching reading.

- ❖ Educators need to develop a flexible curriculum with clear objectives.

- ❖ Teachers need to raise students' awareness about the importance of reading skill.

- ❖ Teachers need to incorporate diverse materials to engage students and reflect their background knowledge.

- ❖ Teachers need to incorporate technology tools (apps, e-books) to support reading development.

For Students:

- ❖ Students should actively engage in discussions about readings to enhance comprehension.

- ❖ Students have to attend workshops and joining clubs for reading.

- ❖ Students have to develop their reading habits.

General Conclusion

Reading is one of the essential skills in language learning, it has a major role in academic success as it enables students to read, comprehend and analyze complex texts across different subjects. Currently, as EFL, students encounter different research articles and specialised literature; teaching reading as a course has become applicable. Despite the importance of the skill, foreign language students are facing several challenges in reading comprehension. Furthermore, this study aims to describe the major difficulties of reading skill in EFL reading classes of Biskra University.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. In accordance with this approach, we employed two data collection methods: a questionnaire for undergraduate EFL students and an interview for teachers of the reading course. The research included two main chapters; the theoretical chapter provided detailed overview on reading discussing the main aspects related to the skill, while the fieldwork devoted to the methodology and the analysis of students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. The findings of this investigation indicated that both teachers and EL students have difficulties in reading classes.

The results of the questionnaire showed that undergraduate students face various challenges in reading classes, mainly limited background knowledge, difficulties with grammar, types of text and vocabulary. Moreover, the results of the interview revealed that teachers have several difficulties related to reading course. Students' lack of motivation, selection of texts, and the techniques used, the absence of a curriculum, in addition to time constraints are the major challenges in reading classes.

In conclusion, this research aims to describe the challenges of reading skill in EFL reading classes. Further research could explore other key areas related to reading skills; other researchers might assess the effectiveness of specific teaching methods on improving reading skills or examine the cognitive factors that influence reading comprehension. Additionally, this research could lay the groundwork for other works with a large sample and different methodology.

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Appendixes

Students' Questionnaire

Dear student,

You are kindly invited to complete this questionnaire, which is a part of study which is designed to investigate into the challenges of reading skills in EFL classes. Your answers are really appreciated. Therefore, be sure that your answers will be anonymous; your answers will not be judged and will be used only for research purposes.

Section 1: Personal Information

Q01.Specify your current year of study: L1 $\bigcirc$ L2 $\bigcirc$

Q02.Describe your level in English

Beginner   Pre-intermediate   Intermediate   upper intermediate

Advanced

Q03.How long have you been studying reading course?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q04.Do you face any difficulties in reading materials?

Yes $\bigcirc$ No $\bigcirc$

Section 2: Reading challenges

Q05.What specific challenges do you face while reading? (Select all that apply)

◯ Vocabulary comprehension

◯ Understanding idiomatic expressions

◯ Grasping grammar and syntax

◯ Difficulty with different text types

◯ Limited background knowledge on the topic

◯ Lack of reading strategies (predicting, questioning, previewing…..)

◯ Lack of interest in the text

◯ Difficulty in maintaining concentration

◯ Time constraints

Other (please

specify)…………………………………………………………...................................

.

Q06.How often do you encounter these challenges?

◯ Always

◯ Often

◯ Sometimes

◯ Rarely

◯ Never

Q07.Indicate the most frequented challenges do you experience from the following:

◯ I frequently encounter unfamiliar words when reading academic texts

◯ I frequently need to reread passages to understand them fully

◯ I frequently struggle to understand the structure of academic articles

◯ I frequently forget what I have read shortly after finishing a text

◯ I frequently find it hard to connect ideas across different texts

◯ I frequently find it challenging to identify the main ideas in reading passages

Q08.What types of questions in reading comprehension do you find them the most challenging?

◯ Suggesting a title for a text

◯ Making predictions

◯ Drawing logical relations and connections

◯ Finding the general theme of the text

Other…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………..………………………………………………………………………………………...

Q09.What type of texts do you find the most challenging to read?

◯ Academic articles

◯ Short stories

◯ Novels

◯ News articles

Q10.Do you feel that the reading materials provided in your course are accessible?

Yes ◯   No ◯   Somewhat ◯

Q11.How do these challenges affect your performance in EFL classes?

………

………

………

………

………

Section 3: Final thoughts

Q12.Please share any other thoughts or experiences related to reading challenges in EFL classes?

………

………

………

………

………

Q13.How do you think you're reading skills could be improved?

………

………

………

……

……

Thank you for your participation

Teachers ` interview

1. How many years have you been teaching reading?

2. How many sessions do you generally teach in one semester?

3. Can you share your approach to teaching reading?

4. What teaching strategies do you use to teach reading?

5. What problems do you usually face in teaching reading?

6. How do you manage varying reading abilities within a single classroom?

7. What are the obstacles you face in tracking student reading progress?

8. What challenges do you encounter with the existing reading curriculum?

9. What are your suggestions for enhancing reading skills and overcoming reading comprehension difficulties?

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف التحديات الرئيسية في دروس القراءة ,بشكل اكثرتحديدا,لفهم صعوبات الطلاب الجامعيين في فهم القراءة ووصف التحديات التي يواجهها الأساتذة في تدريس هذه الدورة.لتحقيق هذا الهدف تم اعتماد منهجية البحث الوصفي. كانت عينة الدراسة من طلاب السنة الأولى والثانية في قسم اللغة الانجليزية وآدابها في جامعة بسكرة . تم اختيار ثلاثين طالبا للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة والإجابة على الاستبيان كما تم إجراء مقابلة مع خمسة أساتذة لمادة القراءة. كشفت نتائج هذا البحث أن طلاب اللغة الانجليزية يواجهون عدة تحديات في القراءة منها :محدودية المعرفة الخلفية , صعوبات تتعلق بالمفردات ,القواعد وأنواع النصوص .بالإضافة إلى ذلك ,أشارت النتائج إلى أن الأساتذة يعانون من صعوبات متعددة مثل :نقص تحفيز الطلاب,صعوبات في اختيار النصوص ,التقنيات المستخدمة ,بعض التحديات المتعلقة بمنهج مادة القراءة بالإضافة إلى التقيد الزمني . بشكل عام , يسلط البحث الضوء على التحديات التي تؤثر على كل من الطلبة والأساتذة ,مما يشير إلى ضرورة إتباع بعض الاستراتيجيات لتحسين مهارات القراءة في سياقات تعليم اللغة الانجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحديات ― مهارات القراءة ― طلبة سنة أولى و ثانية ― أساتذة ماده القراءة