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The Role of Syntactic Awareness in Reading Comprehension: Case Study of Second-Year Students at Mohamed Khider University - Biskra

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Board of Examiners

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Declaration

I, Retima Salim, do herby declare that this submitted master dissertation is my original work and the result of my efforts. I also declare that except where there are references and citations, all the words in this work are my own and has not been previously submitted to or published by any other person, institution, or university for the completion of any degree.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my generous parents and my entire family, as well as to all my loved ones. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my family, for their support in completing and perfecting this work.

Thank you to all who contributed to this work.

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List of Abbreviations

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

FL   Foreign Language

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a cornerstone skill in EFL learning, and its development is closely tied to learners' ability to understand sentence structure. This study investigates the relationship between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among second-year EFL students at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. This research employs a quantitative approach, using a structured online questionnaire to assess participants' syntactic awareness and its effect on their reading comprehension performance. The findings reveal a positive connection between learners' syntactic awareness and their reading comprehension abilities, supporting the idea that suggests syntax awareness contributes to more effective reading skills. However, the results also highlight the variability in students' ability to apply syntactic knowledge during reading, suggesting a need for differentiated teaching strategies. The study recommends integrating explicit grammar instruction, guided practice with complex sentence structures, and autonomous reading opportunities into EFL instruction. The current research provides valuable insights into the pedagogical importance of syntax in reading development.

Key words: Reading comprehension, Sentence structure, Syntax awareness, Teaching strategies.

General Introduction

Reading comprehension is an essential skill for EFL learners because of its ability to ease the process of understanding various academic texts and written materials. This skill is also significant for effective communication and understanding the meanings of texts. Syntax awareness, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and analyze the structure of sentences. This skill plays a fundamental role for EFL learners. By mastering syntax skills through recognizing the grammatical patterns and relations between sentence elements, EFL learners can interpret meaning in written texts more effectively.

Because it is vital to comprehend complex texts in EFL, learners are required to enhance their syntax knowledge and reading comprehension skills. One of the major difficulties that many learners face is the struggle to understand advanced reading materials, this struggle is usually a result of poor syntax knowledge. The current study examines the relation between reading comprehension and syntax awareness to understand this link is an essential step to provide teachers and learners the appropriate methods to work with EFL learners. This study aims to improve EFL learners' reading proficiency and recommend the appropriate teaching methods.

1. Problem statement

Many EFL students at Mohamed Khider University face challenges in reading comprehension. This challenge hinders EFL learners' understanding of their lectures and overall performance in language acquisition. Although EFL students are constantly exposed to English, many students at Mohamed Khider University still face difficulty in understanding written texts. This difficulty could be a result of their poor knowledge and awareness of syntax knowledge. This study examines the influence that syntax awareness has on reading comprehension.

2. **Research questions**

Main question:

What is the relationship between syntax awareness and reading comprehension in EFL learners?

Sub-questions:

How does syntax awareness influence students' ability to comprehend written texts in English?

3. **Hypothesis**

This study hypothesizes that a better syntax awareness among EFL learners have leads to a more positive impact on their improvements in reading comprehension skills. Therefore, this study theorizes that a higher proficiency in syntax awareness means better reading comprehension.

4. **Aims of the study**

This research aims to examine the extent to which syntax awareness influences reading comprehension skills among second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. To evaluate this impact, the research employs a quantitative approach to evaluate the impact of syntax awareness on second-year EFL students' reading comprehension.

5. **Research Methodology**

The current research study employs a quantitative approach to gather data through implementing a questionnaire. The tool aims to gather information from second-year EFL students

at Mohamed Khider University. This methodology is chosen due to its compatibility with the research goals and objectives. The questionnaire was designed to assess participants' syntactic awareness and its impact on reading comprehension. Analyzing the data and the findings should identify the themes in the participants' responses and provide insights regarding the relationship between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University.

6. Sample

This study selected second-year EFL students at Mohammed Khider University. This sample includes 28 students, randomly selected based on their willingness to volunteer and take the online questionnaire.

7. Research design

The current research study is composed of two main sections; theoretical and practical. The theoretical section includes two chapters, chapter one sets the theoretical basis for the role of

syntax awareness in reading comprehension, and chapter two sets the framework for reading comprehension and relevant concepts. The practical section has one chapter; the field work. This chapter presents the results of implementing the questionnaire and discusses the findings.

Chapter One

Impact of Syntax Awareness on Reading Comprehension

Introduction

Reading is one of the four main language skills. This skill is necessary to EFL learners as it enriches their vocabulary, improves their syntax awareness, and enhances their overall linguistic abilities. In EFL settings, reading is almost never flawless and this is the purpose of the current section of the research. This chapter introduces the theoretical concepts that allows a deeper understanding of the issue this study aims to address. First, this section introduces the concepts of syntax awareness in EFL setting, discusses L1 interference with syntax comprehension, examines reading comprehension in EFL learning in which reading comprehension is defined and three models of reading are introduced. The chapter then examines significant and metacognitive reading strategies. It discusses the relationship between syntax and reading comprehension, and explores the challenges students face in EFL reading comprehension.

1.1. Syntax Awareness in EFL Learning

Syntax awareness plays an important part in the process of reading comprehension in EFL settings, because it has increasingly got more recognition in the field of EFL teaching and learning. Syntax awareness is one aspect of language that provides a basic structure for sentence comprehension and allows EFL learners to understand the structure of sentences and therefore, accurately understand their meaning. For EFL learners, emphasizing syntax knowledge is a crucial part of their language acquisition because it allows them to fully comprehend complex structures of the target language.

Some researchers have explored syntax awareness and its influence on reading comprehension from various perspectives. Abdullah and Mousa (2024) suggest that there is a positive correlation between teachers' syntactic awareness and the performance of university

students. Abdullah and Mousa (2024) asset that syntax awareness has a positive association with students' writing performance, and with students' general level in using the language, including reading. Their work also suggests that teachers' syntax awareness contributes in conveying syntax more clearly to students.

Macua and Gaviola (2024) applied the syntactic awareness approach to test its impact on improving learners' reading comprehension. This approach entails implementing a set of different activities that enhances learners' reading comprehension through exposure to varied syntactic tasks. Macua and Gaviola (2024) concluded that using the syntactic awareness approach improves learners' reading comprehension. The researchers were able to conclude that emphasizing teaching the structural composition of the text to arrive at a sensible meaning of the reading text is of great significance to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Abatyihun's (2018) work studies to what extent vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness and metacognitive awareness reading strategies are strong predictors of reading comprehension. Moreover, the study discusses the relationship between vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, metacognitive awareness reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement. Utilizing descriptive research and a correlational research design, the correlation analysis suggests that among the three predictor variables specifically, EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness and metacognitive awareness reading strategies, there is a strong and high correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, and between syntactic awareness and reading comprehension.

These studies strongly support the concept that suggests developing teacher and student syntax awareness will positively impact reading comprehension among university students. These

practical studies tested the influence of syntax awareness and concluded its major impact on enhancing reading comprehension through implementing tasks that would improve students' ability to recognize and fully understand sentence structures, manipulate sentence word order correctly, and help them produce accurate grammar.

1.2. The Impact of First Language on Syntax Comprehension in EFL Learning

Students' first language is their language of primary communication, it is the language in which they think, dream, speak, and spent the majority of their childhood acquiring. L1 interference in acquiring a foreign language is therefore almost unavoidable.

Ellis (2015) suggests that L1 interference is one of the biggest challenges in acquiring a foreign language, its impact on syntactic awareness development is particularly challenging because of the structural and fundamental differences between L1 (Arabic in this case) and L2 (English) affect how language learners perceive, process, produce, and understand sentences in EFL. Such L1 interferences will certainly cause learners to make many syntactic mistakes like confusing word order, mixing tense use, or errors in subject-verb agreement.

Odlin (1989) defines negative language transfer as a phenomenon that occurs when language learners absent-mindedly apply the syntax rules of their L1 to L2. This language transfer can often result in inaccurate grammar production and language incoherence. Odlin (1989) further suggests that negative language transfer is a result of L1 rules and structures being different and incompatible with English syntax, which causes the errors and confusions made by learners. This is evident when many learners whose first language is Arabic struggle to properly use the Subject-Verb-Object order in English.

Moreover, L1 interference can cause hard comprehension because of the morphological differences between the mother tongue and second language. Acquiring a second language involves learning various aspects of the target language including word structures and how they change according to tenses, gender, and other grammar rules. The study conducted by Arche and Domínguez (2011) suggest that there is a connection between morphology and second language learning. Their study suggests that language learners may have the ability to understand syntax of L2, but they could lack full comprehension and struggle with morphology. This supports the idea that learners can acquire and practice the rules of L2 but face hardships in correctly applying them during L2 use, which explains why many learners understand L2 sentences correctly and still make mistakes in speaking or writing in it.

In EFL learning setting, first language impact on syntax comprehension is apparent as suggested by many researchers. This impact can be seen in how language learners transfer grammatical structures from their native language to the target language, which leads to several syntactic errors that extend to sentence production and comprehension. Despite their ability to acquire the target language syntax, many learners still face struggles to apply morphological rules and confuse between the rules of the L1 and the target language causing lack of proficiency and hindering the overall language learning process. These challenges facing learners emphasize L1 interference and its subsequent impact on learners' syntactic awareness.

1.3. The Relationship Between Syntax and Reading Comprehension in EFL Learning

Understanding syntactic rules is a major factor that contributes to reading comprehension, especially with EFL learners, because it helps better understand how words are made into phrases and then into meaningful sentences. Learners should have a strong sense of syntax awareness that

allows them to decipher simple and complex sentence structures and correctly deduce meaning. Having a poor syntax awareness can result in EFL learners struggling with syntax rules, falsely interpreting sentences, and misinterpretation of meaning. Reading provides exposure to different syntactic structures and enhances learners' ability to process complex sentences, which enhances their reading fluency.

There are several studies that support the relationship between syntax and reading comprehension in EFL learning. The study conducted by Morvay (2012) tested relationship between syntax knowledge and reading comprehension on 64 EFL learners using a cross-sectional correlational study. Her study results indicate that syntactic knowledge is a significant estimator of FL reading comprehension. Morvay's (2012) study show that the ability to process complex syntactic structures in a foreign language strongly contributes to learner' efficient reading comprehension in the target language.

Likewise, the study conducted by Sepasdar and Rostampour (2022) studied the effects of syntactic vs. semantic feature analysis of words on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. They selected three groups of sampled learners to conduct a pre- and post-test method to test learners' reading comprehension levels after receiving targeted instruction and compared them to a control group. Sepasdar and Rostampour (2022) found that learners who received explicit teaching of syntactic analysis outperformed the control group. The findings also state that teaching syntactic analysis is more effective in improving learners' reading comprehension than teaching semantic instruction alone. These findings emphasize the importance of syntactic awareness and knowledge in EFL learning and reading comprehension.

The study by Taşçi and Turan (2021) also examined the connection between syntactic and lexical knowledge in EFL reading comprehension. The study included 254 adult Turkish university

students whom were tested according to Syntactic Knowledge Test (SKT), Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) composed of TOEFL, Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) and Word Associates Test (WAT). The data collection tools were analyzed according to correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings showed that all variables of the study positively and significantly correlated with each other. The independent variables all significantly predicted Reading Comprehension Test scores of the students, when each variable was examined separately, the findings indicated that syntactic knowledge was the most contributing variable to EFL reading comprehension.

Depending on targeted teaching to enhance syntactic awareness, and consequently, enhance reading comprehension, EFL learners can better comprehend complex sentence structures, reduce misinterpretation, and improve their text comprehension. Integrating syntax-focused approaches in EFL learning is an essential way to develop reading proficiency.

1.4. Reading Comprehension in EFL Learning

Kusumarasdyati (2022) defines reading comprehension as a process to construct meaning from a text. The reading process has three types including; bottom-up, top down, and interactive. Kusumarasdyati (2022) suggests that to understand a text properly, learners should have a good reading ability in L1 that would result in them having a good reading skill in FL.

1.4.1. The Three Models of Reading

Understanding how individuals process written texts is essential to comprehend reading skill. Researchers have proposed various models to explain how reading occurs, each offering different perspectives on the cognitive and linguistic processes involved. Among the most widely

recognized are the bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models. These models provide distinct yet complementary insights into how learners decode and comprehend texts, particularly in language learning contexts. The following section outlines each model and highlights its key features and implications for reading instruction.

- Bottom up: Browne (1998) defines reading as the process that begins with knowing the letters, sounds, words, and how words are formulate sentences. This model is also known as "part to whole model" because it goes from partial to whole knowledge. This model is most effective in the early childhood, and encourages remembering as a means to learn language.

- Top Down: also known as the "whole to part model," it depends on the reader's experience and what learners previously learnt. Browne (1998) states that this model proposes readers start reading by building on what they already know about the structure and the meaning of language and their knowledge of the world to predict an overall meaning and of a context. In this model, the more experience of the learner is being included, the more effective the teaching will be. Moreover, this model encourages guessing (Browne, 1998, as cited in Abu Baha, 2017).

- Interactive: Stanovich (1980) suggests that this reading model combine the previous two models to provide a more meaningful reading skill. This model is more inclusive of readers, as it relies on their knowledge of texts, experience with words, and grammar skill. This model provides communicative activities, in which reading skills are included and encouraged. In activities where students' experience is involved, learners tend to be more interested and excited.

These three models of reading offer deep perspectives on how reading skills develop and function. The bottom-up model emphasizes the foundational elements of reading, such as letter recognition and word decoding, making it particularly suitable for early learners. In contrast, the top-down model highlights the importance of prior knowledge and context, allowing more experienced readers to interpret meaning based on their linguistic and world knowledge. However, both models present limitations when applied in isolation. The interactive model, as proposed by Stanovich (1980), addresses these limitations by combining the strengths of both approaches. It provides a more comprehensive framework that accommodates the dynamic nature of reading, integrating both lower-level decoding and higher-level comprehension strategies. This model is particularly effective in language learning contexts, where students benefit from activities that merge their existing knowledge with new language input, thereby enhancing engagement and comprehension.

1.5. Reading Strategies

There are many types and strategies in reading like skimming, scanning, and reading for details. Hedge (2000) distinguishes many strategies of reading: receptive reading, reflective reading, skimming, scanning, and reading for details.

Receptive reading refers to reading for entertainment purposes like reading magazines or fiction stories. Reflective reading means reading over and over again to backtrack and check. Moreover, skimming is a reading technique where the reader is not informed regarding the reading material and have no knowledge of it. This technique makes the reader glance for key details to get a clear understating of the subject matter. Scanning is another strategy where the reader is not informed regarding the reading material, but has some basic knowledge of it making the learner

search for particular details. Another strategy is reading for details wherein the learners read carefully to find exact information (Abu Baha, 2017).

These strategies are ways of helping readers develop reading comprehension and increase syntax awareness and each strategy provides unique advantages. Receptive reading emphasizes joy and fun reading that allows readers to expand their vocabulary and provides good practice for recognizing syntax patterns and comprehend semantics more easily.

Reflective reading provides deeper understanding through revisiting complex sentences, analyze grammar patterns, and improve syntax comprehension. Furthermore, skimming allows the quick hold of key points and cues, which is the best way to find and recognize syntactic elements like connectors, contributing to full text comprehension. Scanning is another strategy; it allows readers to identify sentence structures and find specific cues in a text. Finally, reading for details is a strategy that demands analyzing sentence structures to help readers have a better mastery of complex syntax rules and enhance comprehension accuracy.

These reading strategies are a good way to practice reading comprehension, they provide the opportunity for language learners to develop their ability to process meaning and enhance their awareness of how syntax forms understanding in a foreign language.

1.6. Challenges in EFL Reading Comprehension

Reading skill play a significant role in FL acquisition, it is not an easy skill to obtain and EFL students often struggle in reading comprehension as a result of complex grammatical structures, first-language interference, weak vocabulary and lexical knowledge, and complex syntactic structures. All these difficulties hinder the proper acquisition of FL and keep learners from fully comprehending texts and reaching a balanced understanding of the target language.

The lack of metacognitive awareness is equally as important, as it affects learners' ability to assess and adjust the reading strategies that they employ to help them understand texts. EFL students often face struggles in recognizing the correct reading technique like skimming, scanning, or deducing the general meaning from the overall context. Choosing the inappropriate reading techniques causes the false interpretation of the text. Additionally, the role of culture and past experience cannot be neglected, as it plays a major role in shaping discourse structures and further complicating learners' comprehension. EFL learners who are not familiar with cultural references, idioms, and pop culture struggle to extract implicit meaning and cues in texts. These challenges, together, limit learners' reading proficiency and language acquisition.

The study by Hezam et al. (2022) investigated reading comprehension problems facing that EFL learners in an intensive English program. Using a quantitative approach, the study sampled over 300 male and female Saudi EFL students. This study consisted of two parts; the first was students' background information, and the second was on reading comprehension challenges (language, reading process, and psycholinguistic challenges). Hezam et al. (2022) found that most students faced to same difficulties: 40% of students stated they face comprehension issues when reading new English texts, 46% of students stated they face difficulties when reading texts out of the specialty, and 50% of students stated they cannot answer questions after reading a text, despite understanding all the text. 33% of students stated they face comprehension issues despite knowing all the words of the text. 62% of students stated they face comprehension issues due to weak grammar. This study's findings emphasize the role of syntax and linguistic awareness in reading comprehension, especially in EFL setting. The study by Hezam et al. (2022) suggests that EFL learners often struggle with several linguistic issues that include limited vocabulary, incomprehension of complex grammatical structures, choosing and applying appropriate reading

strategies to extract meaning. Data analysis further showed that even though readers understood words, they still failed to comprehend sentences and the full meaning of the text caused by weak syntactic awareness. These issues caused students to misinterpret and struggle to answer the comprehension questions. This finding suggests that reading comprehension is not only connected to vocabulary acquisition but also requires a good understanding of sentence structures and cultural references in texts.

Conclusion

This chapter established the theoretical basis to provide a strong foundation to support the practical section of the study. This chapter introduces theoretical concepts and relates reading comprehension to syntax awareness in EFL settings to establish the significant connection between the two variables, which is the center of this study.

Chapter Two

Reading Comprehension

Introduction

This chapter is the second part of the theoretical section of the research. This chapter sets the theoretical framework for reading comprehension by defining the skill in EFL settings. Then, the researcher discusses metacognition in relation to reading comprehension, then moves to examining metacognition reading strategies. The chapter then establishes a well-balanced theoretical section by concluding with exploring the role of syntax in reading comprehension.

This chapter explores the link between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among EFL learners. This part of the study explores how syntax knowledge can improve comprehension of written texts and syntactic structures like subordinate clauses. The chapter also focuses on the importance of teaching as a grammatical concept and as an essential part of the process of reading comprehension.

2.1. Defining Reading Comprehension in EFL

Reading is one of the four language skills required to master any language, mastering reading comprehension requires full knowledge of the target language's many rules and other skills. Kusumarasdyati (2023) clarifies that reading is more than simply decoding printed texts, it is a process that requires performing a set of perceptual, psychological, and social activities to understand a passage. Therefore, the meaning of a text is not just extracted, but constructed through a process performed by the learner.

To understand the perceptive and social features that affect reading comprehension, the following section provides several definitions by influential scholars who studied these features from a psycholinguistic perspective.

2.1.1. Smith's Definition of Reading

Smith (1971, 2004) asserts that defining the process of reading is futile because reading is a concept that has various meanings according to the context it is used. Although formulating a solid and consistent definition is not possible, Smith (1971, 2004) proposes a model of reading that can simplify how people's minds process written texts and result in comprehending the ideas they read.

Smith's model suggests that comprehension is extracting meaning from a text, and this process could be defined as "the reduction of uncertainty" (Smith, 1971, as cited in Kusumarasdyati, 2023) Smith states this process occurs on three levels: letter identification, word identification, and meaning identification, suggesting that readers need to identify the letters and differentiate them from other letters. Thus, the reader ought to recognize a letter by looking at it, and knowing that for example, the letter R is in fact R, consequently, comprehension occurs. Similarly, word identification, the reader identifies words by limiting the countless possible existing words in a language. For example, the reader can identify the word cat as opposed to the words Cate or Cut. Likewise, meaning identification takes place on a semantics level where the reader chooses the most suitable meaning of a word from so many probable options.

Smith (1971, 2004) further asserts the complexity of the reading process by suggesting that his explanation is limited and does not fully cover the true complexity of the process because reading comprehension goes beyond the three levels of identification. In his attempt to properly define reading, Smith (1971, 2004) suggests two ways the identification process occurs, immediate and mediated. With immediate meaning identification, the reader can recognize the features of a printed letter and can instantly understand the perceived meaning. On the other hand, the mediated meaning identification needs a longer; after the reader successfully identifies the features of the letters, there is an attempt of identification of words in order to know their semantic features and

narrow down the meaning by removing the alternatives to choose the suitable meaning (Kusumarasdyati, 2023).

2.1.2. Goodman's Definition of Reading

Goodman (1988) also defines reading from a cognitive perspective, stating that reading is a perceptive language process and a psycholinguistic process. Goodman (1988) defines reading as the process of comprehending language by readers, it starts with the written text created by a writer and ends with a reader interpreting the meaning. Such a process relates the language to the thinking process by readers, as the writer expresses ideas through writing words, the reader transforms those words back into ideas. The main idea of this model focuses on constructing meaning by readers, not just understanding the meaning of the written words but rather the interaction of readers with the writer through reconstructing the initial meaning intended by the writer. Goodman (1976) discusses the term of 'psycholinguistic guessing game,' that refers to the psychological process of a reader decodes the information of the text and guesses the meaning relying on the existing cues through using their previous linguistic and overall knowledge. This process also applies to the syntactic and semantic cues the readers find in the text. To understand these cues, the reader can pick types of cues to predict an idea or a meaning, then confirm their prediction or disconfirms its correctness. The correct predictions lead the reader to continue using the same way, wrong predictions result in false interpretation and confusion of meaning that leads the reader to catch the mistakes and re-examine the errors they made to correct them based on their prior knowledge and experience. By repeating this process, the reader can then have a full

comprehension of the entire text. Goodman (1976) depends on the cognitive and linguistic processes performed by readers to define reading as a process of constructing meaning through integrating text information and reader's previous knowledge (Goodman, 1976, as cited in Kusumarasdyati, 2023).

2.2. Metacognition and Reading Comprehension

For the last decade, reading skills stirred many theoretical, practical, and political discussions on the most suitable and effective teaching approach due to the importance of this skill. As the discussions continued, schools and universities took on more accountability regarding teaching reading skills and teachers are told by legislators and policymakers what, how, and to whom they ought to teach reading in classrooms (Karbalaei, 2011). These discussions led to proposing many approaches, metacognitive strategies and metacognition being one the most significant concepts. Metacognition can be defined as the knowledge and control that people have over mental processes. When relating this definition to reading, it is usual to discuss metacognitive awareness and metacognitive control (Karbalaei, 2011). El-Koumy (2004) also defines metacognition to be conscious and aware of one's own cognition and having conscious control of one's own learning. Metacognition, thus, is the awareness and control that people have over their own thinking and learning processes, it is the consciousness and regulation of planning, revising, summarizing, and reading processes. Metacognition is the consciousness of one's own comprehension process. Karbalaei (2011) states that metacognition is learning to be aware of one's comprehension processing, comprehension strategies, and how to perform these strategies.

Metacognition plays a significant role in reading comprehension because it provides the awareness learners need to attain and hold on to the necessary information that they need to complete the learning process. If learners had no metacognition, there would not be a learning process, and without metacognitive approaches students are like learners without any direction or chance to review their progress, achievements, and future directions (O'Malley et al, 1985, as cited in Karbalaei, 2011). Without metacognition, instruction would be useless because students would be unaware of the learning process, thus, not attaining any information.

2.3. Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Reading is a cognitive process that takes place as a result of the reader interacting with the text and context in which reading takes place (Flavell, 1979). To fully understand a text correctly, the learner has to make use of metacognitive knowledge, utilizing awareness and metacognitive strategies. Karbalaei (2011) suggests that a reader's metacognitive knowledge is influenced by several factors including previous experiences, beliefs, culture, and teaching methods. For non-native readers, the major factor influencing metacognitive knowledge is their proficiency level in the target language. When facing a reading task, the metacognitive knowledge can be triggered either consciously or unconsciously to form an understanding of the text. The readers' comprehension of reading strategies and how their awareness of the strategies directly affects the comprehension, combining conscious awareness of reading, strategic reading processes, and utilizing reading strategies all help decide skilled from unskilled readers (Karbalaei, 2011). There are many significant metacognitive reading strategies, El-Koumy (2004) suggests that there are three main strategies that are particularly emphasized in reading: planning, self-monitoring, and self-assessment.

Planning in reading activities is formulating a plan that decides how to handle the text in question. This strategy is a refreshing way to increase students' interest and motivates the reading process, and sets a goal for reading to activate past knowledge relevant to the text. A learner must be aware of the purpose of the reading to discourage passive scanning of the text and encourage active interaction with the text and context. Planning strategy allows readers to assess, set expectations, evaluate difficulty level, and choose the correct reading strategy. These steps allow the reader to connect with the text and relate it to any prior knowledge they have, thus, making the comprehension process easier.

Self-monitoring is another meta-cognitive strategy. It refers to how the reader regulates the level of comprehension as they are reading. This strategy, also known as, comprehension monitoring, is a way of helping readers recover their lost comprehension and adapt their reading strategies if they fail to understand the text. This strategy encourages readers to have selective attention to evaluate themselves and to what extent their reading strategy is successful and if they ought to replace it.

El-Koumy (2004) proposes two types of self-monitoring during reading: fix-up strategies and studying strategies. fix-up strategies are used when there is a comprehension failure, they suggest slow reading, focusing on the confusing part of the text, re-reading, looking back at certain parts and searching for clarification, noting the problem areas, and forming a guess based on prior knowledge (Karbalaei, 2011). Studying strategies are used to enhance storage and retrieval. These strategies include underlining, outlining, notetaking, summarizing, and self-questioning (Karbalaei, 2011). Studying strategies help readers keep notice of their understanding of the text and keeps them aware of what they are reading while they are reading by encouraging learners to ask themselves questions to understand the task and text. Such question may sound like why am I reading this text? How am I doing so far? What could I have done differently to better understand the text?

Self-assessment strategy is a significant metacognitive strategy as stated by several researchers (Maitland, 2000; Shoemaker, 1998; Wenden, 1998). Shoemaker (1998) states that self-assessment has its roots in metacognition and self-regulated learning and is considered to have a great potential to provide teachers and students the opportunity to understand and enhance the ways students monitor and adjust strategic thinking in literacy learning (Shoemaker,1998, as cited in Karbalaei, 2011). This strategy promotes students' autonomy and inclusivity in assessing

themselves and their own errors, resulting in enhanced critical thinking and improved learning experience.

2.4. The Role of Syntax in Reading Comprehension

Poor readers usually do not depend on syntax to help them decode written language for the purpose of understanding it. Martohardjono et al. (2005) state that poor readers exhibit syntactic deficiencies in the written language. Thus, syntax awareness and skills are directly related to reading written language. Martohardjono et al. (2005) further state that reading-impaired children struggle with specific syntactic factors, independent of phonological short-term memory issues. Their research suggests that deficits in syntactic processing, rather than phonological memory alone, play a critical role in reading impairments, and that improving syntactic awareness could enhance reading comprehension.

Martohardjono et al. (2005) suggests that there is a strong relationship between syntax and reading comprehension. Their study found a link between syntactic skills and listening comprehension in bilingual learners, this relationship was present in both the first language (L1) and second language (L2). The study further explains that knowledge of complex sentence structures, especially subordinate clauses, was significant for the link with listening comprehension.

Moreover, Martohardjono et al. (2005) state that syntactic awareness has a significant impact on pre-reading skills. Their study suggests that it is not just general syntactic knowledge but particularly knowledge of complex sentence structures (such as subordination) that plays a significant role in pre-reading skills, asserting that models of reading teaching should focus on the acquisition of complex syntactic structures to enhance early reading abilities.

Morvay (2012) also state that syntax awareness plays a vital role in reading comprehension, as it contributes to deeper reading comprehension in EFL learners. This study highlights the crucial role of syntax in understanding complex texts. Specifically, knowledge of complex syntactic structures, such as subordinate clauses, was strongly related with better comprehension outcomes. This study strongly suggests that awareness of syntactic structures in the second language is more critical for reading proficiency than knowledge from the first language.

Macua and Gaviola (2024) suggest that teachers should focus on teaching their learners the structures of texts, as a tool to help them understand meaning more clearly and easily. Moreover, Macua and Gaviola (2024) found that giving novice learners time to process texts; it helps them understand better. Additionally, creating a positive learning environment by setting the right mood enhances students' comprehension. The researchers also showed that using a syntactic awareness approach encourages supportive and authentic learning, leading to more meaningful learning experiences that improve reading comprehension.

2.5. Syntax Awareness and Its Impact on EFL Reading Skills

Cain (2007) studied the relative contributions of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge; assessing them both. The study found that the connection between syntactic awareness and reading comprehension was mediated by vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. The study by Cain (2007) emphasized that syntactic awareness played a crucial role in reading comprehension, although it cannot be fully understood in isolation from other cognitive skills. In relation to EFL reading, the study suggests that like vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and memory skills should also be considered when assessing student reading proficiency. Syntactic awareness is related to all these concepts because they facilitate the understanding of sentence meaning, support the comprehension of sentence structures, and help in processing complex syntactic forms. Thus, improving EFL reading skills requires integrating and developing these interconnected cognitive

abilities, instead of focusing only on syntactic awareness. These findings suggests that effective EFL reading instruction should also address vocabulary, grammar, and memory, to create a better teaching approach for learners to enhance their reading abilities.

Macua and Gaviola (2024) conducted a study on syntactic awareness approach in improving learners' reading comprehension psychology and education. This study focused on the positive impact of the syntactic awareness approach on improving reading comprehension among learners. The study used Joan Sedita's Syntactic Awareness methodology that includes various activities that work on improving learners' reading comprehension through exposing them to syntactic tasks. The study findings reveal that syntactic awareness helped learners move beyond frustration levels of comprehension, showing that syntax knowledge can contribute to better understanding and interpreting texts.

Macua and Gaviola (2024) suggest that reading comprehension in EFL learners is enhanced if they are equipped with both semantic awareness and syntactic knowledge. In EFL context, syntax awareness is vital and should be integrated into a teaching approaches that also address other cognitive and motivational factors to maximize learners' reading proficiency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter focused on the role of syntax awareness in enhancing reading comprehension in EFL setting. The chapter included several studies that demonstrate the strong understanding of syntactic structures, particularly complex ones, is crucial for decoding and interpreting texts effectively. Moreover, the chapter emphasizes that the ability to process syntactic structures contributes to reading comprehension, which is foundational for successful language acquisition. As evident from the studies discussed, incorporating syntax-focused approaches into EFL teaching methods is essential for improving students' reading proficiency. Teachers' focus on

enhancing students' syntax awareness can help learners build a better understanding of written texts, that leads to greater language mastery.

Chapter Three

Field Work

Introduction

This chapter sets the methodological basis for the study. First, the chapter explains the methodology employed by the researcher. Additionally, this section of the study discusses the sample chosen and the sampling techniques for the selected students. Moreover, the data collection procedures are also explained and discussed to get a better understanding of the field work done by the researcher. Then, it details the implementation of the questionnaire through a thorough explanation of the process and the questionnaire, then, it describes the analysis techniques. This chapter provides the field work of the study with the results of the field work, analyses the findings, and then it concludes with discussing the key findings.

3.1. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design, depending on a structured close-ended questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire designed consists of a series of statements and questions related to syntax awareness and reading comprehension. Participants answer using predetermined answers that include: five-point Likert scales (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree) and multiple-choices (Yes, definitely to No, not at all). The researcher chose this design because it allows for a consistent data collection and results in statistical analysis to examine the frequencies and connections between syntax awareness and reading comprehension performance in EFL learners.

3.1.1. Sampling techniques

The sample for this research includes second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khieder University. Participants who answered the questionnaire are all anonymous volunteers who took the online questionnaire willingly.

3.1.2. Data Collection Procedures

The primary data gathering tool for this research is a carefully structured online questionnaire. This tool is an efficient way to reach the target sample and save time and efforts. The questionnaire includes five parts; each of them focuses on a different aspect of the research. Part 1 includes questions on students' general linguistic awareness, part 2 is related to syntax awareness, part 3 discusses reading comprehension practices, part 4 is on the influence of syntax awareness on reading comprehension, and part 5 discusses syntax awareness and reading comprehension in EFL settings.

3.2. Implementation of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was specifically designed to collect quantitative data on students' awareness of syntactic structures and their reading comprehension performance in EFL contexts. This tool aligns with the research aim of identifying parallels between syntax awareness and reading proficiency.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire is divided into five sections, each section has three questions or statements. section 1 includes questions on students' general linguistic awareness, section 2 is related to syntax awareness, section 3 discusses reading comprehension practices, section 4 is on the influence of syntax awareness on reading comprehension, and section 5 discusses syntax awareness and reading comprehension in EFL settings. Many of the questions are measured on a five-point Likert scale (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) or other pre-determined

response options (Yes, definitely to No, not at all or Always to Never). The statements on the questionnaire were studied and developed based on an extensive review of literature on syntactic awareness and EFL reading comprehension.

The questionnaire was administered online by sharing the link with send-year EFL students at Mohamed Khieder University between the period of March, 15th to May, 27th ,2025. Moreover, participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study, how to answer, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.

3.3. Analysis Techniques

To analyze the quantitative data gathered, the researcher used descriptive analysis and focused on visual representation and percentage-based interpretation. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended items with predefined categorical responses, thus the data is processed and presented using charts, graphs, and frequency tables.

All responses were analyzed in terms of percentages and frequency distributions to identify patterns and trends among participants regarding their syntax awareness and reading comprehension. No measures of central tendency (such as mean or median) will be applied, in order to preserve the ordinal and categorical nature of the data. Using visual tools to interpret data help highlight the way students perceive and apply syntactic knowledge, and how this may influence their reading comprehension in an EFL context.

3.4. Presenting Results

Part 1: General Linguistic Awareness

Q1: How would you rate your overall proficiency in English?

The data on students' proficiency in English (Figure 1) revealed that a significant number of students 50% see themselves as intermediate learners, suggesting that most participants consider their proficiency to be at a modest level. 28.57% rate themselves as beginner, reflecting that there is a group who acknowledge their need for improvement in their English skills. A smaller portion, 21.43%, see themselves as advanced, indicating that only a few students view their proficiency as high. This variety in data reveal that while the majority of students have a moderate level of proficiency, which can significantly influence their performance in both syntax awareness and reading comprehension.
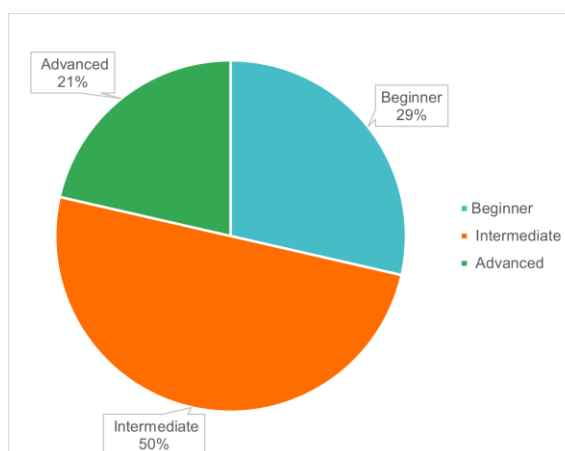

Figure 1 Proficiency in English Levels

Q2: How often do you read academic or literary texts in English?

The data on the frequency of reading academic or literary texts in English, as shown in Figure 2, indicated that 50% of students report reading such texts sometimes, suggesting that a significant portion engages with these texts on an occasional basis. 21.43% of students state that they always read, while 17.86% read often, showing a moderate level of regular engagement with academic or literary materials in English. However, 10.71% of participants indicated that they read

Rarely, and no students stated they never engage with such texts. The data indicates that though many students have occasional to frequent exposure to academic and literary English, there is still many students who read less frequently, this could influence their syntax awareness and reading comprehension skills.
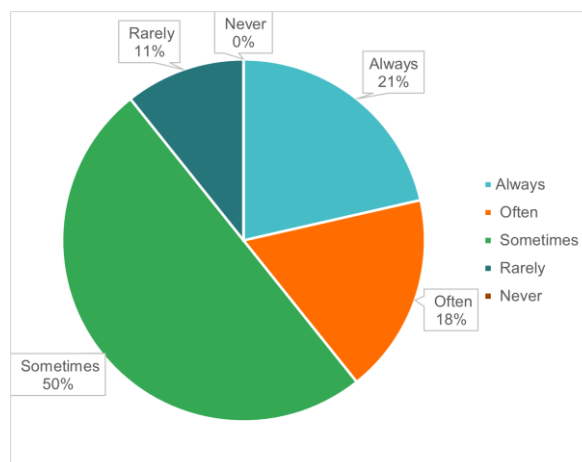

Figure 2 Frequency of Reading Academic or Literary Texts in English

Q3: What do you find most challenging when reading in English? (Multiple choices allowed)

The results on the most challenging aspects of reading in English, Figure 3, indicate that 42.86% of students find understanding vocabulary the most challenging, suggesting that vocabulary acquisition poses a significant challenge for many learners. 39.29% report difficulty in recognizing sentence structure, suggesting that learners face a challenge in understanding the grammatical organization of English sentences. 14.29% find interpreting the meaning of complex sentences difficult, the data indicates that learners struggle with comprehension of complex sentence constructions. Additionally, 14.29% of students also find identifying the main idea and supporting details challenging, thus stating they face difficulties in extracting the essential message

from texts. The data reveals that vocabulary and sentence structure are the primary obstacles for students, which directly impacts their reading comprehension and syntax awareness in English.
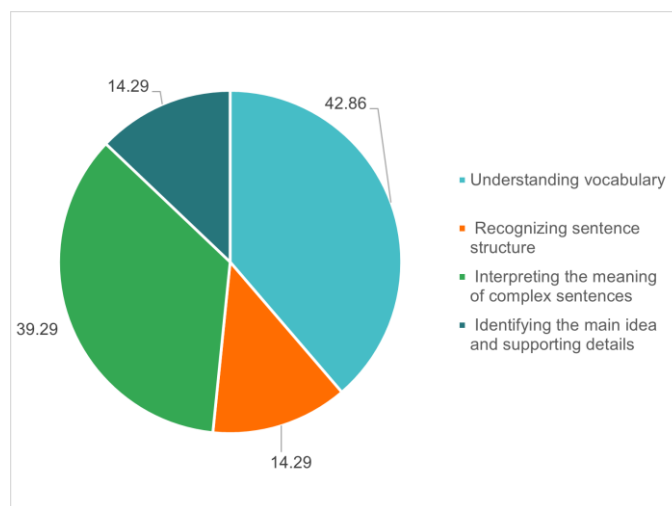

Figure 3 Challenges when Reading in English

Part 2: Syntax Awareness

Q1: Do you actively pay attention to sentence structure while reading?

Figure 4 presents data on students' attention to sentence structure while reading, showing that 46.43% of students sometimes pay attention to sentence structure, indicating that the majority do not always focus on sentence structure during reading. 32.14% of students claim to always pay attention, reflecting a strong group that actively engages with sentence structure in their reading. However, 10.71% rarely pays attention to sentence structure, and 10.71% never do. Suggesting that while some students consistently focus on sentence structure, many others overlook this element, thus affecting their overall understanding and proficiency in syntax awareness.
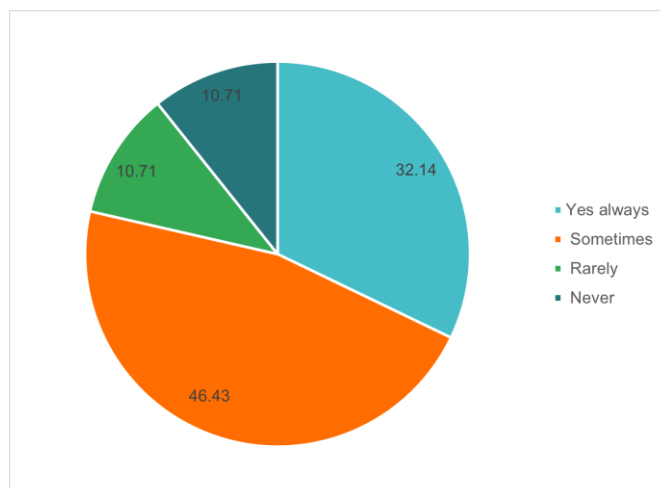
Figure 4 Students' Attention to Sentence Structure while Reading

Q2: When encountering complex sentences, how do you usually process them?

The results on how students process complex sentences are shown in figure 5. The data revealed that 39.29% of students rely on context to understand complex sentences, indicating that the majority of students use contextual clues to help them comprehend these sentences. 25% break them down into smaller parts, as a strategy of deconstructing complex structures for better understanding. 21.43% state they ignore complex structures and focus on the general meaning, indicating they simplify the reading process by not engaging deeply with complex sentence structures. 14.29% of students struggle to understand complex sentences, showing a group of students that face difficulty when encountering complex sentences. The data reflects varied strategies among students, with the majority relying on context and others simplifying or struggling with complex sentence structures.
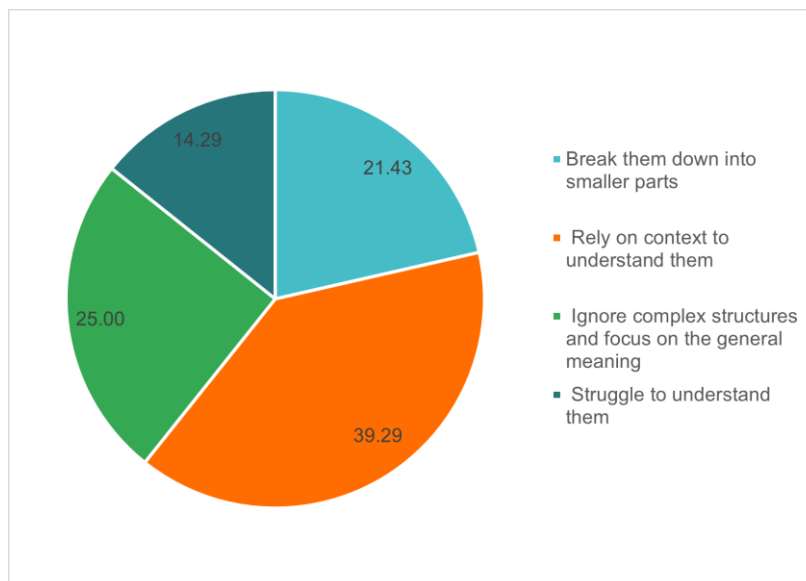
Figure 5 Strategies for Processing Complex Sentences Among Students

Q3: Which syntactic structures do you find most difficult to understand in English texts?

The data regarding what syntactic structures students find most difficult to understand in English texts (Figure 6) revealed that 32.14% find relative clauses the most challenging. This result indicates that such structures pose a difficulty for the majority of the participants. 25% find passive voice difficult, this reflects a common struggle with understanding sentences in which the subject receives the action. 25% report that sentence inversion is the most challenging, indicating they face difficulties with word order. 17.86% find conditional sentences the most difficult to understand. This data shows that while relative clauses are the most challenging for students, other syntactic structures like passive voice and sentence inversion all pose difficulties for many learners.
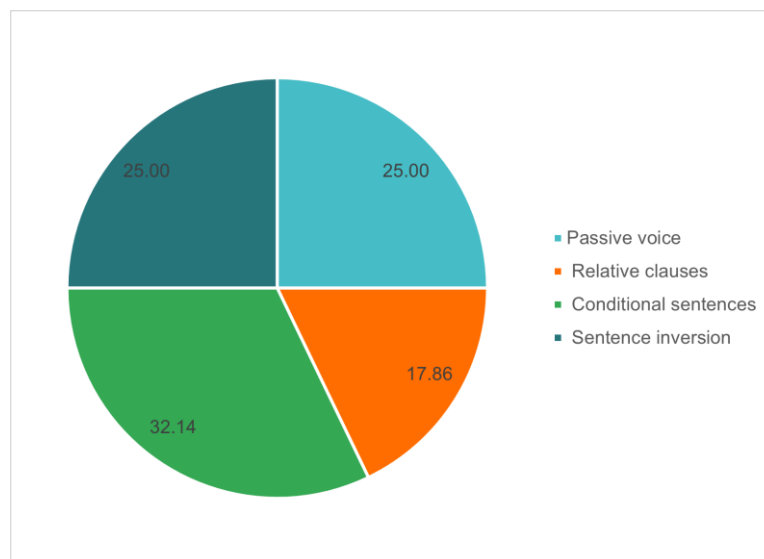
Figure 6 Most Difficult Syntactic Structures for Students

Part 3: Reading Comprehension Practice

Q1: How do you usually approach reading comprehension tasks?

Figure 7 below shows the results for how students approach reading comprehension tasks. 35.71% of students read word by word carefully, meaning they perform a thorough and detailed approach to understanding texts. 32.14% skim for general meaning first, suggesting a general approach where students focus on getting the essence of the text before diving into specifics. 17.86% scan for key details, reflecting a strategy where students look for specific information quickly. 14.29% guess meaning from context, relying on context to infer meaning rather than focusing on individual words or details. The data reveals that the majority of students employ careful reading and skimming as their primary strategies, and a minority relying on scanning or guessing meaning from context.
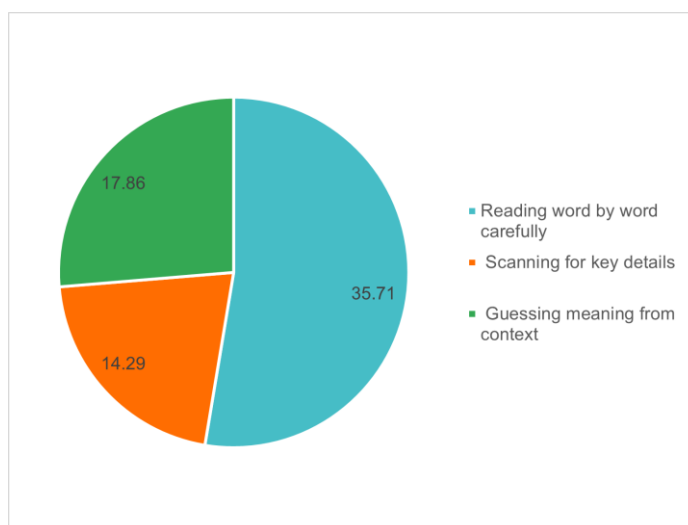
Figure 7 Reading Comprehension Approaches

Q2: Do you believe that understanding sentence structure helps you comprehend texts more efficiently?

The results for whether students believe that understanding sentence structure helps them comprehend texts more efficiently (Figure 8) revealed that 35.71% agree with this statement, thud indicating a strong belief that sentence structure plays a critical role in comprehension. 25% agree, suggesting that a significant number of students also recognize the importance of sentence structure. 21.43% remain neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. 14.29% disagree, and 3.57% strongly disagree, indicating that a minority group does not see sentence structure as essential to reading comprehension. These results suggest that while most students acknowledge the importance of sentence structure for comprehension, there is a small number who do not recognize its impact.
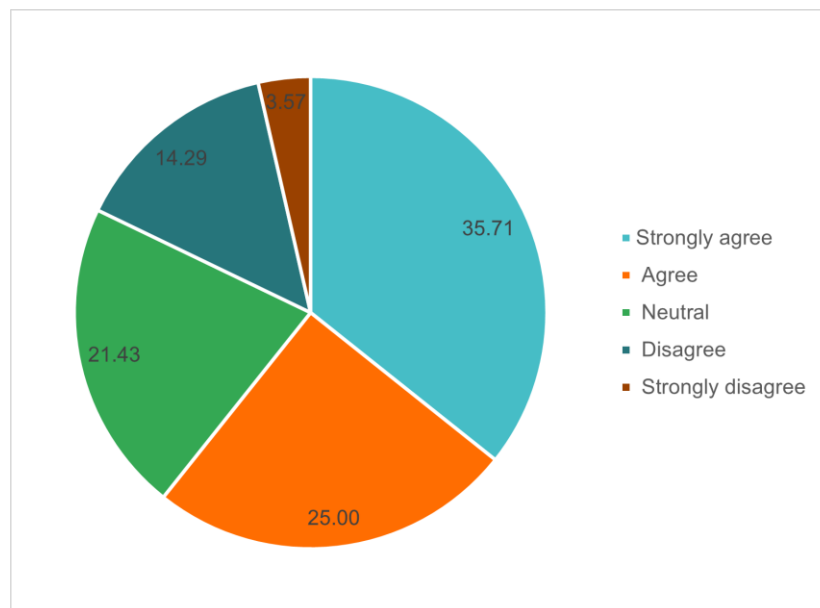
Figure 8 Students' Perception on the Role of Sentence Structure in Text Comprehension

Q3: How confident are you in identifying the subject, verb, and object in complex sentences?

Students' confidence in identifying the subject, verb, and object in complex sentences shown in Figure 9, revealed that 42.86% of students are somewhat confident, suggesting that a significant number of participants feel somewhat capable of identifying these elements in complex sentences. 32.14% are very confident, strongly believing in their ability to identify these components. 14.29% are not very confident, and 3.57% are not confident at all, reflecting a group that struggles with identifying the subject, verb, and object. 7.14% remain neutral, neither confident nor unconfident. The data suggests that though most students feel confident to some degree in identifying sentence components, there remains students who face challenges in this area.
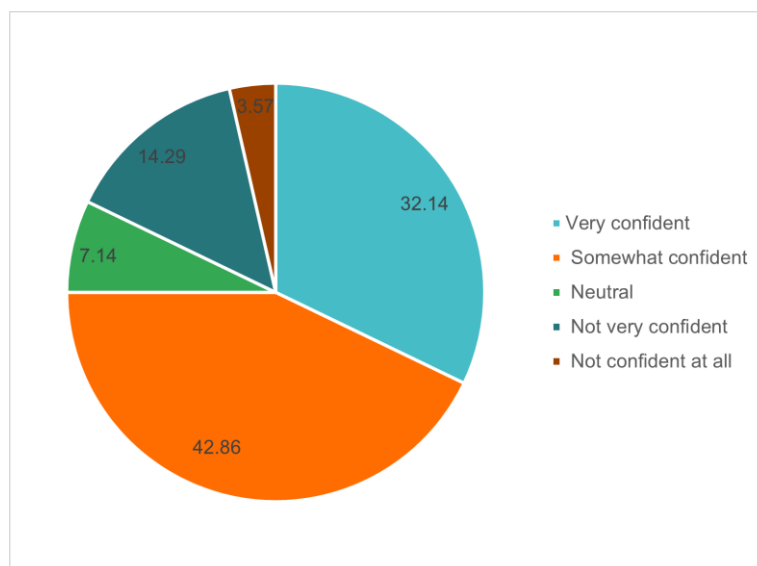
Figure 9 Student Confidence in Identifying Subject, Verb, and Object in Complex Sentences

Part 4: The Influence of Syntax Awareness on Reading Comprehension

Q1: Have you noticed improvements in your reading comprehension when focusing on sentence structure?

Figure 10 presents the data for whether students have noticed improvements in their reading comprehension when focusing on sentence structure. The results revealed that 42.86% of students report significant improvement, indicating a strong positive impact of focusing on sentence structure. 25% noticed some improvement, suggesting that focusing on sentence structure has had a moderate effect on their comprehension. 17.86% observed no noticeable difference, implying that for some students, focusing on sentence structure did not seem to affect their reading comprehension. 14.29% feel that focusing on sentence structure makes reading more difficult, indicating that some students faced challenges regarding this approach. The data reflects a positive impact of focusing on sentence structure for most students, but also reveals that some students may struggle with this approach.
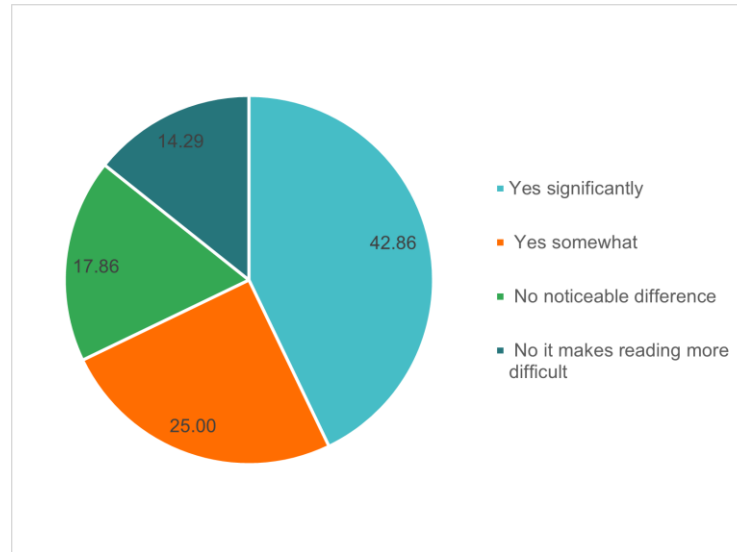
Figure 10 Improvements in Reading Comprehension when Focusing on Sentence Structure

Q2: Do you think explicit instruction in syntax could enhance your reading skills?

The data presented in Figure 11 regarding whether students think explicit instruction in syntax could enhance their reading skills shows that 39.29% of students strongly agree, strongly believing that learning about syntax can improve their reading skills. Another 39.29% agree, suggesting more students also recognize the potential benefits of explicit instruction in syntax. 10.71% remain neutral. 7.14% disagree, and 3.57% strongly disagree, indicating that many students do not believe explicit instruction in syntax would enhance their reading skills. This data suggests that most students are in favor of explicit instruction in syntax, with a few students less convinced of its effectiveness.
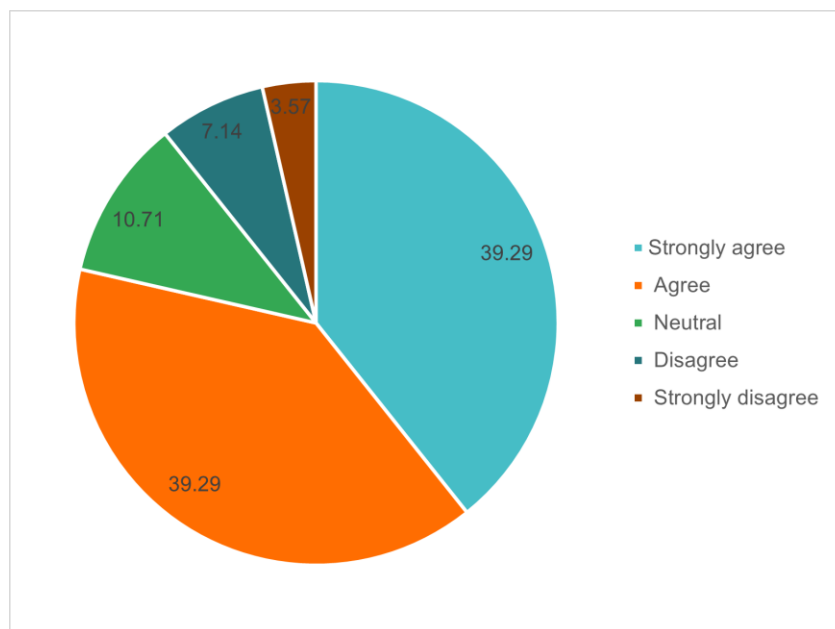
Figure 11 Student Perception on Explicit Instruction in Syntax

Q3: What strategies do you think would help improve syntax awareness and reading comprehension? (Multiple choices allowed)

Figure 12 shows the data on strategies that students believe would help improve syntax awareness and reading comprehension. The results revealed that 42.86% of students suggest more reading practice as an effective strategy, indicating that regular reading is seen as essential for improving comprehension and syntax awareness. 39.29% recommend grammar-focused exercises, emphasizing the importance of direct practice with grammatical structures. 28.57% believe interactive classroom discussions on syntax would be helpful, suggesting that engaging in discussions about syntax can enhance understanding. 14.29% favor sentence diagramming or analysis, indicating that visualizing sentence structure could improve comprehension, and 14.29% suggest translation between L1 and L2, pointing to the value of comparing languages in developing syntax awareness. This data reflects that students believe a combination of reading practice, grammar exercises, and interactive discussions are key to improving their syntax and reading skills.
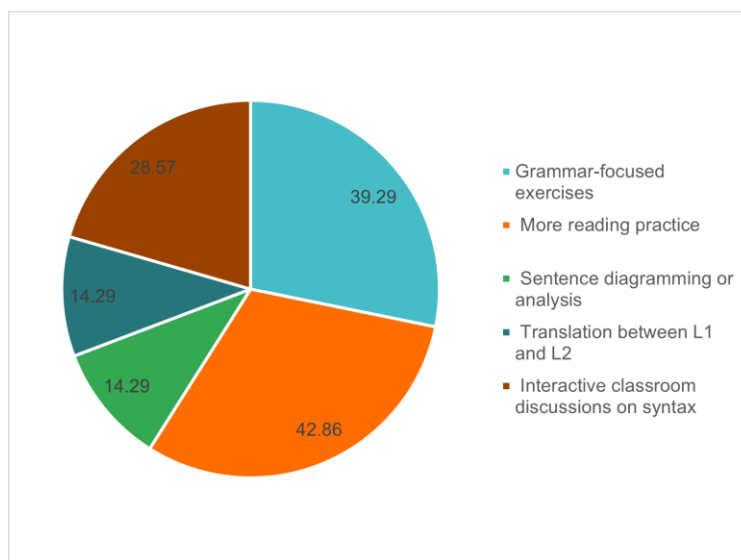
Figure 12 Strategies that Help Improve Syntax Awareness

and Reading Comprehension

Part 5: Syntax Awareness and Reading Comprehension in EFL Learning

Q1: Do you believe there is a strong connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension?

Figure 13 reveals the participants' answers on whether they believe there is a strong connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension. The data showed that 46.43% of students believe there definitely is a connection, indicating a strong belief in the importance of syntax awareness for improving reading comprehension. 35.71% somewhat believe there is a connection, suggesting that while they recognize the connection, they may see other factors as important as well. 10.71% feel there is no real connection, suggesting that the minority do not see a link between syntax awareness and reading comprehension. 7.14% believe there is no connection at all, suggesting an even weaker belief in the connection between the two. These opinions reflect

the general consensus that syntax awareness plays an important role in reading comprehension, though not all students are fully convinced.
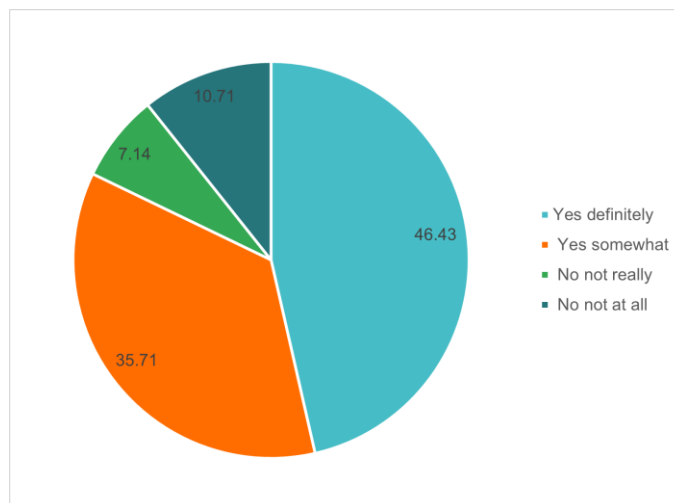

Figure 13 Student Perceptions on Connection Between Syntax Awareness

and Reading comprehension

Q2: In what way do you think syntax awareness affects your reading comprehension?

Figure 14 provides data on how students think syntax awareness affects their reading comprehension. The figure states that 50% of students believe it helps them understand sentence meaning better, indicating that half of the participants see syntax awareness as a key factor in improving their understanding of texts. 28.57% feel that it slows down their reading but improves accuracy, suggesting that syntax awareness requires more time but still contributes to an accurate understanding of the text. 14.29% think it has little effect on their reading, stating that for some students, syntax awareness does not significantly impact their comprehension. 7.14% believe it makes reading more complicated, these students believe syntax may hinder their reading experience. This data suggests that half the students see syntax awareness as beneficial for comprehension, and the other half have varied opinions on its overall impact.
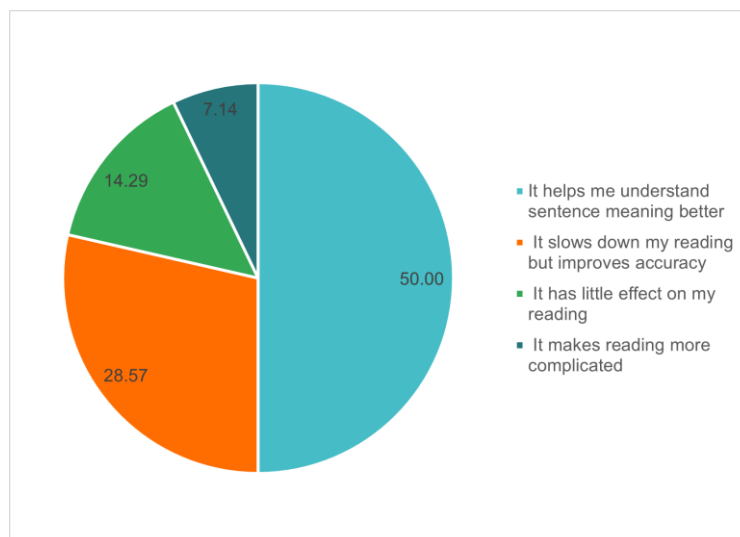
Figure 14 Influence of Syntax Awareness on Reading Comprehension

Q3: What kind of support do you think teachers should provide to help students with syntax awareness and reading comprehension?

Figure 15 reveals data gathered on what kind of support students think teachers should provide to help with syntax awareness and reading comprehension. Data showed that 39.29% of students believe teachers should provide more exercises on sentence structure, a majority of students see this as a critical area for improvement. 25% suggest teaching strategies for analyzing complex sentences, emphasizing the need for specific strategies to handle more challenging sentence structures. 17.86% think using visual aids like sentence trees would be helpful, suggesting that visual representations of sentence structure could aid comprehension. Another 17.86% feel that encouraging more independent reading would help, emphasizing the importance of students engaging with texts on their own. These results reflect the strong preference for structured support in sentence analysis, while still recognizing the value of independent reading and visual aids in improving comprehension.
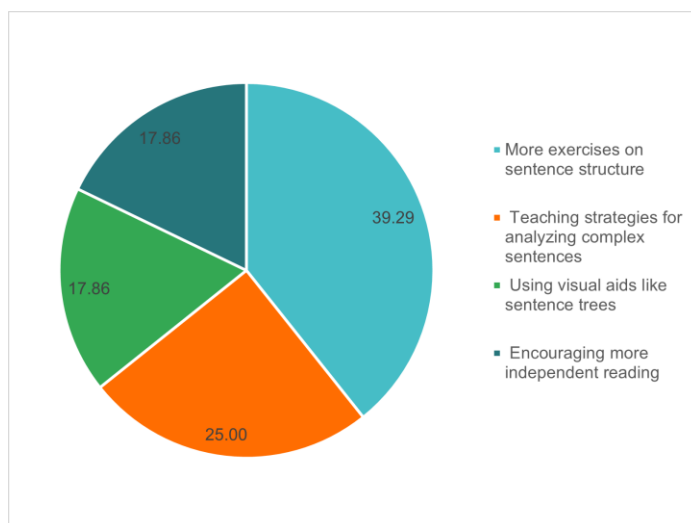
Figure 15 Suggested Teacher Support for Syntax Awareness and Reading Comprehension

3.1. Analysis of Results

This section provides an analysis of the gathered data presented in the previous part of the study. Data taken from the questionnaire revealed several insights on students' general linguistic awareness, syntax awareness, reading comprehension skills, and their perceptions of the relationship between syntax and comprehension.

For the first section of the questionnaire, the data revealed a diverse range of assessments in English proficiency where half of the students identified as intermediate learners and a smaller proportion as advanced. This finding suggests that most students view their proficiency as moderate, which influences their performance in syntax awareness and reading comprehension. When it comes to reading academic or literary texts in English, most students engage with such texts occasionally or regularly, though some still read less frequently, indicating that though many students are exposed to academic texts, their frequency of engagement may not be enough to improve syntax awareness and reading comprehension. In terms of challenges, vocabulary and

sentence structure were the most commonly reported difficulties with students also struggling with complex sentence interpretation and identifying main ideas. These findings point out the importance of addressing such challenges in educational strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension.

The second section of the questionnaire, analyzing syntax awareness, reveals that a significant percentage of students do not always focus on sentence structure while reading, with many stating they pay attention only sometimes. However, a few students consistently focus on sentence structure, suggesting a gap in syntax awareness that could obstruct reading comprehension. When processing complex sentences, the majority of students still rely on context or breaking sentences down into smaller parts, indicating a variety of strategies for dealing with complex structures. Nevertheless, a few students struggle to understand these sentences, pointing to the need for targeted instruction in complex sentence structures. The data also indicates that relative clauses, passive voice, and sentence inversion are the most difficult syntactic structures for students, also suggesting a need for targeted instruction in these areas.

Regarding reading comprehension strategies in the third section of the questionnaire, most students either read word by word or skim for general meaning. This result aligns with common approaches to understanding texts. However, other students rely on scanning or guessing meaning from context, which is not as effective for developing deeper comprehension. The majority of students also recognize the critical role of sentence structure in comprehension, some students believe that their focus on sentence structure improves accuracy and understanding, while others find it makes reading more difficult.

In the fourth section of the questionnaire, findings indicate that students believed there was a strong connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension. Many students stated their focus on sentence structure improves their comprehension significantly. This finding supports the idea that understanding syntax plays a key role in understanding sentence meaning. However, some students stated that focusing on syntax either slowed down their reading or had little effect, suggesting that the benefits of syntax awareness vary depending on individual reading habits and skills.

The analysis of the final section of the questionnaire showed that most students are in favor of explicit instruction in syntax, recognizing its ability to enhance reading skills. The majority of students also believed that teachers should provide more grammar-focused exercises and teaching strategies for analyzing complex sentences, this aligns with the data suggesting that focused syntax teaching is essential for improving comprehension. Other helpful strategies include interactive classroom discussions and the use of visual aids, such as sentence trees.

3.2. Discussion

This study's findings reveal valuable results on the relationship between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among EFL students. The results suggest that many students recognize the importance of syntax awareness in enhancing reading comprehension, but varying degrees of proficiency and other challenges may influence how effectively they can apply this knowledge in practice.

Identifying vocabulary and sentence structure as the primary challenges in reading comprehension is supported by existing literature on language acquisition. Many students stated they faced difficulty with understanding vocabulary, an obstacle that can significantly hinder their

comprehension especially when encountering complex texts. Such a challenge is combined by struggles with recognizing sentence structures suggesting that students may have gaps in their understanding of how English sentences are constructed. These difficulties are also reflected in the students' challenges with complex sentences and identifying the main idea and supporting details. The findings suggest that without the proper education of syntax, students may find it difficult to extract the core meaning of a text, which is vital for both academic reading and general comprehension.

The results also indicate that, although a majority of students recognize the importance of syntax awareness, yet many students do not consistently focus on sentence structure while reading. This finding indicates a gap between understanding the importance of syntax and actively engaging with it during reading tasks. Many students still pay attention to sentence structure but only sometimes, while a minority focuses on it more often, suggesting that for many learners, syntax awareness is not really a part of their reading strategies. This gap reflects the need for more explicit teaching on how to recognize and interpret sentence structures effectively.

Regarding processing complex sentences, the data revealed a variety of strategies indicating that the majority of students relied on context to understand these sentences. This result supports the common strategy of deducing meaning from context, especially in cases where students struggle with more complicated syntactic structures. However, such strategy may not be as effective for deeply understanding the text, as it could lead to weak comprehension without grasping the full syntactic and semantic meaning of the sentences. The findings suggest that students would benefit from targeted teaching on how to break down complex sentences and analyze their elements.

Moreover, the majority of students in this study believed that syntax awareness has a significant impact on their reading comprehension, supporting the hypothesis that understanding sentence structure is crucial for effective reading. However, the data gathered also revealed that some students felt that focusing on sentence structure either slowed down their reading or made comprehension more difficult. This reflects the fact that while many students benefit from syntax awareness, for others, it may present challenges, particularly if they have not developed the necessary skills to apply this knowledge efficiently during reading. It is important to consider these differences in proficiency and reading habits when designing teaching strategies aimed at improving syntax awareness.

The current study also emphasizes student perceptions on explicit syntax teaching as a factor in improving their reading comprehension. A significant number of students suggested that teachers should provide more grammar-focused exercises and strategies for analyzing complex sentences. This result reflects the need for targeted pedagogical interventions to help students develop a deeper understanding of syntax and its relationship to comprehension. The preference for interactive classroom discussions and visual aids, such as sentence trees, confirm that students can benefit from engaging approaches to learning about sentence structure.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the field work and analysis of the findings. The study emphasized the connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among EFL learners. The findings also suggest that many students benefit from syntax-focused instruction, although not all participants equally benefited. The study findings suggest designing customized

teaching approaches to make the most out of the connection between syntax awareness and reading

comprehension in EFL setting.

General Conclusion

The current research explored the role that syntax awareness plays in reading comprehension, emphasizing the case study of second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. This sample of students usually face challenges in comprehending written texts and identifying syntax structures, which can seriously obstruct their overall academic performance. Consequently, the hypothesis for this research theorized that the better syntax awareness EFL learners have, the more positively it impacts their reading comprehension skills. Therefore, this study theorized that a higher proficiency in syntax awareness means better reading comprehension.

To test the validity of the hypothesis, the current research study used a quantitative approach to gather data through the implementation of an online questionnaire, aiming to gather information from second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. The questionnaire was designed to include five sections to assess participants' syntactic awareness and its impact on reading comprehension.

the study findings answered the main question of the research and revealed there is a strong connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension. The majority of students recognized the importance of syntax awareness in their reading comprehension. However, the findings also suggest that though many students benefited from syntax-focused teaching, other participants found it challenging to incorporate this awareness into their reading practices. To address these challenges, it is crucial to design teaching strategies that take into consideration the varying levels of proficiency and provide students with the tools they need to actively engage with sentence structures. Teachers should focus on providing a combination of explicit grammar instruction, practice with complex sentences, and opportunities for independent reading to help students strengthen their syntax awareness and enhance their reading comprehension skills.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were encountered during this study. Firstly, the lack of participation by students. The online questionnaire was posted on March, 16th and closed the replies on May, 27th giving second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University a period of six weeks to answer the questionnaire. Yet, despite this relatively long period, only 28 students replied to the questionnaire that takes merely five minutes to answer. Students' lack of interest and participations slowed this research and affected the sample making it smaller and resulted in making the findings less generalizable. Secondly, time management was also an issue, the theoretical section, though longer, but was less time consuming to research. However, the practical part took longer time and was shorter. Thirdly, time constraints prevented the research from assessing syntax changes and reading comprehension over an extended period. A longer study could provide more inclusive findings on how these skills develop over time. Lastly, the study focused on EFL learners in a one academic setting (Mohamed Khieder University), which may limit the applicability to other educational contexts, such as different universities with varying approaches to language teaching.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers should focus on including more diverse range of participants, such as learners from different proficiency levels, various universities, and different ages. This can increase the generalizability of the findings and allow for comparisons across different populations.

Future researchers should also focus on including qualitative data to accompany the quantitative findings. They could incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews or observational studies to provide a deeper understanding of how students process syntax and how it affects their reading comprehension in real-time.

Future researchers should also focus on exploring the Role of L1 in Syntax Awareness given the impact of students' first language on second language learning. Future studies could explore how L1 syntax awareness influences the acquisition of syntax in L2 to help identify transfer effects or challenges specific to bilingual learners. Future studies could explore how other factors influence reading comprehension, such as motivation or individual differences in learning styles, and how these factors interact with syntax awareness.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Student Questionnaire

The Role of Syntax Awareness in Reading Comprehension: A Case Study of Second-Year EFL Students at Mohammed Khieder University-Biskra

The current questionnaire is designed to examine the relationship between syntax awareness and reading comprehension among second-year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. All the responses will provide valuable insights into this research and how syntax awareness influences reading skills and comprehension. The questionnaire consists of five sections. All participation is anonymous, and all responses will be used solely for research purposes.

You are requested to answer honestly based on your understanding and experiences.

Before you start: some key concepts should be clarified
Definition of Key Concepts:

- **Syntax** is the order of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.
- **Syntax Awareness:** the ability to recognize and understand sentence structures, including grammatical rules and patterns.
- **Reading comprehension:** the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts effectively.

Section 1: General Linguistic Awareness

1. How would you rate your overall proficiency in English? *

o   Beginner

o   Intermediate

o   Advanced

2. How often do you read academic or literary texts in English?*

o   Always

o   Often

o   Sometimes

o   Rarely

o   Never

3. What do you find most challenging when reading in English? (You may select more than one) *

o   Understanding vocabulary

o   Recognizing sentence structure

o   Interpreting the meaning of complex sentences

o   Identifying the main idea and supporting details

Section 2:   Syntax Awareness

4. Do you actively pay attention to sentence structure while reading?*

o   Yes, always

o   Sometimes

o   Rarely

o   Never

5. When encountering complex sentences, how do you usually process them?*

o   Break them down into smaller parts

o   Rely on context to understand them

o Ignore complex structures and focus on the general meaning

o Struggle to understand them

6. Which syntactic structures do you find most difficult to understand in English texts?*

o Passive voice

o Relative clauses

o Conditional sentences

o Sentence inversion

o Other:

Section 3: Reading comprehension Practices

7. How do you usually approach reading comprehension tasks?*

o Reading word by word carefully

o Skimming for general meaning first

o Scanning for key details

o Guessing meaning from context

8. Do you believe that understanding sentence structure helps you comprehend texts more efficiently?*

o Strongly agree

o Agree

o Neutral

o Disagree

o Strongly disagree

9. How confident are you in identifying the subject, verb, and object in complex sentences?*

o   Very confident

o   Somewhat confident

o   Neutral

o   Not very confident

o   Not confident at all

Section 4: The Influence of Syntax Awareness on Reading Comprehension

10. Have you noticed improvements in your reading comprehension when focusing on sentence structure?*

o   Yes, significantly

o   Yes, somewhat

o   No noticeable difference

o   No, it makes reading more difficult

11. Do you think explicit instruction in syntax could enhance your reading skills? *

o   Strongly agree

o   Agree

o   Neutral

o   Disagree

o   Strongly disagree

12. What strategies do you think would help improve syntax awareness and reading comprehension? (Select all that apply) *

○ Grammar-focused exercises

○ More reading practices

○ Sentence diagramming or analysis

○ Translation between L1 and L2

○ Interactive classroom discussions on syntax

○ Other:

Section 5: Syntax Awareness and Reading Comprehension in EFL Learning

13. Do you believe there is a strong connection between syntax awareness and reading comprehension? *

○ Yes, definitely

○ Yes, somewhat

○ No, not really

○ No, not at all

14. In what way do you think syntax awareness affects your reading comprehension? *

○ It helps me understand sentence meaning better

○ It slows down my reading but improves accuracy

○ It has little effect on my reading

○ It makes reading more complicated

15. What kind of support do you think teachers should provide to help students with syntax awareness and reading comprehension? *

○ More exercises on sentence structure

○ Teaching strategies for analyzing complex sentences

o   Using visual aids like sentence trees

o   Encouraging more independent reading

o   Other:

End of Questionnaire.

الملخص

يعدّ الاستيعاب القرائي مهارة أساسية في تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ويرتبط تطورها ارتباطًا وثيقًا بقدرة المتعلمين على فهم بنية الجملة. تبحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقة بين الوعي النحوي وفهم القراءة لدى طلبة السنة الثانية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة محمد خيضر في بسكرة. ويستخدم هذا البحث منهجًا كميًا منهجيا عبر الإنترنت لتقييم الوعي النحوي لدى المشاركين وأثره على أدائهم في فهم القراءة. وتكشف النتائج عن وجود علاقة إيجابية بين الوعي النحوي لدى المتعلمين وقدراتهم على الفهم القرائي، مما يدعم الفكرة التي تشير إلى أن الوعي النحوي يسهم في زيادة فعالية مهارات القراءة. ومع ذلك، تسلط النتائج الضوء أيضًا على التباين في قدرة الطلاب على تطبيق المعرفة النحوية أثناء القراءة، مما يشير إلى الحاجة إلى استراتيجيات تدريس متباينة. وتوصي الدراسة بدمج التعليم الصريح لقواعد اللغة، والممارسة الموجهة مع تراكيب الجمل المعقدة، وفرص القراءة المستقلة في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. قدم البحث الحالي رؤى قيمة حول الأهمية التربوية للنحو في تطوير القراءة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فهم القراءة، بنية الجملة، الوعي النحوي، استراتيجيات التدريس.