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**Title**

**Investigating the Effects of Semantic Mapping in  
Developing Learners' Reading Comprehension  
The Case of**

**Second Year Students of English at Biskra University**

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## **Dedication**

First and foremost, I dedicate my work to the pure soul of my late paternal grandfather

‘Ahmed’ whose love for me knew no bounds. May Allah grant you ‘Al Jannah’

To my parents, with great love, respect and endless gratitude for teaching me the values of hard work and for their patience and constant support.

To my beloved fiancé who has encouraged me all the way. I am truly thankful for having you in my life.

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## **Abstract**

Reading is regarded as a difficult but necessary skill because it allows for the acquisition of knowledge as well as access to a wide range of information in many academic fields. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of reading comprehension was not always guaranteed, as was the case for the majority of second-year English students at Biskra University. They seemed to have inadequate reading skills, thus the reading comprehension questions were approached in an inappropriate and/or superficial manner. In this study, we hypothesize that using semantic mapping as a strategy would help EFL learners in achieving the reading comprehension objectives, as well as teachers' attitudes toward the use of this strategy would be significantly positive. Striving to lay the basis for an effective and profound reading approach, the current study was an attempt to measure the effectiveness of using the semantic mapping strategy for enhancing reading comprehension of the study's sample of 22 students. In terms of methodology, a qualitative method approach was used along with students' questionnaire, to obtain participants' reading comprehension difficulties, as well as their perceptions on the use of semantic mapping strategy in enhancing reading comprehension and teachers' questionnaire in order to treat the teachers' feedback and attitudes towards the semantic mapping strategy, were used in this regard as data gathering tools. As anticipated, the results of the research showed that the participants had several reading difficulties attributed to a number of potential reasons. The results also ultimately showed that none of the questioned teachers seemed to incorporate this strategy into their reading classes. Subsequently, they show genuine enthusiasm in this innovative strategy and revealed positive attitudes to its use in the reading class.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

**2nd:** Second

**ALE:** Anglais comme Langue Etrangère

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

**ESSA:** Every Student Succeed Act

**FLL:** Foreign Language Learning

**GOs:** Graphic Organizes

## List of Tables

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table3.1: Students' Choice of Studying English .....   | 51 |
| Table3.2: Students' Type of the Baccalaureate.....   | 52 |
| Table3.3: Students' Opinions about the Importance of Reading .....   | 53 |
| Table3.4: Students' Ability to Read in English .....   | 54 |
| Table3.5: The Frequency of Students' Reading in English .....  | 54 |
| Table3.6: The Existence of Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties .....                                | 55 |
| Table3.7: Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulties .....  | 56 |
| Table3.8: Reasons of Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties .....                                      | 58 |
| Table3.9: Students' Use of Reading Strategies.....   | 59 |
| Table3.10: The Familiarity with Semantic Mapping .....   | 60 |
| Table3.11: The Frequency of Using Semantic Mapping in Class.....   | 61 |
| Table3.12: Student's Perception about the Contribution of Semantic Mapping in Reading<br>Comprehension ..... | 62 |
| Table3.13: Teachers' Degree .....  | 64 |
| Table3.14: Teachers' Period of Teaching .....  | 64 |
| Table3.15: Teachers' Perception of Teaching Reading .....  | 65 |
| Table3.16: The Procedure of Teaching Reading .....   | 66 |
| Table3.17: Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties.....   | 67 |
| Table3.18: Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties.....   | 67 |
| Table3.19: The Reasons behind Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties .....                             | 68 |
| Table3.20: Teachers' Support to Low Achievers .....  | 69 |
| Tableau 21: Teachers' Perception towards the Encouragement of the Use of Reading<br>Strategies .....         | 70 |
| Table3.22: The Teachers' Encouragement for the use of Reading Strategies .....                               | 70 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table3.23: Teachers' Perception on the Use of Semantic Mapping Strategy..... | 71 |
| Table3.24: The Reasons that Hinder the Adoption of Semantic Mapping.....     | 72 |
| Table3.25: Teacher' Opinion about Semantic Mapping Strategy.....             | 73 |

## List of Figures

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Figure 1:</b> Semantic map ( Graney, 1992).....            | 33 |
| <b>Figure 2:</b> Concept map (Novak & Canas, 2008) .....      | 35 |
| <b>Figure 3:</b> Story map (Idol, 1987).....                  | 36 |
| <b>Figure 4:</b> Knowledge map (O'Donnell et al., 2002) ..... | 38 |



## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix1:** Students' Questionnaire

**Appendix2:** Teachers' Questionnaire

## List of Contents

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Dedication.....</b>                          | <b>II</b>   |
| <b>Acknowledgements.....</b>                    | <b>III</b>  |
| <b>Abstract .....</b>                           | <b>IV</b>   |
| <b>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....</b> | <b>V</b>    |
| <b>List of Tables.....</b>                      | <b>VI</b>   |
| <b>List of Figures .....</b>                    | <b>VIII</b> |
| <b>List of Appendices .....</b>                 | <b>IX</b>   |
| <b>List of Contents.....</b>                    | <b>X</b>    |
| <b>General Introduction .....</b>               | <b>II</b>   |
| <b>Introduction: .....</b>                      | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>1. Statement of the Problem.....</b>         | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>2. Aim of the Study .....</b>                | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>3. Methodology.....</b>                      | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>3.1 Population and sampling .....</b>        | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>3.2 Data gathering tools .....</b>           | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>4. Research Questions .....</b>              | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>5. Research Hypotheses:.....</b>             | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>6. Significance of the Study: .....</b>      | <b>4</b>    |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>7. Limitation of the Study .....</b>                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Chapter One.....</b>                                    | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Reading Comprehension .....</b>                         | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Introduction .....</b>                                  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>1. 1 Definitions of Reading .....</b>                   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>1.2 Models of Reading .....</b>                         | <b>10</b> |
| <b>1.2.1 Bottom-up Model.....</b>                          | <b>10</b> |
| <b>1.2.2 Top-down Model.....</b>                           | <b>10</b> |
| <b>1.2.3 Interactive Model.....</b>                        | <b>11</b> |
| <b>1.3 Types of Reading .....</b>                          | <b>12</b> |
| <b>1.3.1 Extensive Reading.....</b>                        | <b>12</b> |
| <b>1.3.2 Intensive Reading .....</b>                       | <b>13</b> |
| <b>1.4 Purpose of Reading.....</b>                         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>1.5 Definitions of Reading Comprehension.....</b>       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>1.6 Importance of Reading Comprehension.....</b>        | <b>15</b> |
| <b>1.7 Difficulties of Reading Comprehension.....</b>      | <b>16</b> |
| <b>1.8 Effective Reading Comprehension Strategies.....</b> | <b>22</b> |
| <b>1.8.1 Predicting .....</b>                              | <b>23</b> |
| <b>1.8.2 Visualizing .....</b>                             | <b>24</b> |
| <b>1.8.3 Making Connections.....</b>                       | <b>24</b> |
| <b>1.8.4 Summarizing .....</b>                             | <b>25</b> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1.8.5 Questioning.....                             | 25        |
| 1.8.5 Inferring .....                              | 25        |
| 1.8.7 Graphic organizers .....                     | 26        |
| Conclusion .....                                   | 26        |
| <b>Chapter Two .....</b>                           | <b>28</b> |
| <b>Semantic Mapping.....</b>                       | <b>28</b> |
| Introduction .....                                 | 31        |
| 2.1 Definitions of Graphic Organizers.....         | 31        |
| 2.2 Types of Graphic Organizers .....              | 32        |
| 2.2.1 Semantic Mapping.....                        | 33        |
| 2.2.2 Concept Mapping .....                        | 34        |
| 2.2.3 Story Mapping .....                          | 35        |
| 2.2.4 Tree Diagrams .....                          | 36        |
| 2.2.5 Knowledge Maps .....                         | 37        |
| 2.3 Benefits of Graphic Organizers.....            | 39        |
| 2.4 Definitions of Semantic Mapping Strategy ..... | 40        |
| 2.5 Types of Semantic Mapping .....                | 41        |
| 2.5.1 Narrative Sequential Map .....               | 41        |
| 2.5.2 Thematic or Descriptive Map.....             | 42        |
| 2.5.3 Comparative and Contrastive Map .....        | 42        |
| 2.6 Procedure of Using Semantic Mapping.....       | 42        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>2.6.1 Introducing the topic</b> .....                                     | <b>42</b> |
| <b>2.6.2 Brainstorming</b> .....   | <b>43</b> |
| <b>2.6.3 Categorization</b> .....  | <b>43</b> |
| <b>2.6.4 Personalizing the map</b> .....                                     | <b>43</b> |
| <b>2.6.5 Post-assignment synthesis</b> .....                                 | <b>43</b> |
| <b>2.7 Implementation of Semantic Mapping in Reading Comprehension</b> ..... | <b>44</b> |
| <b>2.8 Advantages of Semantic Mapping</b> .....                              | <b>45</b> |
| <b>2.9 Disadvantages of Semantic Mapping</b> .....                           | <b>46</b> |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....  | <b>46</b> |
| <b>Chapter Three</b> .....   | <b>47</b> |
| <b>Field Work and Data Analysis</b> .....                                    | <b>47</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....  | <b>49</b> |
| <b>3. Students' Questionnaire</b> .....                                      | <b>49</b> |
| <b>3.1 The Sample</b> .....  | <b>49</b> |
| <b>3.2 Reasons of Choosing the Sample</b> .....                              | <b>50</b> |
| <b>3.3 Description of The Questionnaire</b> .....                            | <b>50</b> |
| <b>3.4 Analysis of The Results</b> .....                                     | <b>51</b> |
| <b>4. Teachers' Questionnaire</b> .....                                      | <b>62</b> |
| <b>4.1 The sample</b> .....  | <b>62</b> |
| <b>4.2 The Reason for Choosing The Sample</b> .....                          | <b>62</b> |
| <b>4.3 Description of The Questionnaire</b> .....                            | <b>63</b> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>4.4The Analysis of The Results.....</b> | <b>64</b> |
| <b>Conclusion .....</b>                    | <b>74</b> |
| <b>General Conclusion .....</b>            | <b>75</b> |
| <b>Recommendations of the study .....</b>  | <b>77</b> |
| <b>References.....</b>                     | <b>79</b> |
| <b>Appendices .....</b>                    | <b>87</b> |
| <b>المخلص .....</b>                        | <b>94</b> |
| <b>La Résumé</b>                           |           |



# **General Introduction**



## **Introduction**

Learning a foreign language involves the ability to use it effectively to communicate. This effectiveness requires the mastery of the four skills reading, listening, writing, and speaking which support one another. In this respect, the receptive skills; reading and listening, yield the floor for the productive ones (speaking and writing) through enriching learning vocabulary and pronunciation.

In this area of study, reading is one of the most important skills that EFL learners should master. It is the process of looking at series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. Reading can be challenging, particularly when the material is unfamiliar or complex. But for some readers, comprehension is always challenging. Successful comprehension is considered to be a strong tapestry that can be withstanding lifelong and function through all seasons, in other words, we can get from a reading material wherever and whenever it is needed.

A great deal of research in the field of language has been and is being devoted to this specific area. It is mainly related to the investigation of the usefulness and effectiveness of some strategies in reading comprehension. From our part, we have chosen one of these strategies to measure its impact on the comprehension of the population of our work. It is the so-called semantic mapping strategy that is considered to be a very effective memory strategy as related to reading comprehension.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of the act of reading. When a student reads a text, s/he engages in a complex array of the cognitive process. They are

simultaneously using their awareness and understanding of phonemes, phonics, and the ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text. This latter component is reading comprehension. It is made up of two elements: vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension. To understand the text, the reader must be able to comprehend the vocabulary used in the piece of writing. However, being able to understand each distinct word in the text only is not sufficient, the student also has to be able to develop an overall conception of what it is being read to reach a successful text comprehension. However; second year EFL learners at Biskra University are facing difficulties as they read passively failing to construct an accurate comprehension of the material they come across. According to the data we gathered from a preliminary short questionnaire, students expressed some of these difficulties hindering them from understanding certain reading material.

The reason indicates that the choice of the appropriate reading strategy will increase students' reading comprehension without decreasing students' motivation. In this respect, semantic mapping strategy can be one successful solution as it facilitates the task of reading comprehension for learners. This strategy is also considered as a good process through which students visually depict the way ideas are connected. Semantic mapping can be used for a text or a unit of study through which, students are able to represent the relationships among words and concepts and in doing so, they are able to reinforce the associations and categories that structure meaning. This activity helps students to organize, learn, remember, and extend their learning.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

The present study aims to:

- Investigate the causes leading to reading comprehension difficulties.
- Examine the effective use of semantic mapping strategy in improving learners' reading comprehension.
- Identify the attitudes of both teachers and students regarding the use of semantic mapping.

## **3. Methodology**

This research is a qualitative research in which we relied on the descriptive method to collect and conduct data. It attempts to examine the effects of semantic mapping strategy on EFL learners' reading comprehension. As well as, describe teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the influence of semantic mapping.

### **3.1 Population and sampling**

The population of this study is second year LMD students of English at Biskra University. This case study is intentionally chosen because they are supposed to achieve and rely on many basic tasks of reading throughout this level.

### **3.2 Data gathering tools**

In this study, two data gathering tools are used: a closed-ended questionnaire for students to obtain participants' perceptions on the use of semantic mapping strategy in

enhancing their reading comprehension and an open-ended questionnaire for teachers in order to treat their feedback and attitudes towards the semantic mapping strategy.

#### **4. Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does the semantic mapping strategy help in achieving the reading comprehension objectives?

RQ2: What is the attitude of EFL teachers toward the use of semantic mapping?

#### **5. Research Hypotheses**

We hypothesize that:

RH1: using semantic mapping as a strategy would help EFL learners in achieving the reading comprehension objectives.

RH2: EFL teachers may have positive attitude towards the use of semantic mapping strategy in enhancing learners' reading comprehension because of its easiness.

#### **6. Significance of the Study**

This research is significant because:

- It attempts to examine whether semantic mapping would facilitate EFL learners' reading comprehension.
- This strategy would help EFL teachers to enhance their teaching process and increase students' performance in reading comprehension.

## **7. Limitation of the Study**

Although the present study retained significant results for the effectiveness of using semantic mapping strategy in enhancing learners' reading comprehension, certain limitations need to be considered in discussing the findings. The first issue is the small sample size due to the spread of the COVID-19. For this reason, it is often seen as an obstacle in generalizing the results. Moreover, due to both time limitations and the epidemic situation of COVID-19, the study could not take a classroom observation as a data gathering tool that could support and expand the scope of the study's tools, and/or mixed method approach that focuses on testing the impact of using the semantic mapping strategy on the reading comprehension.

# **Chapter One**

## **Reading Comprehension**

# **Chapter One: Reading Comprehension**

Introduction

**1.1. Definitions of Reading**

**1.2. Models of Reading**

**1.2.1. Bottom-up Model**

**1.2.2. Top-down Model**

**1.2.3. Interactive Model**

**1.3. Types of Reading**

**1.3.1. Extensive Reading**

**1.3.2. Intensive Reading**

**1.4. Purpose of Reading**

**1.5. Definitions of Reading Comprehension**

**1.6. Importance of Reading Comprehension**

**1.7. Difficulties of Reading Comprehension**

**1.8. Effective Reading Comprehension Strategies**

**1.8.1. Predicting**

**1.8.2. Visualizing**

**1.8.3. Making Connections**

**1.8.4. Summarizing**

**1.8.5. Questioning**

**1.8.6. Inferring**

**1.8.7. Graphic organizers**

**Conclusion**



## **Introduction**

This chapter sheds the light on one of the four basic skills that is reading. It provides definitions of reading from various perspectives, as well as details about both reading models and types. Since reading comprehension is an important part of this skill, there has been a focus on its definitions and importance. In addition, some difficulties that EFL learners encounter during the reading comprehension process are discussed in this chapter. The current chapter concludes with a review of various effective reading comprehension strategies.

### **1. 1 Definitions of Reading**

Reading is among the most common methods of getting information. It is regarded as an essential language skill that should be learned both in and out of the classroom. Reading is essentially the method of determining the meaning of a written document (Nuttall (1996), Urquhart & Weir in Grabe (2007), Colheart (2005), & Moreillon (2007). According to Johnston (1983, p. 17), reading is “a complex behavior that involves the conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem-solving strategies, to build a model of the meaning that the writer is assumed to have intended.” Reading, according to this description, entails not only learning the meaning of the text, but also learning what the writer wants to express. As a result, comprehending the essence of the text does not always imply comprehending the writer's intent (Nuttal, 1996).

Reading is considered to be a receptive skill since it focuses on responding rather than producing a text. According to Spratt et al. (2005), reading is a complex process that necessitates a great deal of precise information and reading strategies. Reading, according to Johnston (1983), is a complex behavior that involves the use of different strategies, both

consciously and unconsciously. Based on the above review of literature, it can be concluded that reading is a complicated process of obtaining meaning from written or printed texts.

## **1.2 Models of Reading**

Since reading plays an important role in the field of FLL, the researchers study the relationship between the reading process (what happens in the brain) and the reading teaching process (Dechant, 1991). Therefore, they proposed a method that is called the reading model. This latter represents a graphical attempt to depict how a person perceives words, process clauses and understands text (Razi, 2016).

### **1.2.1 Bottom-up Model**

Although this model is beyond the scope of behaviorist research, some scholars still believe that it is a model based on behaviorism. The model emphasizes written or printed text by focusing on the ability to recognize graphic stimuli, decode them into sounds, and recognize words, so as to obtain general meaning (Anderson, 2000; Anderson, 1999); as cited in Razi (2016). In addition, the bottom-up model suggests to learn the reading process, it must begin from teaching the children the small parts of language (letters) then continue to understand the entire text (Razi, 2016).

### **1.2.2 Top-down Model**

This model is also known as the cognitive view model. It reflects the cognitive view that is processing text begins in the mind of a reader with some background

knowledge and constructs an assumption about what he/she thinks the meaning of the text will be (Razi, 2016). The core of the top-down model is meaning, which takes precedence over linguistic structure. That is to say, the focus is on the readers' background knowledge in the reading process. Therefore, it tends to neglect that grammar is important in the level of language use. In this area of study, Clarke et al. (1977) believe that readers can obtain information, thoughts and attitudes from the text in which knowledge is combined with language predictive ability.

### **1.2.3 Interactive Model**

This model is based on constructivism that is recognized by the interaction of both bottom-up and top-down processes with emphasizing on the strengths of each process. Similarly, Leu and Kinzer (1987), state that “reading proceeds when each knowledge source in one's mind interacts simultaneously with the print on the page and with other knowledge sources”, as cited in Dechant (1991, p. 5). In addition, it relies on graphic and textual information in which the surface structure system (bottom-up model) is combined with the deep structure system (top-down model) to establish meaning.

## **1.3 Types of Reading**

According to Grellet (1998, p.4), reading can be divided into two types; extensive and intensive reading.

### **1.3.1 Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading, as described by Harold Palmer and Michael West after a pilot research in India (Loh, 2009), is reading immense quantities of simple language materials for understanding without executing any activities after reading. Therefore, reading is done for general comprehension (Carrell & Carson, 1997). Meaning that, the main purpose of reading is to get a general understanding about the given material. Accordingly, extensive reading, which is seen to be an efficient strategy to improve language competency (Maley, 2005), focuses on meaning rather than language.

Extensive reading allows students to become autonomous and confident readers (Day & Bamford, 1998). Similarly, learners have a better opportunity to enhance their reading fluency and speed (Walker, 1997), leading them to become better readers (Camiciottoli, 2001). Moreover, extensive reading assists students in developing a strong writing style (Tsang, 1996), acquiring enough understanding of word and structure (Day & Swan, 1998), and becoming effective spellers (Krashen, 1993). The fact that learners are not required to understand each single word gives them confidence to be better writers and fluent speakers.

### **1.3.2 Intensive Reading**

Intensive reading is a more detailed process that involves specific learning objectives to enhance learners' strategies. Similar to this definition, Nuttal (1962, p. 23) stated: "the intensive reading is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies". It emphasizes careful study of vocabulary and grammar rather than fluency. The use of guided reading in the language classroom helps students reach higher levels of success. A detailed study of reading materials via intensive reading helps learners to efficiently master the language.

Accordingly, it has been maintained that learners do not acquire adequate competency by extensive reading alone (Paran, 2003); in other words, perfect command of the target language cannot be acquired without deep comprehension. When extensive and intensive readings are combined, explicit and implicit learning take place at the same time.

### **1.4 Purpose of Reading**

According to Kalayo (2007, p.114), reading is a purposeful activity which is divided into three purposes: 1-obtaining general knowledge from the text, 2-obtaining detailed information from the text, and 3- just reading for pleasure. In addition, Rivers and Temperly in Mcdonough and Shaw propose seven primary reasons for reading: 1- to gain information for certain purpose or they're just concerned about a subject, 2- to acquire instructions about how to do some tasks for their work or daily life, 3- to act in a play, play a game, or do a puzzle, 4- to keep in touch with friends through correspondence or to understand business letters, 5- to know when or where anything will take place or what is available, 6- to know exactly what happened, and 7- for the sake of entertainment or

excitement (Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw, *Material and Method in ELT*, Backwell Publishing, Malden, 2003, p. 90.).

## **1.5 Definitions of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is an essential aspect that cannot be divided from reading since it is “the essence and ultimate goal of reading” (Vaughn & Bos, 2009). In other words, if the reader effectively comprehends the text, the reading activity's target will be fulfilled.

Kalayo (2007, p.115) pointed out that reading is an interactive activity that occurs between the reader and the text, eventually resulting in comprehension. The text contains meaning-encoding letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs. The reader deduces the meaning from his or her knowledge, skills, and strategies. Reading is therefore a type of communication between the reader and the written text. Readers should use their knowledge to comprehend the text's ( Kalayo Hasibuan and Muhammad Fauzan A. *Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL)*.(Pekanbaru: Alaf Riau Graha UNRI press. 2007) p. 115

Reading comprehension is described by Rubin Westwood as a complex intellectual process involving multiple abilities. Readers must use the information they have already acquired to filter, explain, organize, reflect upon and build relationships with the new incoming information on the page. To comprehend a text, readers must be able to recognize words rapidly, to understand the meaning of almost every word and to be able to combine meaning into coherent message (Peter Westwood. *Op cite*.p.10).

According to Grabe & Stoller (2002:17), reading ability requires understanding or gaining information from a text. That is to say, reading is not only getting information from a text, but also to comprehend it. Understanding reading comprehension starts by analyzing what comprehension involves and how it is related to the whole reading process. In this area of study, Turner (1988:160) states, “successful comprehension involves the reader discovering the meaning needed to achieve particular purposes set for, or by, him. It may be finding a particular piece of information solving a problem through reading, working to understand an idea, or following a set of directions”.

From what has been said before, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is a process in which readers can read spontaneously the information from the text and correlate the information with one’s own background knowledge to construct the meaning that the author intends to convey.

## **1.6 Importance of Reading Comprehension**

Students need reading comprehension skills to succeed in their both academic and personal life. In students’ academic life, reading comprehension is considered to be the basis for understanding the academic content. As students progress to grades, the importance of reading comprehension in all academic subjects has significantly increased. Students’ reading comprehension is required to successfully accomplish their educational expectations in school. For instance, students are required to understand what they are reading, so that students can quickly find relevant information, non-relevant one and identify important information to focus on. Academic success also demands students’ ability to understand, analyze and apply the collected information from what they have read. Similarly, students need reading comprehension skills to comprehend and perform

their academic assignments. However, if there is no reading comprehension ability, students cannot complete their own assignments (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013; Wong, 2011).

Reading comprehension is also a crucial skill for individuals to have in order to be competitive in their personal lives (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007). Individuals, for example, must consider the simple text used in utility bills, housing contracts, job applications, and newsletters in order to be effective (Hoeh, 2015). Individuals often need reading comprehension skills in order to have and keep a career, as well as to effectively participate in various everyday activities (Hoeh, 2015; Mahdavi, & Tensfeldt, 2013). When considering the negative effects of not being able to read in crucial circumstances, the need for reading comprehension rises dramatically. For example, being unable to read and understand prescription instructions on a bottle of medication or warnings on a jar of toxic chemicals may affect consumers in a precarious situation that endangers their health and lives (Marshall, n.d.). If a student's inability to read successfully stops them from graduation from high school, they will struggle to find work and live independently (Hoeh, 2015). And if they do find work, their salary would be much lower than that of proficient readers (Brault, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Another potential disadvantage to not being able to read is being socially alone (Bryner, 2008; Hoeh, 2015). Individuals who can understand what they are hearing, on the other hand, can live their lives happily and begin to develop socially and mentally (Hoeh et al., 2015; Marshall, n.d.).

## **1.7 Difficulties of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is an important part of reading that every student should master. In doing so, EFL learners may face some difficulties, including inappropriate use



of background knowledge, lack of vocabulary knowledge, lack of reading fluency, failure to distinguish between different text structures, and difficulty making inferences.

Firstly, prior knowledge, as pointed out by Brandao & Oakill (2005, p.688) as cited in Almutairi, N. R, (2018) is “the sum up of what a person knows about the content of a text”. That is to say, in order to comprehend the given material, the reader has to make connection of what he already knows about the topic and the newly acquired information McNamara & Kintsch, (1996). Ferstl & Kintsch, (1999); Kintsch, (1998); Kintsch & Rawson, (2005), as cited in Almutairi, N. R, (2018), add that making this connection is essential in facilitating the reading comprehension process. In addition, readers who have less background knowledge struggle in understanding the written material when compared to readers who have more background knowledge (Johnston, 1984; Taft and Leslie, 1985 as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Furthermore, Brandao & Oakhill, (2005, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) believe that prior knowledge help learners in terms of understanding implicit information and remember what have been read easily.

Lack of reading fluency is another difficulty that has a negative effect on EFL students’ reading comprehension. According to Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, (2002) ; The National Reading Panel, (2000); Whalon, Al Otaiba, Delano, (2009), as cited in Almutairi, N. R, (2018), reading fluency is an important aspect of reading that refers to a reader's ability to interpret a written passage correctly, instinctively, and quickly with appropriate language. The ability to read quickly and smoothly helps readers to decode and recognize words, allowing them to save more cognitive capacity for sense construction (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Perfetti, 1985; Perfetti, 1977; Therrien, 2004, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). A slow word processing rate, on the other hand, will hinder readers' thinking during the reading process and overwhelm their working memory with multiple attempts to make the words sound clear that leads to interruptions in their

understanding. In other terms, rather than relying on the content of the reading and how words are linked together, slow reading of words and information focuses readers' attention on letters and vocabularies, preventing readers from accessing information in their working memory for sufficient time to learn meaning (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Perfetti, 1985; Perfetti, 1977; Therrien, 2004, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Reading fluency, in addition to facilitating reading and processing information quickly and efficiently for students, plays a vital role in promoting their reading comprehension. In other terms, rather than relying on the content of the reading and how words are linked together, slow reading of words and information limits readers' attention on letters and vocabularies, preventing readers from accessing information in their working memory for sufficient time to learn meaning (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Perfetti, 1985; Perfetti, 1977; Therrien, 2004, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Lack of vocabulary knowledge is considered to be one of reading comprehension difficulty that face EFL students. According to Qian (2002, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), vocabulary knowledge is a vital aspect that aids students' reading comprehension by helping them to quickly interpret vocabulary in a written text, which is an important component of reading. As a result, there is a strong and clear connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Baumann & Kameenui, 1991; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Joshi & Aaron, 2000; Malatesha Joshi, 2005; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Paul & O'Rourke, 1988; Stanovich, 1986, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). This relation is referred to as a reciprocal relationship (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Ricketts, Nation, & Bishop, 2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). In other words, increasing vocabulary improves students' reading comprehension and can be enhanced by reading experiences (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Furthermore, as compared to students with lower

vocabulary knowledge, students with higher vocabulary knowledge better interpret written texts (Chou, 2011; Graves, 1986, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) and can quickly learn the meaning of new words (Boucher, 1986 as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Qian (2002, p.518, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) declared that “having a larger vocabulary gives the learner a larger database from which to guess the meaning of the unknown words or behavior of newly learned words, having deeper vocabulary knowledge will very likely improve the results of the guessing work”. Despite the fact that vocabulary competence is essential in promoting students' reading comprehension, readers with poor comprehension abilities struggle to effectively comprehend a text due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge (Clemens & Simmons, 2014; Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks, & Jacobson, 2004, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Furthermore, Ricketts, Nation, and Bishop (2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) add that students' limited vocabulary knowledge can restrict their comprehension of a text, especially when the text includes unfamiliar vocabulary.

Furthermore, when compared to students with high comprehension abilities, students with poor comprehension demonstrated vocabulary deficiencies and were only able to read a smaller fraction of exception vocabulary. Similarly, Chou (2011, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) concluded that the scale of a student's vocabulary skills influences their reading comprehension. As a result, students with more vocabulary knowledge understand text better than students with less vocabulary knowledge.

Another problem that may affect EFL students' reading comprehension is having a limited knowledge about the common text structures. Text structures are the ways in which an author organizes textual material to convey a meaning to a reader (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Knowledge of text structure plays a vital role in promoting learning by assisting students in linking details in text and distinguishing between important and less important ideas (Sáenz, & Fuchs, 2002, as cited in Almutairi,

N. R, 2018). It also helps in the learning of literary materials by allowing students to ask pertinent questions about the text while reading (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Furthermore, being able to understand various types of text structure helps students improve their reading efficiency (Englert & Hiebert, 1984, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth (1980, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) discovered that understanding text structure helps students organize details conveyed in written texts as they interpret which improves and organizes their retelling abilities. It is important for students to understand text structures because they will be dealing with different types of text structures as they study and advance through school (Graham & Bellert, 2005, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Students experience and interact with a variety of textual material as they pass to education. Poems, plays, tales, novels, descriptions, and accounts are only a few examples of these kinds of texts. Of all the various types of text structures, narrative and expository text are the most well-known types of text that students experience while studying (Graham & Bellert, 2005, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Expository text is a category of textual material that is often designed to provide readers with new information and insights about the universe and natural phenomena (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Graham & Bellert, 2005, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). In other words, the primary goal of expository text is to express thoughts, principles, problems, argument (Berman & Nir-sagiv, 2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), cause and effect, problems and solutions, compare and contrast, definition and example (Anderson & Armbruster, 1984, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), and explain the philosophical relationship between them (Berman & Nir-sagiv, 2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Textbooks, articles, and magazine articles are all examples of expository texts (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). In comparison to the expository text, the narrative text is a tale that is written with the intention of amusing or entertaining the reader (Sáenz, & Fuchs, 2002, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Fiction, myths, novels, legends and other narrative texts are examples of narrative texts. The elements of narrative texts are often written using the same plot structure, which includes setting, characters, incidents, and outcome (Graham & Bellert, 2005, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), making them simple for students to understand (Dickens, 2016, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Difficulty with making inferences from a text is another problem that impedes EFL students' reading comprehension. Making inferences during reading is a critical standards-based competence that students must have in order to comprehend a transcript (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004; Hall, & Barnes, 2017; Kendeou, Bohn-Gettler, White, & van den Broek, 2008; Oakhill, Cain & Bryant, 2003; Rapp, van den Broek, McMaster, Kendeou, & Espin, 2007; Woolley, 2011; Yeh, McTigue, Joshi, 2012, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Making inferences refers to students' ability to draw their own conclusions from what is said in the text without the author's explicit comment (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), make predictions prior to and during reading, and use pictures or imagery to aid comprehension (Bintz, Pienkosky-Moran, Berndt, Ritz, Skilton, Bircher, 2012; Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, 2007; Jiménez-Fernández, 2001, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Being able to practice any of these metacognitive skills, students must be able to build connections between various types of information in order to construct context from the text. Making inferences from a written text is a constructive cognitive method (Baretta, Tomitch, MacNair, Lim, & Waldie, 2009, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) that helps

students to create a conceptual interpretation of a text by combining various types of knowledge to derive meaning from that text. For example, students must make a link between the different pieces of information that are precisely reported in the document (Elleman, Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Jenkins, 2011; Hall, & Barnes, 2017; Woolley, 2011, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). A text-connecting inference is the term referring to this kind of relation. Another example of text connecting inference is making a relation between a pronoun and the subject that corresponds to it (Hall & Barnes, 2017, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

In order to understand the text, students must incorporate concepts contained in the text with their own personal experiences, prior knowledge (Elleman, Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Jenkins, 2011; Hall, & Barnes, 2017; Woolley, 2011, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018), wisdom, principles, thoughtfulness, and creativity (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). A knowledge-based inference is when you make a correlation between written facts and personal experience (Hall & Barnes, 2017, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). As an example of this relation, Hall and Barnes (2017, p. 279, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) state that “a knowledge-based inference might draw on what the reader knows about people's motivations to infer why a character performed a given action”.

## **1.8 Effective Reading Comprehension Strategies**

Since reading comprehension is a difficult skill that does not come easily to all students, teachers may help students improve their reading comprehension by incorporating various reading comprehension strategies. According to The National Reading Panel's (2000) survey, teaching reading comprehension to students plays an

important role in helping them boost their overall academic success, not just in the reading field.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires teachers to meet the literacy needs of all students, including those with reading skills below grade level. To meet these needs, teachers must provide students with comprehensive, supplementary, accelerated, and clear literacy intervention and support (International Literacy Association, 2016). Reading comprehension strategies are teaching approaches that teach students how to construct meaning from written material such as predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning, summarizing and graphic organizers.

### **1.8.1 Predicting**

To be a good reader, students should set a target for their reading; therefore, good readers read with intent. Predicting is one method for improving comprehension because it enables the reader set a goal for their reading. According to Block & Israel (2005, as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013), strong readers use their experiences and knowledge to make predictions and formulate ideas while reading. This approach allows for more student engagement, which boosts student participation and comprehension of the text (Oczkus, 2003, as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013).

It is important to equate the result in the real text with the predicting process and this will help the learner develop his/her interpretation. It is futile to improve student's reading comprehension if this part of the prediction process is missing (Duke& Pearson, 2005). Teacher modeling, predicting throughout the text; with colleagues, using a graphical organizer, or using post-it notes throughout the text are several ways for teaching predicting. One prediction approach is to use the title, table of contents, pictures, and key

words. Another important prediction technique is to make students predict at particular points in the text, review their predictions, and revise them as needed (Teele, 2004, as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013).

### **1.8.2 Visualizing**

Visualization is another technique used by successful readers to comprehend a text (Adler, 2001, as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013). Visualization necessitates the reader creating an impression of what is read. This illustration is remembered by the reader as a symbol of the reader's reading of the text (National Reading Panel, 2000, as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013). Teachers may encourage students to visualize the surroundings, characters, and actions in a story by asking them to draw or write about the images that come to mind after reading the text.

### **1.8.3 Making Connections**

Another strategy that can be utilized in the reading process is to make correlations. Students can relate the concepts in the text to their own interactions by creating connections. According to Teele (2004) as cited in Küçüköğlü, H, 2013) "Text-to-Text, Text To-Self and Text-to-World" are strategies that help students make connections with the outside world. Students may create text-to-self connections through illustrating, charting, or writing. Furthermore, they may create text-to-world connections by drawing, charting, writing, or using graphic organizers. Text-to-World connections can be made by comparing characters in a novel to characters today or by comparing the text's content to the world today. (Teele, 2004 as cited in Küçüköğlü.H, 2013).



#### **1.8.4 Summarizing**

Summarization necessitates the reader determining what is relevant when reading and condensing the information in the reader's own terms (Adler, 2001, as cited in Küçüköğlü, H, 2013). During the summarizing process, students would be able to differentiate between the key ideas and the supporting ideas. Distinguishing relevant knowledge from irrelevant knowledge is another step in the summarizing process that will aid students' ability to increase text comprehension. Summarizing is a technique that lets students coordinate their thoughts even in lengthy reading sentences, which are also seen as a threat by students.

#### **1.8.5 Questioning**

Questioning may be used by readers before, during, and after reading. The questioning process necessitates readers asking themselves questions in order to build context, improve comprehension, find solutions, fix challenges, find knowledge, and uncover new information (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, as cited in Küçüköğlü, H, 2013). Students use this technique to return to the text during the reading period to find answers to questions posed by the teacher before, during, and after the reading process. Students practice distinguishing between questions that are true, inferred, or based on the reader's prior knowledge using this approach.

#### **1.8.5 Inferring**

Reading between the lines is referred to as inferring. Students must draw their own conclusions using their own knowledge as well as information from the text (Serafini, 2004, as cited in Küçüköğlü, H, 2013). Students would be able to draw conclusions, make

assumptions, recognize underlying themes, use information to create meaning from text, and use pictures to create meaning by inferring (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, as cited in Küçüköğlü, H, 2013). Techniques for making inferences from diagrams, tables, images, dates, related vocabulary, and titles from the text can be introduced to students.

### **1.8.7 Graphic organizers**

Graphic organizers are valuable to the extent that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” (Sam & Rajan, 2013, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). It is a visual paradigm that has been used to arrange, classify, and rearrange textual information in an easy-to-remember and understandable manner (Dye, 2000; Kim et al., 2004; Liliana, 2009; Muniz, 2015, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). This can be accomplished by “using lines, arrows, and a spatial arrangement that describe text content, structure, and key conceptual relationships” (Darch & Eaves, 1986, p. 310, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). The graphic organizer can be used to represent information in a variety of ways, including semantic mapping, concept mapping, flowcharts, Venn diagrams, web, framed outlines, and story mapping (Bromley, Irwin DeVitis, & Modlo, 1995; Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, & Wei, 2004, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). While graphic organizers may take various forms, their common purpose is to aid students' comprehension by visualizing textual content.

## **Conclusion**

This theoretical chapter seeks to define the reading skill by focusing on its various models and types, based on the perspectives of various scholars. It also attempts to emphasize the importance of comprehension being the main purpose of EFL learners when

reading any passage. Then, it passes to discuss the comprehension difficulties encountered by them. For instance, they struggle with the inappropriate use of background knowledge, lack of vocabulary knowledge, lack of reading fluency, failure to distinguish between different text structures, and difficulty making inferences. To deal with these troubles, they are advised to adhere to certain strategies are meant to remedy them. One of these strategies is the well-known visual mapping strategy, called *semantic mapping*. It will be fruitfully discussed in the following chapter.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Semantic Mapping**

## Introduction

### 2.1 Definitions of Graphic Organizers

### 2.2 Types of Graphic Organizers

#### 2.2.1 Semantic Mapping

#### 2.2.2 Concept Mapping

#### 2.2.3 Story Mapping

#### 2.2.4 Tree Diagrams

#### 2.2.5 Knowledge Maps

### 2.3 Benefits of Graphic Organizers

### 2.4 Definitions of Semantic Mapping

### 2.5 Types of Semantic Mapping

#### 2.5.1 Narrative Sequential Map

#### 2.5.2 Thematic or Descriptive Map

#### 2.5.3 Comparative and Contrastive Map

### 2.6 Procedure of Using Semantic Mapping

#### 2.6.1 Introducing the Topic

#### 2.6.2 Brainstorming

#### 2.6.3 Categorizing

#### 2.6.4 Personalizing the Map

### **2.6.5 Post-assignment Synthesis**

### **2.7 Implementation of Semantic Mapping in Reading Comprehension**

### **2.8 Advantages of Semantic Mapping**

### **2.9 Disadvantages of Semantic Mapping**

### **Conclusion**

## **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the description of semantic mapping strategy. Since semantic mapping strategy belongs to a type of the instructional strategies that are called graphic organizers, this chapter will first describe its definitions, types and benefits. After that, the current chapter clarifies the identification of semantic mapping by explaining its various definitions and types. In addition, it focuses on both the procedure of using semantic mapping strategy and its main implementation in reading comprehension. Finally, this chapter examines some of the advantages and disadvantages of semantic mapping strategy.

### **2.1 Definitions of Graphic Organizers**

Graphic organizers (GOs) originally known as advance organizers were introduced by Richard Barron (Barron, 1969). According to Ausubel (1968), new knowledge is gained when it is connected to the learners' pre-existing cognitive structure. As a result, the organizer's objective is to activate students' prior knowledge and link the new material to previously acquired information, giving ideal anchoring and making the new material more familiar and relevant (Ausubel, 1960).

The theory of the schema states that the cognitive structures (schemata) of knowledge known as prior knowledge or background knowledge absorb information that was acquired and integrate them in order to improve learning and retention. If someone understands a text, they have found the information in the text a mental home and have adapted existing information to match the new information (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

The early research formed the basis for the use of organized overviews with key words in a text to provide a conceptual framework before reading the content. According

to Meyen, Vergasón and Whelan (1996, p.132) graphics organizers also use visual displays to organize information in ways that facilitate the understanding and learning of information.

As cited in Kansizoğlu (2017, p. 139) and Lestari and Wahyuni (2018, p. 1) graphic organizers are seen as a graphical or spatial representation of texts that enable students to organize, arrange and link information and concepts with other concepts. According to the literature, these visual devices, which usually employ lines, circles, and boxes, are considered as the most important teaching tools that are specially developed to improve students' learning. It can be deduced that these graphic organizers are a good help to EFL learners to understand any material they come across because they can be seen as visual aids that may facilitate the task for readers.

## **2.2 Types of Graphic Organizers**

There are several types of graphic organizers (GOs) that exchange information using different protocols and are categorized in various ways. In her review, Vekiri (2002) as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, (2012) confirms the above claim, stating that there is no consistency in the categorization system of GOs and, as a result, the same terminology may be employed with various meanings from one research to the next. Although numerous sorts of graphic organizers are used to promote learning from various sorts of texts, they differ in design and the kind of relationships highlighted.

Even the following types of graphic organizers scratch a small part of the present research, it has been noticed that they are of certain importance and benefit to enrich this study.



### 2.2.1 Semantic Mapping

Semantic maps function as web-like organizers. Semantic maps are known by a variety of names, including mind maps, spider maps, and sunbursts. They resemble “a sun or star with rays emanating from it, as they consist of a circle with lines radiating from the circle” (Graney, 1992, p. 164, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). They are diagrams that may be used to represent words, concepts, or other objects that are linked to and grouped around a central key word or idea of the text and demonstrate links between the many components of a concept and the major concept, that is, the part to the whole (Graney, 1992; Iranmehr, 2011, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

Semantic maps, in particular, concentrate on the core idea, to which relevant concepts or sub-concepts are linked. Simultaneously, they provide an overview of key vocabulary and concepts, establishing a link between what students know and what they will learn and read, a type of brainstorming activity purely used before reading a passage to stimulate students' background cognitive structure and assess their knowledge in terms of the specific topic (Vaughn & Edmonds, 2006, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). The schema theory underpins the creation of semantic maps (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). The employment of semantic organizers improves students' comprehension capabilities, according to a study synthesis done by Kim et al. (2004, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).



**Figure 1: Semantic map (Graney, 1992)**

### **2.2.2 Concept Mapping**

Concept mapping is one type of visual device that might influence how learners understand expository texts. Novak was responsible for developing the concept mapping (Novak, 1990; Novak, 1991; Novak & Musonda, 1991, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012), based on Ausubel's 1968) cognitive learning assimilation theory. According to Novak and Caas (2008) as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, (2012), it covers concepts that usually fall within circles and boxes as well as relationships between concepts, indicated by a link between two concepts, while there are words on the line that specify the link between the two.

Another feature of concept mapping is that it provides a hierarchical depiction of concepts, with the most general, most inclusive notion at the top of the map and increasingly less generic, less inclusive notions at suitable subordinate locations (Novak, 1990; Novak & Cañas, 2008, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). It can also express many forms of relationships between concepts that students are likely to encounter in texts, such as comparative, causal, explanatory, and sequential, so enhancing reading comprehension (Oliver, 2009, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

The concept mapping is a valuable tool in any subject, since its fundamental goal is to concentrate on selecting the important ideas (keys) of the text, linking these concepts through relation links, and showing the principal text framework (Chalarut & DeBacker, 2004; Chang et al., 2002; Novak, 1990; Oliver, 2009; Schmid & Telaro, 1990, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). The electronic form is a modern concept mapping trend (Canas et al., 2001; Novak & Canas, 2008, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

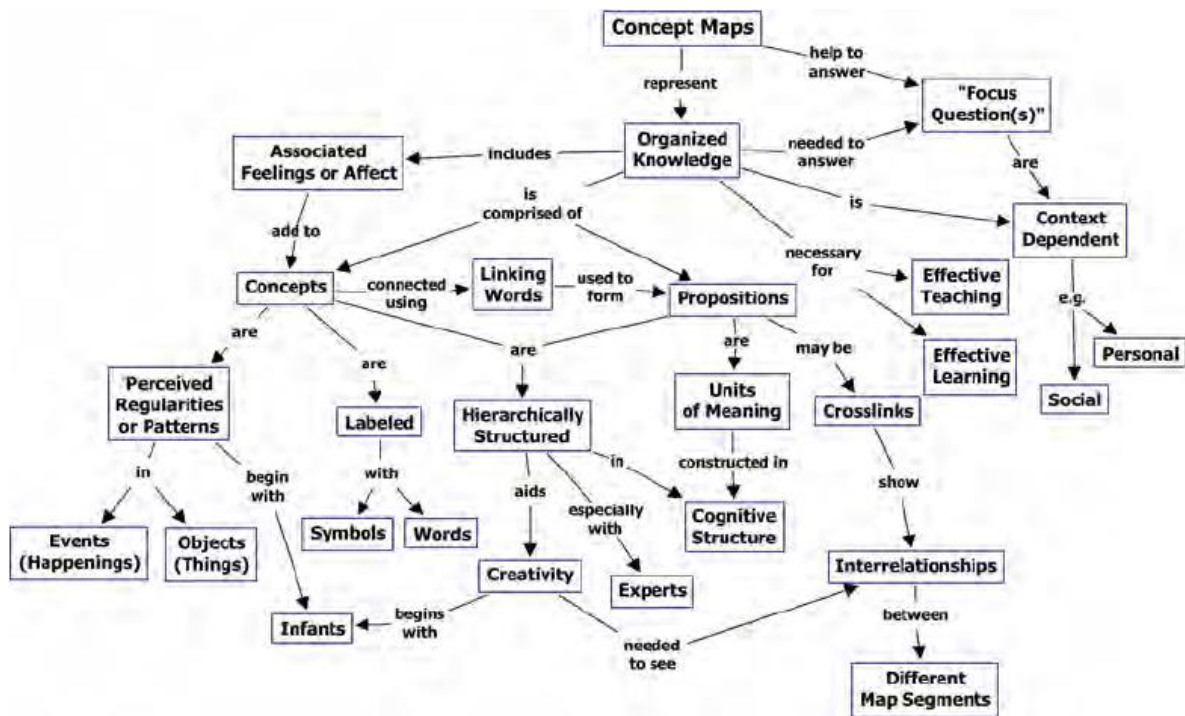


Figure 2: Concept map (Novak & Canas, 2008)

### 2.2.3 Story Mapping

In narrative texts, story mapping is a type of graphic organizer that is commonly used. It draws attention to the important parts of tales such as characters, times, settings, plots and graphic information through a specific framework in narrative texts (Boulineau, Force, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2004, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). At the same time, it highlights critical connections in a story that lead to better understanding (Gardill & Jitendra, 1999, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

Story mapping can be used to activate the knowledge of learners prior to reading the piece and connect what they read to their knowledge structure, provide a purpose for their reading; while reading a text, monitor understanding, and after reading a passage,

help them to summarize the most relevant concepts (Boulineau et al., 2004; Davis, 1994; Gardill & Jitendra, 1999, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

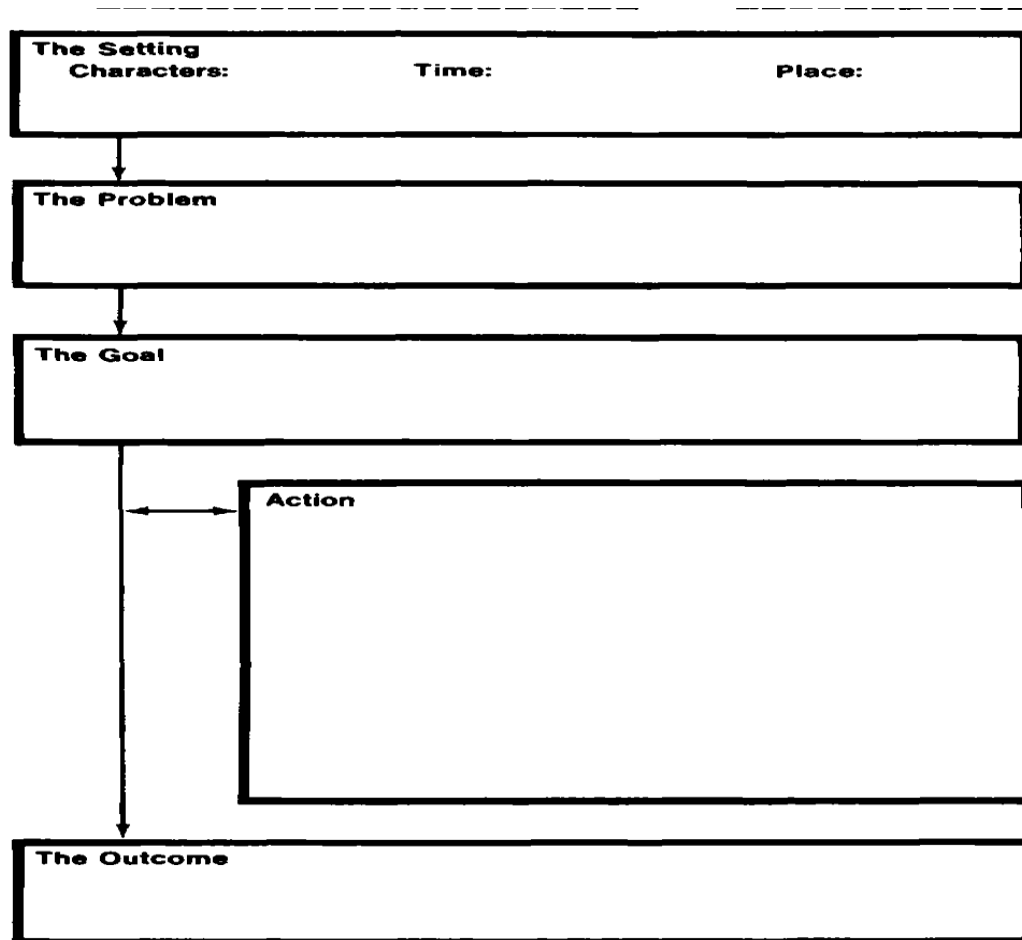


Figure 2. Components of the story map.

Figure 3: Story map (Idol, 1987)

#### 2.2.4 Tree Diagrams

Tree diagrams, which are organizers of hierarchy, visually show the main ideas of the text and establish several relationships between the different elements in the text, such as specific to general or general to specific, describing in hierarchy the connections between the diverse elements of the text (Graney, 1992, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). Therefore, tree diagrams, in particular, convey superordinate-

subordinate or hierarchical concept relations, which is a defining aspect of a hierarchy (Robinson & Kiewra, 1995; Robinson & Skinner, 1996, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). They are most commonly employed to describe family trees, sentence formation, the organization of societies, classes, institutions, taxonomies, and numerous hierarchical models. The use of tree diagrams to improve comprehension and memory of major ideas is supported by research (Guri-Rozenblit, 1989, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).

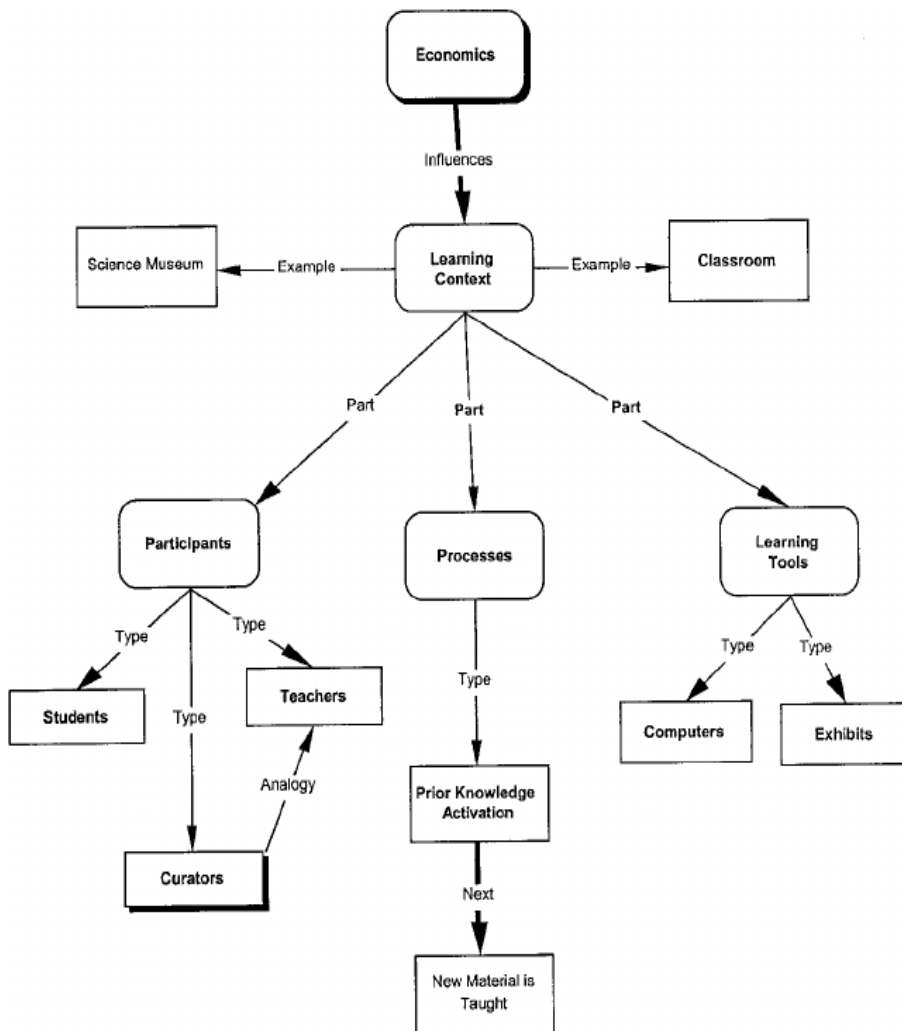
### **2.2.5 Knowledge Maps**

The knowledge map is another similar graphic organizer. It refers to a two-dimensional visual representation that presents information in the form of node-link-node assemblies, containing essential ideas and defining the interconnections between nodes (McCagg & Dansereau, 1991, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). This means that this graphic organizer aims at structuring data using two different aspects that meet at a connecting point in order to facilitate the task of comprehension.

Knowledge map's nodes also show conceptual information in the form of simple, verbal propositions, and each link includes an arrowhead to show directionality (McCagg & Dansereau, 1991, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). This explains that everything is made clear thanks to the verbal explanations that are well-directed through arrowheads. Additionally, knowledge maps highlight the relationship of concepts and ideas in a body of knowledge to an overall framework (Chmielewski & Dansereau, 1998, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). When compared to simply studying texts, examining knowledge maps regularly results in better delayed recall of macro level ideas (Amer, 1994; Chmielewski & Dansereau, 1998; McCagg & Dansereau, 1991, as

cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012). The fact that this organizer clarifies connections between ideas to reach a general description of the complex material being read makes it better for recalling data.

It should be noted that knowledge maps vary from other comparable representations, such as concept maps, in that they intentionally employ a set of labeled connections to connect concepts and contain arrowheads to demonstrate directionality among concepts (O'Donnell et al., 2002, as cited in Manoli, P., & Papadopoulou, M, 2012).



**Figure 4: Knowledge map (O'Donnell et al., 2002)**

## **2.3 Benefits of Graphic Organizers**

Graphic organizers are an effective reading strategy which benefits EFL learners in several ways. To begin with, graphic organizers assist students in making a connection between prior knowledge and new acquired knowledge in order to enhance learning (Sam & Rajan, 2013, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Moreover, they give a visual presentation to students in order to simplify and explain the connections between ideas and concepts (Anders, Bos, & Filip, 1984; Bos, Anders, Flip, & Jaffe, 1985, 1989; Darch & Eaves, 1986; Darch & Gersten, 1986; Sam & Rajan, 2013, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). In addition, they provide learners with a framework for organizing their thought in order to minimize perceptual mistakes that may arise throughout the reading process and to retain information (Boon, Burke, & Fore, 2006; Boon, Burke, Fore, & Hagan-Burke, 2006; DiCecco & Gleason, 2002; Sam & Rajan, 2013, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018).

Graphic organizers assist students in comprehending textual content by allowing them to make predictions about the text, make inferences, evaluate their comprehension while reading, and recall key information supplied by the author (Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002; DiCecco & Gleason, 2002; Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, & Wei, 2004; Pang, 2013; Sam & Rajan, 2013, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018). Chang et al. (2002, p.5, as cited in Almutairi, N. R, 2018) pointed out that “among the numerous reading strategies, graphic strategies are one of the few approaches that can be applied at the preview stage before reading, during the reading process itself, and at the stage after reading”. In other words, graphic organizers can be used at any level of the reading process.

## **2.4 Definitions of Semantic Mapping Strategy**

Various definitions have been proposed by scholars to identify what the semantic mapping strategy refers to. Sinatra et al. (1986, p.4, as cited in Muhtar, K. 2010) define semantic mapping as a graphical arrangement that illustrates how the major and minor concepts in a literary work are connected. Similarly, Bouchard (2005, p.69) adds that semantic mapping is used to provide a learner with a partial and visual venue to arrange concepts, to indicate relationships and retain significant knowledge. Thus, it is based on the arrangement of information in a way that helps EFL learners to support their comprehension through the identification of relations between the different concepts.

Moreover, Huynh (2002, p.47, as cited in Muhtar, K. 2010) argues that semantic mapping is a type of visual organizer which can be used in any subject to help students grasp relationships and construct conceptions about broad topics. That is to say, Semantic mapping enables learners to comprehend relationships that otherwise would be difficult to perceive. Johnson, Pittelman, and Heimlich (1986, p.779, as cited in Muhtar, K. 2010) provide a more detailed definition of semantic mapping, describing it as “a categorical structuring of information in a graphic form. It is an individualized content approach in that students are required to relate new words to their own experiences and prior knowledge”. This means that learners differ one from another in categorizing data as they relate or refer to what they experienced and knew before.

In addition, Graney (1992, p.169) defined semantic mappings as diagrams to be used to represent words, ideas, or other elements related and arranged to a key word or idea in the central part of the text and to represent the connections between the various components of the idea and the principal ideas, that is to say the relationships between the parts and the whole.



According to applied research on language learning strategies, semantic mapping are often used graphic organizers that support learners in analyzing texts and organizing concepts into meaningful clusters. Kim et al. (2004), for example, examined previous research studies on the impacts of graphic organizers on reading comprehension. According to their studies, certain types of graphic organizers were more helpful than others: Cognitive maps and semantic organizers were proven to be extremely useful in increasing reading comprehension.

From the above definitions, semantic mapping is a map of knowledge or an organized arrangement of vocabulary that reveals what learners already know about the topic and what they find from the text in order to effectively understand the text.

## **2.5 Types of Semantic Mapping**

According to Sinatra (1986, p.5) there are three types of semantic mapping formats elaborated as follows:

### **2.5.1 Narrative Sequential Map**

In this type, the students show how to isolate important episodes in a story or in a short fiction, show key facts in each episode and organize events in sequence in this episode. Each episode can be marked by arrows to symbolize the sequential organization.

### **2.5.2 Thematic or Descriptive Map**

According to this type, the students are required to present Information about the central theme and elements of persons, places or things. The main concept is depicted as the theme is centered and associated relations are depicted.

### **2.5.3 Comparative and Contrastive Map**

In this type, the students are required to present compared and contrasted topics in the center. On the left side of the topic, an arrow represents similarity, while on the right side of the topic, another arrow represents difference.

## **2.6 Procedure of Using Semantic Mapping**

Zaid (1995, p.05) discussed several procedures for semantic mapping implementation. They are described as follows:

### **2.6.1 Introducing the topic**

Zaid (1995) pointed out that at this level, the teacher announces the subject of reading by drawing on a big oval board and writing the subject inside it. He may show an image of the subject to stimulate students' thinking and refresh their understanding of the subject. In other words, the teacher can help his/her students by showing a clear picture of the material to refresh their previous knowledge.

### **2.6.2 Brainstorming**

In the brainstorming phase, Zaid (1995) says that it permits students to use prior knowledge or experiences. The teacher asks them to come up with ideas that are linked to the topic. As these words are identified, he writes them on the board. It is crucial during the brainstorming phase that all comments are accepted as long as they are relevant to the issue.

### **2.6.3 Categorization**

The teacher urges the learners to recognize the connections between the words suggested. According to Zaid (1995), the instructor can use various colored markers to record the words in a circle or link them to the center circle. Wh-questions (who, what, when, where, and why?) can be used to persuade students to participate in this process.

### **2.6.4 Personalizing the map**

According to Zaid (1995), when each student has produced a copy of the pre-assignment map, the class is given a reading passage related to the topic, which generally has more details and a vocabulary list with more terms than the students brainstorm during the pre-reading tasks. They are permitted to determine what to add to or remove from the pre-assignment map as they read. As a result, new information is blended with prior knowledge.

### **2.6.5 Post-assignment synthesis**

Zaid (1995) describes this part of the teaching task as an integration of the semantic mapping developed by the students after reading and talking to the students. This can be

done by discussing what they learned from reading the content and how the concepts shown on their initial map changed or contributed to it.

## **2.7 Implementation of Semantic Mapping in Reading Comprehension**

Semantic mapping can be employed before, during, or after reading activities. The purpose of semantic mapping exercises during the pre-reading phase of a class is to engage learners' schemata and introduce them to the main idea of the text. Teachers can utilize core questions as a pre-reading activity to improve comprehension, basic ideas, supporting details, pattern of textual structure, and character and plot development. At this phase, a semantic map is created by circling the key notion in the middle of a piece of paper. Students then provide ideas for words and phrases related to the topic (Johnson and Pittleman; 1986, p.778-783).

The students are asked during mapping to draw links between the primary concepts in the text and their supporting details with text collocations, co-ordinates, super-ordinates and synonyms. Moreover, they are asked to link reading passages (e.g., short stories, journal articles and novels) to what they were aware of in advance of reading the texts. That is, they will be building their own semantic connecting networks with a particular text

Post-reading mapping is also recommended by Heimlich and Pittleman (1986) in which learners can add new ideas, concepts, and even categories to their pre-reading maps during the post-reading phase of the course. Then, in the final phase of map construction, the learners are challenged to recall the content of a text and to discuss and graph new information onto their pre-existing maps. Students and teachers can utilize different colors on the second map if semantic maps are created throughout both rounds. This makes it simple to identify whether words or phrases are unfamiliar to the students.

## **2.8 Advantages of Semantic Mapping**

Heimlich and Pittelman (1986, p.44) present a number of advantages associated with the semantic mapping strategy. These advantages are: to motivate students at all levels of education, integrate thinking into reading, integrate evaluation with teaching and judge on the necessary education. Heimlich & Pittelman (1986, p.46) argue that Semantic mapping seems to motivate and actively involve students of all ages. The semantic mapping process also allows teachers to evaluate and to understand what students know and to evaluate the appropriate instruction necessary.

Rather than teachers assuming what students know, these judgments can be based on what students demonstrate they already know about a topic. Semantic maps enable students to visually organize and graphically depict the relationship between two pieces of information. This method has been found to be effective in increasing vocabulary and improving reading comprehension.

One common feature of semantic mapping strategies is that they display the order and completeness of a student's thought process, revealing both strengths and weaknesses in understanding. Many semantic maps are close-up and also large-scale, since many semantic maps use short words or phrases; they are perfect for many kinds of students including intermediate English literacy students. Classifications, analyses, structures, attributes, examples and brainstorming can be used on semantic maps.

In conclusion, many studies have demonstrated that semantic mapping strategy provides numerous advantages, especially for students, in the teaching and training process. They showed how semantic mapping improves students' understanding of the reading process, and how they think, brainstorm and write.

## **2.9 Disadvantages of Semantic Mapping**

It is difficult for the writer to find evidence demonstrating the disadvantages of the semantic mapping strategy in the learning process. Almost all studies conducted by researchers discovered that when students used this strategy in reading activities, their ability improved.

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002, p.34), potential overuse of semantic mapping should be avoided in second language contexts where students can easily be overloaded. In this context, the function of semantic mapping is to insert words into a certain category, so that the words are always semantically or syntactically the same. Students are often confused; some students for instance use carrot cabbage, British or Britain. In the linked words or representation, the worst performance includes both similar and different features, for example in the case of synonyms or antonyms. This makes learning difficult when you teach a couple of words such as prevent and protect, open and shut.

## **Conclusion**

The present chapter has shed some light on the various aspects related to the semantic mapping strategy in regard to its definitions, types and the way of using it. Moreover, it has provided a review of the application of the semantic mapping strategy in reading comprehension. This chapter is concluded with describing the advantages of using the semantic mapping strategy in enhancing reading comprehension without forgetting to mention its disadvantages.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Field Work and Data Analysis**

## **Chapter Three: Field Work and Data Analysis**

Introduction

### **3. Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.1 The Sample**

#### **3.2 Reasons of Choosing the Sample**

#### **3.3 Description of the Questionnaire**

#### **3.4 Analysis of the Results**

### **4. Teachers' Questionnaire**

#### **4.1 The Sample**

#### **4.2 Reasons of Choosing the Sample**

#### **4.3 Description of the Questionnaire**

#### **4.4 Analysis of the Results**

Conclusion



## **Introduction**

The present chapter is considered as the field work of the study. It attempts to investigate the effects of Semantic Mapping in developing learners' reading comprehension. It also aims to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the use of the latter strategy. Furthermore, the chapter provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the gathered data; in addition to, the results that are discussed and synthesized. Moreover, to check the validity of the suggested hypotheses, the current chapter presents the resulted findings. Therefore, two questionnaires were designed to enrich this study with an efficient data. One was for 2nd year EFL students at the University of Biskra to highlight the main difficulties they face in reading comprehension and the other one dedicated to reading comprehension teachers to determine their attitudes towards the use of the proposed strategy.

## **3. Students' Questionnaire**

### **3.1 The Sample**

This questionnaire was designed for second year EFL students group 05 at the University of Biskra. It was delivered to twenty two (22) students at the end of reading comprehension session. This current questionnaire aims to obtain participants' perceptions on the use of semantic mapping strategy in enhancing their reading comprehension.

### **3.2 Reasons of Choosing the Sample**

The current investigation sample was intentionally chosen because they have been studying English for more than two years. This shows that they should have a considerable knowledge of the English basics and literacy skills at this level. Furthermore, in the reading comprehension course, they were more likely to be exposed to a number of reading tasks. Most importantly, the researcher has tried to avoid high-reading comprehension learners, as they appear to develop good strategy and speedy reading skills most often and has focused on the intermediate level learners that are facing reading comprehension difficulties in their learning.

### **3.3 Description of the Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire consists of eleven (11) questions in a form of closed-ended questions where students were supposed to tick Yes/No or choose the appropriate answer among the given options. It is divided into three main sections.

#### **Section One:** General information

The first section is about general background and information about the students which contains two main questions, including questions about their choice of the English field and the type of the baccalaureate they hold.

#### **Section two:** Reading Comprehension

This section aims to discuss different aspects of reading comprehension. It includes five questions (From question 3 to question 7). It discusses students' point of view concerning the importance of the reading skill and how they deal with it, as well as, the

difficulties that they face in the reading task. It concludes with highlighting the main reasons behind reading comprehension difficulties.

### **Section three: Semantic Mapping**

The last section includes four (04) questions about the students' use of any reading strategy and their familiarity with semantic mapping. Moreover, the students were asked whether their teachers are using this strategy or not and the frequency of using it. This section was concluded by asking students about their point of view about applying this strategy.

## **3.4 Analysis of the Results**

### **Section1: General Information**

**Question1.** Choosing to learn English is:

| <b>Options</b>            | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| <b>a) Your own choice</b> | 20            | 91%                   |
| <b>b) Imposed on you</b>  | 2             | 9%                    |
| <b>Total</b>              | 22            | 100%                  |

**Table3.1: Students' Choice of Studying English**

This question was simply included to inquire about whether the respondents' choice to learn English emanates from external advice, or personal choice. Table 3.1 suggests that the majority of students (91%) chose to learn English by their personal desire. This shows that students were motivated and have a desire to learn and ameliorate their level in English, as well as they are expected to release good feedback in learning

English. Besides, others (9%) who are forced to learn English may have less desire and motivation to improve their English; this may subsequently undermine their language proficiency.

**Question2.** The Bacculaureate you hold is:

| <b>Options</b>                             | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| <b>a) Literary</b>                         | 10            | 45%                   |
| <b>b) Scientific</b>                       | 4             | 18%                   |
| <b>c) Literature and foreign languages</b> | 7             | 32%                   |
| <b>d) Others</b>                           | 1             | 5%                    |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 22            | 100%                  |

**Table3.2: Students' Type of the Bacculaureate**

This question has been introduced to know the different backgrounds of the students. The majority of them (45%) came from the literary stream. This is due to the fact that English was one of the main privileged choices available to them among other branches, as well as one of the main basic matters in their previous studies. The category of students who studied literature and foreign languages as their specialty (32%) is expected to be more knowledgeable and capable because they studied English before entering university. The last category (5%) is one student whose stream is technical. May be this student was obliged to opt for EFL in order not to lose a complete academic year.

## Section 2: Reading Comprehension

**Question 3.** To what extent do you consider the importance of reading in the target language?

| Options           | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| a) Ordinary       | 1         | 5%             |
| b) Important      | 8         | 36%            |
| c) Very important | 13        | 59%            |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>22</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

**Table3.3: Students' Opinions about the Importance of Reading**

As shown in the table, the majority of students (59%) admitted to and emphasized the importance of reading ability. They see it as one of the main crucial of the four skills in learning English language. It can be deduced that the majority of students are completely aware and totally conscious about the importance of the reading skill. Others (important 36%) confirmed also the significance of the reading skill. This shows that even those who do not go with the big importance of the reading skill, they admit that it is something necessary in order to acquire the language. The rest of the students (5%) see that the ability to read is ordinary. This category may have an interest in other skills such as writing, listening or speaking.

**Question 4.**Your ability to read in English is:

| Options      | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| a) Weak      | 3         | 14%            |
| b) Average   | 13        | 59%            |
| c) Good      | 6         | 27%            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

**Table3.4: Students' Ability to Read in English**

The above table shows that a large number of students (59%) say that their English language reading skills are average. Thus, we can ensure that the students are eager to improve their reading ability. This also, may tell that students are facing some difficulties while reading. But, the other students (27%) who answered "good" were apparently satisfied with their ability to read. The other respondents stated that they were 'weak' (14%), because they certainly have many problems with reading skills so they need more practical help, guidance, and containment from teachers.

**Question 5.**How often do you read in English?

| Options      | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| a) Always    | 1         | 5%             |
| b) Often     | 9         | 40%            |
| c) Sometimes | 12        | 55%            |
| d) Never     | 0         | 0%             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

**Table3.5: The Frequency of Students' Reading in English**

Based on the data above, twelve (12) students (55%) out of twenty two (22) asserted that they occasionally read in English. Here, it can be noticed that students were candid to a good extent because instead of reading, they are interested in doing something else. While 9 students (40%) claimed that they often read in English. This implies that the reason for reading in English so frequently is due to time limitation. One participant only (5%) said that he/she always reads in English. May be this student is either fond of reading or he/she has acquired this good habit for a long time.

**Question 6.** During reading, do you face any reading comprehension difficulties?

If yes, what kind of difficulties?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 15     | 68%            |
| b) No        | 7      | 32%            |
| <b>Total</b> | 22     | 100%           |

**Table3.6: The Existence of Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

| Options  | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| a) The inability to distinguish between different text structures  | 0         | 0%             |
| b) The inappropriate use of background knowledge and/or inability to connect ideas of the text with each other | 2         | 13%            |
| c) The inability to understand new vocabulary  | 2         | 13%            |
| d) The inability to make inferences in the text  | 0         | 0%             |
| e) The lack of reading fluency   | 4         | 27%            |
| f) All of them   | 0         | 0%             |
| b+c+e  | 3         | 20%            |
| c+d  | 4         | 27%            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>15</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

**Table3.7: Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

According to the results in table 3.6, it can be noticed that majority of participants, representing 68% of participants, are facing some reading difficulties, although only 32% do not. This argues that more than half of the respondents find reading and understanding English materials difficult or more difficult.



The students were then further asked to discuss the answer in the closed question. All options have been chosen at least once, as shown in Table 3.7. Nonetheless, nearly most students (27%) are facing difficulties including reading fluency, understanding new vocabulary items, as well as making inferences in the text. Twenty per cent (20%) of the participants said that they have difficulties in using the background knowledge and/or connecting ideas of the text with each other, understanding new vocabulary items and struggling in reading fluency. This indicates that although the participants have similar learning experiences, they don't necessarily have the same problems, as well as they do not attain the same rate of reading skills.

**Question7.** In your opinion, what are the main reasons behind students' reading comprehension difficulties? (You may choose more than one option)

| <b>Options</b>  | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|
| a) having a limited knowledge about both the text structures and genres | 0             | 0%                    |
| b) the lack of practicing reading                                       | 0             | 0%                    |
| c) the misuse of certain effective reading strategies                   | 3             | 12%                   |
| d) learning in overcrowded, disorganized and noisy classrooms           | 1             | 5%                    |
| e) having poor background knowledge                                     | 1             | 5%                    |
| f) all of them  | 2             | 9%                    |
| a+b   | 1             | 5%                    |
| a+c+e   | 1             | 5%                    |
| a+b+e   | 2             | 9%                    |
| a+e   | 3             | 12%                   |
| a+d+e   | 1             | 5%                    |
| a+c+d+e   | 1             | 5%                    |
| b+e   | 2             | 9%                    |
| b+d+e   | 1             | 5%                    |
| b+c+e   | 1             | 5%                    |
| d+e   | 2             | 9%                    |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>22</b>     | <b>100%</b>           |

**Table3.8: Reasons of Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

In this question, students are asked to mention the main reasons behind reading comprehension difficulties. They were allowed to choose more than one option. As shown in table 3.8, most of the students (12%) believed that the suggested reasons, such as the misuse of certain effective reading strategies, the lack of background knowledge, and the lack of knowledge about both text structures and genres which play a big role in hampering learners' reading comprehension because the reading material may not be comprehensible and clear if certain reading strategies are not used. However, the rest of the students declared that the factors that represent the main causes of facing reading difficulties are the lack of practicing reading and learning in overcrowded, disorganized and noisy classrooms. This means that teachers have to deliver more tasks about reading and the appropriate setting should be managed before learning in order to limit the main struggles of reading comprehension faced by learners.

### Section 3: Semantic Mapping

**Question 8.** Once you decide to start reading, do you plan out in advance to use a given strategy?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 5      | 23%            |
| b) No        | 17     | 77%            |
| <b>Total</b> | 22     | 100%           |

**Table3.9: Students' Use of Reading Strategies**

It is evident from the above table that the aim of this question is to know the students' use of some strategies while reading. It is observed that the majority of the respondents (77%) claimed that they do not use any strategy before reading, but 23% of

them intended to use certain strategies before reading. This implies that enormous number of students does not use may be because they do not know even to utilize it.

**Question 9.**Are you familiar with Semantic Mapping Strategy?

| Options   | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes  | 5      | 23%            |
| b) No   | 2      | 9%             |
| c) I heard about it, but I do not know what is it | 15     | 68%            |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | 22     | 100%           |

**Table3.10: The Familiarity with Semantic Mapping**

This question aimed to know students' familiarity with semantic mapping. Fifteen (15) students out of 22 (68%) declared that they heard about it as a concept, but they do not know exactly what does it represent. Followed by 23% whose choice was 'yes' indicating that they were well acquainted with it. Whereas, the rest of the students (9%) have ensured that they are not familiar with this strategy. It can be deduced that students' unfamiliarity with semantic mapping strategy may be because their instructors use it regularly in their classes.

**Question 10.**How often does your teacher use it in his/her class?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Always    | 0      | 0%             |
| b) Often     | 2      | 9%             |
| c) Sometimes | 12     | 55%            |
| d) Never     | 8      | 36%            |
| <b>Total</b> | 22     | 100%           |

**Table3.11: The Frequency of Using Semantic Mapping in Class**

The above table indicates the frequency of using Semantic Mapping in class. Twelve (12) students (55%) reported that semantic mapping was sometimes used by their teachers; however, eight (8) students asserted that this strategy is often used in the class followed by the rest of students (9%) who claimed that semantic mapping has never been used in the class. As a result, it can be concluded that the teachers are frequently using semantic mapping in their classes.

**Question 11.**Do you think that applying the semantic mapping strategy could facilitate and fast the comprehension of texts?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 17     | 77%            |
| b) No        | 0      | 0%             |
| c) No answer | 5      | 23%            |
| <b>Total</b> | 22     | 100%           |

### **Table3.12: Student's Perception about the Contribution of Semantic Mapping in Reading Comprehension**

The purpose of this question is to highlight students' perception towards the use of semantic mapping strategy. It is clearly noticed from the above table that almost all the students (77%) believe that this strategy can facilitate and enhance the comprehension of the text; whereas, 23% of participants were uncertain, so they have not answered the question. Overall, it can be said that the majority of students agreed on the effectiveness of semantic mapping strategy in enhancing reading comprehension.

## **4. Teachers' Questionnaire**

### **4.1 The sample**

The second questionnaire is designed to be administered to reading comprehension teachers at the department of English, University of Biskra. The population was totally 05 teachers but, unfortunately, only three (3) responses were received. It was distributed online to the email account of each teacher as a word document, in order to treat the teachers' feedback and attitudes towards the semantic mapping strategy. This questionnaire contains a mixture of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

### **4.2 The Reason for Choosing the Sample**

This sample was purposefully chosen because the variation of teachers is beneficial for the current research in terms of attaining some advantages from their experiences and their background knowledge. As this module was newly implemented in second year EFL curriculum, the teachers designated by the department to teach it were eager and

enthusiastic to engage in teaching reading comprehension where they are ready to excel in doing so.

### **4.3 Description of the Questionnaire**

The present questionnaire consists of eleven (12) questions in a form of closed-ended questions where the teacher is asked to tick the suitable answer, as well as of open-ended questions where teachers were supposed to prove their own clarifications and explanations. It is divided into three main sections.

#### **Section one: General Knowledge**

This section includes three (03) questions that aim to highlight the general background and information about teachers' profiles including their degree, their period of teaching reading comprehension and how they find teaching this module.

#### **Section two: Teachers' Practice in the Teaching of Reading Comprehension**

The current section contains five (05) questions which investigate the way reading is being taught, students' reading difficulties, the main reasons of these difficulties, as well as the effective strategies used to overcome these difficulties.

#### **Section three: Semantic Mapping**

The last section consists of four (04) questions which discuss the use of semantic mapping strategy in the class, the reasons that hinder the adoption of this strategy into reading classes. In addition, it highlights the use of semantic mapping strategy to reduce students' reading comprehension difficulties and determine if the teachers have any further suggestions.

## 4.4 The Analysis of the Results

### Section1. General Knowledge

**Question1.** Would you specify your degree?

| Options      | Number   | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|----------|----------------|
| a) Master    | 0        | 0%             |
| b) Magister  | 2        | 67%            |
| c) Doctorate | 1        | 33%            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

**Table3.13: Teachers' Degree**

According to the above table, there are two (02) teachers who hold a magister degree and one teacher (01) holds the doctorate degree. It can be deduced that the variation of teachers is beneficial for students in terms of attaining some advantages from their experiences.

**Question 2.**How long have you been teaching English at University?

| Respondents  | Number (years) |
|--------------|----------------|
| a) Teacher A | 1              |
| b) Teacher B | 10             |
| c) Teacher C | 3              |

**Table3.14: Teachers' Period of Teaching**

The table above shows that the period of teaching English in university ranges from 1 to 10 years. The periods' variety of teaching EFL at universities is beneficial and



positive for the researcher, as well as it guarantees that the next answers will be collected at university level from teachers with diverse experience and generations.

**Question3.** How do you find teaching reading?

| Options        | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Easy        | 0      | 0%             |
| b) Challenging | 3      | 100%           |
| c) Difficult   | 0      | 0%             |
| <b>Total</b>   | 3      | 100%           |

**Table3.15: Teachers' Perception of Teaching Reading**

It is evident that the main aim of this question is to highlight how teachers regard teaching reading comprehension. The table above shows that all teachers sample (100%) found that reading is neither easy nor difficult, but in fact they consider it as a challenging task. This entails that reading is a complex task that needs more attention and preparation by the teacher to make sure that he/she reaches the ultimate goal such as the comprehension of the students.

## Section 2. Teachers' Practice in Teaching Reading Comprehension

### Question 4. How do you teach reading?

| Respondents         | Procedure  |
|---------------------|--|
| a) <b>Teacher A</b> | Each time, I try to provide students with different documents (generally original materials) and ask them to read silently. Different questions are included with a text (reading comprehension/ vocabulary preview, and writing...etc.). I asked them to use the context in order to understand the unfamiliar words. In other words, I avoid using dictionary. From time to time, I ask them to read extensively.  |
| b) <b>Teacher B</b> | Through teaching strategies and applying them.   |
| c) <b>Teacher C</b> | In first semester, I tried to focus on vocabulary building through reading exercises. We learnt how to infer the meaning of some lexical items in their immediate context, some collocations and parts of speech. Our theme for second semester, on the other hand, is comprehension skills. We teach our students how to use and employ different reading strategies to comprehend the text at hand which is for this level the paragraph. Some of these strategies are making inferences, connecting ideas, making predictions, understanding text organization and so on! |

**Table 3.16: The Procedure of Teaching Reading**

The purpose of this question is to explain the procedure of teaching reading. The table 3.16 shows that both teacher A and teacher C mainly focused on learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension through different reading exercises; whereas, teacher B depends on teaching and applying different reading strategies. It is clear that the three teachers seem to have different plans in teaching the reading module.

**Question 5.** Do your students face any reading comprehension difficulties?

If yes, would you please specify them?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 3      | 100%           |
| b) No        | 0      | 0%             |
| <b>Total</b> | 3      | 100%           |

**Table3.17: Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

| Respondents  | Difficulties  |
|--------------|---|
| a) Teacher A | Unfamiliar and vague vocabulary, hard pronunciation, multi-syllabic words.  |
| b) Teacher B | Lack of vocabulary, ignorance of strategies.  |
| c) Teacher C | Understanding vocabulary, making correct inferences, connecting ideas to each other are among the main difficulties of reading. |

**Table3.18: Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

This item aims to investigate students' reading comprehension difficulties. Table 3.18 illustrates that the lack of vocabulary is the ultimate difficulty that learners face which was supported by the three teachers of the sample. It can be deduced that having a limited vocabulary knowledge will certainly affect reading comprehension. Moreover, teacher A added hard pronunciation and multi-syllabic words as the struggles that her students faced during reading comprehension class. Furthermore, other obstacles were highlighted by both teacher B and teacher C including the ignorance of strategies, inability to make correct inference, as well as failure to connect ideas with each other in the reading text. That is to say, these difficulties may cause the misunderstanding of the reading material.

**Question 6.**What do you think are the reasons behind students’ reading comprehension difficulties?

| <b>Respondents</b>  | <b>Reasons</b>   |
|---------------------|--|
| a) <b>Teacher A</b> | Lack of vocabulary, lack of reading, lack of support and motivation, lack of using effective reading strategies. |
| b) <b>Teacher B</b> | Lack of practice, motivation, they do not read.  |
| c) <b>Teacher C</b> | Lack of reading, lack of use or improper use of effective reading techniques and strategies                      |

**Table3.19: The Reasons behind Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

The main purpose of this question is to focus on the reasons behind learners’ reading comprehension difficulties. From the above table, it can be noticed that the main reasons that was declared by the three (03) teachers are the lack of reading and the lack of using effective reading strategies. As a result, the more students read, the better they become fluent, as well as making and using effective reading strategies is an important task for students to prevent them from reading comprehension difficulties. Moreover, other reasons were introduced by teacher A and teacher B including the lack of motivation and the lack of practice. This entails that, teachers must maximize the reading practices in teaching this module and try to implement different enjoyable and rich reading materials in order to get students’ attention and motivate them to complete the given task.

**Question 7.**What kind of support do you usually give to learners who are low achievers in terms of reading comprehension?

| <b>Respondents</b>  | <b>Support</b>   |
|---------------------|--|
| a) <b>Teacher A</b> | Make them love the English language through reading interesting, funny and rich texts.   |
| b) <b>Teacher B</b> | Giving them short texts or short stories within the field of their interest and showing them that with the proper strategies they can do it.                             |
| c) <b>Teacher C</b> | Practicing reading skills and strategies in the classroom is very helpful in addition to answering their questions and allowing for peer interaction during the session. |

**Table3.20: Teachers' Support to Low Achievers**

The above question aims to focus on teachers' support to low achievers in the reading skill. The table 3.20 shows that the three teachers agreed on assessing their low achievers in reading by introducing them to various reading materials that touch their interests. That is to say, teachers must motivate their learners by avoiding using boring materials to get their attention. Besides that, teacher C supports her learners by making them apply effective strategies, as well as allow them to work in peers. It can be deduced that working in groups make students focus more and try to interact with their colleagues.

**Question 8.** Do you encourage students, especially the ones with reading comprehension difficulties, to use particular strategies in order to overcome these difficulties?

If yes, what kind of strategies?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 3      | 100%           |
| b) No        | 0      | 0%             |
| <b>Total</b> | 3      | 100%           |

**Tableau 21: Teachers' Perception towards the Encouragement of the Use of Reading Strategies**

| Respondents  | Strategies  |
|--------------|---|
| a) Teacher A | To use the internet in order to grasp new words, listening to songs in order to enlarge their repertoire, using dictionary.   |
| b) Teacher B | Previewing, making inferences, inferring the main idea and supporting ideas, connecting ideas, extracting the topic sentence. |
| c) Teacher C | Making inferences, connecting ideas, making predictions, understanding text organization.                                     |

**Table3.22: The Teachers' Encouragement for the use of Reading Strategies**

The teachers' encouragement for the use of reading strategies is highlighted in table 3.21 which shows that the three (03) teachers declared on using some of certain strategies to assist their learners. According to table 3.22 the information illustrates that teachers use different types of strategies. Teacher B and teacher C agreed on making inferences and connecting ideas as effective strategies to use by their learners. As a result, using these two strategies may help students in facing reading comprehension struggles. In addition,

teacher A focuses mainly on the use of the Internet, listening to music and using dictionaries to enlarge their repertoire. It is clear that teacher A focuses on developing her learners' vocabulary.

**Question 9.** Do you use semantic mapping in your reading classes?

If yes, please why?

| Options      | Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| a) Yes       | 1      | 33%            |
| b) No        | 2      | 67%            |
| <b>Total</b> | 3      | 100%           |

**Table 3.23: Teachers' Perception on the Use of Semantic Mapping Strategy**

This question aims at knowing teachers' perceptions toward the use of semantic mapping strategy. From the table 3.23 appears that the majority of teachers (67%) declared that they do not use semantic mapping strategy in their classes. It can be deduced that due to time limitations they do not use this strategy. However, only one teacher (33%) makes the use of this strategy. Maybe, this teacher is totally aware of the importance of this strategy.

**Question 10.** If no, what are the reasons that hinder you from adopting and using semantic mapping into your instruction, in general, and your reading classes, in particular?

| Respondents         | Reasons  |
|---------------------|--|
| a) <b>Teacher B</b> | I believe that using semantic mapping is an effective; however, due to time shortage I do not use it.  |
| b) <b>Teacher C</b> | Though I believe in its usefulness and effectiveness in building vocabulary and improving comprehension, I do not rely on this strategy in the classroom because it takes time at the expense of other vocabulary teaching and reading comprehension activities. Actually, this is my one and only reason. |

**Table 3.24: The Reasons that Hinder the Adoption of Semantic Mapping**

Table 3.24 aims to discuss the reasons that hinder teachers from using the semantic mapping strategy. As mentioned above, the reason of not using semantic mapping by teacher B and teacher C is time limitations though they believe in its usefulness and effectiveness. So, time management is necessary here to help some teachers involve this strategy in their reading comprehension classes in order to take advantage of it.



**Question 11.**What do you think about the use of the semantic mapping strategy to reinforce students’ reading and reduce their comprehension difficulties?

| <b>Respondents</b>  | <b>Opinions</b>   |
|---------------------|---|
| a) <b>Teacher A</b> | It is an effective, handy strategy that we need to adopt it as teachers and even students can use it in learning different language elements. |
| b) <b>Teacher B</b> | It is an effective strategy that may help them understand texts better.   |
| c) <b>Teacher C</b> | They will absolutely develop their lexical repertoire and improve comprehension.  |

**Table3.25: Teacher' Opinion about Semantic Mapping Strategy**

This question aims to know teachers’ point of view about semantic mapping strategy. Though the majority of teachers do not use semantic mapping strategy, table 3.25 illustrates that the three teachers (03) have developed a positive attitude toward the use of this strategy as they agreed on the usefulness and effectiveness of it in improving reading comprehension.

**Question12.** Is there anything you want to add?

This question was devoted to teachers for the sake to state any additional suggestions. Only one teacher (teacher A) has added her appreciation of the dissertation theme and the type questions of the teachers’ questionnaire as she stated: “It is an interesting topic, I enjoyed answering your questions and I hope your dissertation can attract language users’ attention to use this strategy in their classes not only in reading”.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was devoted to the field work of the study. It consists of the sample of the study that includes second year EFL students, as well as reading comprehension teachers. It also contained the description of the gathering tools that are the students and teachers' questionnaires. Furthermore, the current chapter investigates the analysis of the study.

After having analyzed the gathered data, it has been founded that most of the students have the desire to improve their reading comprehension abilities. They seemed extremely eager to master the reading skills. According to their responses, most of the students are aware of the importance of reading in their language. Therefore, they confirmed that their levels should be increased through the use of certain strategies including semantic mapping to improve their reading comprehension. On the other hand, the responses of the teachers showed that teaching reading is very challenging because it requires different efforts, as well as the positive attitudes of using the semantic mapping strategy to reduce reading comprehension difficulties.

# **General Conclusion**

## **General conclusion**

Language learning requires an eager and earnest willingness to learn the language, and then mastery of language skills. The reading skill is among them. It is an important part of any language learning process. Thereby, the primary aim of the current study is to investigate the effects of semantic mapping in developing learners' reading comprehension of second year students at the English Department in Biskra University.

To validate our hypothesis, two questionnaires were used as a data gathering tool under the qualitative approach. The first questionnaire was distributed to second year EFL students to highlight the difficulties they face in reading comprehension ; whereas, the second questionnaire was delivered to reading comprehension teachers to investigate their attitudes toward the use of semantic mapping strategy as an effective strategy to reduce learners' difficulties in reading comprehension. The findings of our study revealed that most students in the second year encounter different difficulties concerning learning and enhancing reading comprehension. Reading fluency, comprehending new vocabulary, making inferences in the text, the misuse of background knowledge and/or connecting ideas of the text with each other are the most frequent factors which students mentioned each time they were asked about their difficulties in studying reading comprehension. These obstacles impede enhancing the reading skill. In addition, through the finding of our study, reading comprehension teachers shows their positive attitudes towards the use of semantic mapping strategy in terms of its effectiveness in improving reading comprehension and the way that is easy to use.

To conclude, it can be deuced that using semantic mapping strategy, as an instructional visual aid, has proven its effectiveness in improving EFL learners reading comprehension.

## Recommendations

Based on the gathered data and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are suggested by the researchers

- Both teachers and students should be aware of the importance of the reading skill in language competence.
- Teachers should focus on selecting the instructional material on the basis of students' interest, familiarity, and level of difficulty.
- Teachers need to familiarize their students with a variety of reading comprehension strategies that will likely be used by their students before, during and after reading.
- Since it is found that semantic mapping strategy is not well known and it is not widely used for practical use, the presentation of the strategy should be executed by using some interesting ways, for example with the help of pictures, illustrations and videos.
- Due to the fact that semantic mapping strategy can improve students' reading comprehension, it is recommended that teachers of English should use it as one of the alternatives for teaching reading comprehension.
- Since semantic mapping works well in different types of texts, teachers should vary text types to differentiate the content-area.
- The information about using reading strategies, in general, and semantic mapping strategy, in specific is expected to be shared through a teacher's forum such as in service training, workshops and conferences.

For future researchers, it is hoped that they will undertake similar studies of other skills such as listening, speaking and writing, and students at other levels, in order to improve

English teaching, or conduct experimental studies on the same skills to confirm the current findings.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendix 01

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear Students,

The current questionnaire is an attempt to gather the needed information for the accomplishment of Master Dissertation. We designed this questionnaire to explore the effectiveness of semantic mapping in developing learners' reading comprehension. We would be very grateful if you could help us to accomplish our research by filling in the questionnaire.

NB: semantic mapping is a map of knowledge or an organized arrangement of vocabulary which exposes what students already know about the topic (brainstorming) and what they find from the text in order to be able to easily comprehend the text.

Please, use a tick (✓) to indicate your chosen option, and write your answer when needed.

#### Section 1

1. Choosing to learn English is:

- a) Your own choice
- b) Imposed on you

2. The Bacallaureate you hold:

- a) Literary
- b) Scientific
- c) Literature and foreign languages
- d) Others

#### Section 2

3. To what extent do you consider the importance of reading in the target language?

- a) Ordinary
- b) Important
- c) Very important

4. Your ability to read in the English language is:

- a) Weak



- b) Average
- c) Good

5. How often do you read in English?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Never

6. Do you have any reading comprehension difficulties?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If yes, what kind of difficulties:

- a) The inability to distinguish between different text structures
- b) The inappropriate use of background knowledge and/or the inability to connect ideas of the text with each other
- c) The inability to understand new vocabulary
- d) The inability to make inferences in the text
- e) The lack of reading fluency
- f) All of them

7. Would you specify the main reasons for students' reading difficulties? (you may choose more than one option)

- a) The lack of practicing reading
- c) The misuse of some effective reading strategies
- d) Learning in overcrowded, disorganized, and noisy classrooms
- e) Having poor background knowledge
- f) All of the above

### Section 3

8. Once you decide to start reading a passage, do you plan out in advance to use a given strategy?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. Are you familiar with the semantic mapping strategy?

Yes

No

10. How often does your teacher use it in his/her class?

a) Always

b) Often

c) Sometimes

d) Never

11. Do you think that applying the semantic mapping strategy could contribute to facilitate and enhance comprehension of texts?

a) Yes

b) No

**Thank you so much for your collaboration**

**Good luck**

## Appendix 02

### Teacher's questionnaire

Dear teacher,

You are kindly asked for an answering the following questionnaire, which serves as a data collection tool for a study, entitled “the Effects of Semantic Mapping in Developing Learners’ Reading Comprehension” for the second year EFL students. Your answers will be of great help for our research.

Thank you in advance.

#### Section One: General Knowledge

1. Would you specify your degree?

a) Master

b) Magister

c) Doctorate

2. How long have you been teaching English at university?

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.....

3. How do you find teaching reading?

a) Easy

b) Challenging

c) Difficult

#### Section Two: Teachers' Practice in the Teaching of Reading Comprehension

4. How do you teach reading?

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.....  
.....  
.....

5. Do your students face any reading comprehension difficulties?

Yes

No

If yes, would you please specify them?

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.....  
.....  
.....

6. What do you think are the reasons behind students' reading comprehension difficulties?

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.....  
.....  
.....

7. What kind of support do you usually give to learners who are low achievers in terms of reading comprehension?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you encourage students, especially the ones with reading comprehension difficulties, to use particular strategies in order to overcome these difficulties?

Yes

No

If yes, what kind of strategies?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you use semantic mapping in your reading classes?

Yes

No

If yes, please say why?

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.....  
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.....

10. If no, what are the reasons that hinder you from adopting and using semantic mapping into your instruction, in general, and your reading classes, in particular?

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.....

11. What do you think about the use of the semantic mapping strategy to reinforce students' reading and reduce their comprehension difficulties?

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12. Is there anything you want to add?

.....  
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**Thank you dear Teacher for your collaboration**

**We wish you all the best in your career**

## الملخص

تعتبر القراءة مهارة صعبة ولكنها ضرورية لأنها تسمح باكتساب المعرفة وكذلك الوصول إلى مجموعة واسعة من المعلومات في العديد من المجالات الأكاديمية. ومع ذلك، لم يكن الهدف النهائي لفهم القراءة مضموناً دائماً، كما كان الحال بالنسبة لغالبية طلاب السنة الثانية الإنجليزية في جامعة بسكرة. يبدو أن لديهم مهارات قراءة غير كافية، وبالتالي تم التعامل مع أسئلة الفهم القرائي بطريقة غير مناسبة و / أو سطحية. في هذه الدراسة، نفترض أن استخدام الخرائط الدلالية كاستراتيجية من شأنه أن يساعد متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تحقيق أهداف فهم القراءة، وكذلك مواقف المعلمين تجاه استخدام هذه الاستراتيجية ستكون إيجابية بشكل كبير. تسعى الدراسة الحالية جاهدة لوضع الأساس لنهج قراءة فعال وعميق، وكانت محاولة لقياس فعالية استخدام استراتيجية رسم الخرائط الدلالية لتعزيز الفهم القرائي لعينة الدراسة المكونة من 22 طالباً. فيما يتعلق بالمنهجية، تم استخدام منهج الطريقة النوعية مع استبيان الطلاب، للحصول على صعوبات استيعاب المشاركين للقراءة، وكذلك تصوراتهم حول استخدام استراتيجية رسم الخرائط الدلالية في تعزيز فهم القراءة واستبيان المعلمين من أجل معالجة تم استخدام ملاحظات المعلمين ومواقفهم تجاه استراتيجية رسم الخرائط الدلالية في هذا الصدد كأدوات لجمع البيانات. كما هو متوقع، أظهرت نتائج البحث أن المشاركين واجهوا عدة صعوبات في القراءة تُعزى إلى عدد من الأسباب المحتملة. أظهرت النتائج أيضاً في النهاية أنه لا يبدو أن أيًا من المعلمين الذين تم سؤالهم يدمج هذه الاستراتيجية في فصول القراءة الخاصة بهم. بعد ذلك، أظهروا حماساً حقيقياً في هذه الاستراتيجية المبتكرة وكشفوا عن مواقف إيجابية لاستخدامها في فصل القراءة.

## Le Résumé

La lecture est considérée comme une compétence difficile mais nécessaire car elle permet l'acquisition de connaissances ainsi que l'accès à un large éventail d'informations dans de nombreux domaines académiques. Néanmoins, le but ultime de la compréhension en lecture n'était pas toujours garanti, comme c'était le cas pour la majorité des étudiants de deuxième année d'anglais à l'Université de Biskra. Ils semblaient avoir des compétences en lecture insuffisantes, de sorte que les questions de compréhension en lecture ont été abordées de manière inappropriée et/ou superficielle. Dans cette étude, nous émettons l'hypothèse que l'utilisation de la cartographie sémantique comme stratégie aiderait les apprenants ALE à atteindre les objectifs de compréhension en lecture, ainsi que les attitudes des enseignants envers l'utilisation de cette stratégie seraient significativement positives. S'efforçant de jeter les bases d'une approche de lecture efficace et profonde, la présente étude était une tentative de mesurer l'efficacité de l'utilisation de la stratégie de cartographie sémantique pour améliorer la compréhension en lecture de l'échantillon de l'étude de 22 étudiants. En termes de méthodologie, une approche de méthode qualitative a été utilisée avec le questionnaire des élèves, pour obtenir les difficultés de compréhension en lecture des participants, ainsi que leurs perceptions sur l'utilisation de la stratégie de cartographie sémantique pour améliorer la compréhension en lecture et le questionnaire des enseignants afin de traiter les commentaires et attitudes des enseignants vis-à-vis de la stratégie de cartographie sémantique ont été utilisés à cet égard comme outils de collecte de données. Comme prévu, les résultats de la recherche ont montré que les participants avaient plusieurs difficultés de lecture attribuées à un certain nombre de raisons potentielles. Les résultats ont aussi finalement montré qu'aucun des enseignants interrogés ne semblait intégrer cette stratégie dans ses cours de lecture. Par la suite, ils manifestent un

réel enthousiasme pour cette stratégie innovante et révèlent des attitudes positives vis-à-vis de son utilisation en classe de lecture.