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## Challenges and Issues of Reading Comprehension Experienced by third semester students at Zawia University

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### ABSTRACT

This research intended to explore some of the reading comprehension difficulties that Zawia university students and teachers encountered. It also shed light on the influences that cause such problems. Data were collected qualitatively by interviewing ten teachers and quantitatively by a questionnaire given to 5 teachers to respond. Results showed that new vocabulary, reading techniques, reading fluency, among others, hindered reading comprehension. Results also revealed a wide range of reasons that could lead to reading comprehension difficulties. The research come up with some possible results to help students overcome their problems in reading comprehension. The results of this research will help the students to improve their reading skills by practicing more in the class. Also the outcomes impulse the teachers to explore more techniques and methods on teaching reading.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension, new vocabulary, reading techniques, difficulties, reading methods, difficulties, reading methods.



## المشاكل والعراقيل التي تواجه طلبة الفصل الثالث في مادة الاستيعاب لجامعة الزاوية

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### الملخص:

يقوم هذا البحث باكتشاف بعض الصعاب لمادة الاستيعاب التي يواجهها طلبة جامعة الزاوية وأساتذتها ، وكذا يقوم البحث بإلقاء الضوء على المؤثرات التي سببت تلك الصعاب ، وقد تم تجميع المعلومات بطريقه نوعية ، وذلك عن طريق القيام بمقابلات مع عشرة أساتذة، وبطريقة كمية وذلك عن طريق استبانة أعطيت لخمسة من الأساتذة لكي يقوموا بالإجابة عنها ، وأظهرت النتائج أن المصطلحات الجديدة، وأساليب القراءة، والطلاقة في القراءة وغيرها الكثير أعاقت مادة القراءة والاستيعاب، وأوضحت النتائج أيضا العديد من الأسباب التي أدت إلى صعوبات القراءة والاستيعاب ، كما أظهر البحث أيضا بعض النتائج المحتملة لمساعدة الطلبة كي يتخطوا مشاكلهم في مادة القراءة والاستيعاب.

إنّ نتائج هذا البحث سوف تساعد الطلبة لكي يطوروا مهارة القراءة بالتدريب أكثر داخل الفصل. كما تقوم النتائج بدفع الأساتذة إلى اكتشاف أساليب وطرائق لتدريس مادة القراءة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** القراءة والاستيعاب - المصطلحات الجديدة - طرائق القراءة - الصعاب - أساليب القراءة.

### 1. Introduction

Reading is a complex skill to manage yet it is essential to any English language program. It is a skill that every learner needs to master to comprehend the text well. In order to read and recognize the content of a text, students have to understand the language. For example, if the student's awareness of English is poor, then his or her reading will also be poor. Thus, the students will have difficulty as they cannot use the language to communicate or to convey their ideas. According to J, Jabamani., S. Senthilnathan reading is a compound communication between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's previous information, familiarities, attitude, and language community which is ethnically and socially located. The reading as a skill requires continuous rehearsal, progress, and modification. Also, it requires originality and critical examination. Reading is a very complicated procedure, it cannot be measured or limited to one or two clarifications and there are no concrete laws in reading.

Yet, it allows readers a passage to produce their own products introspectively. Consequently, this stimulates deep examination of texts during understanding. Readers use a variety of reading approaches to support with comprehension any text.

Reading skill is taught to students at Zawia university from the early stages. Noticeably, in many settings, plus the present research, students apply more than enough time when they attend reading exam and request more time and explanation. Moreover, as the researcher once taught reading she noticed that the students had difficulty reading the text or even understanding it. They did not apply reading subskills to read the text given. This has enthused the researcher to study this issue closely and limit the causes and propose real solutions. The importance of this search is to recognize the complications that face students at Zawia university in reading as a skill. Also, the researcher tries to recommend some solutions to deal with such problems.

## **2. Research Problem**

Third semester students at Zawia University have hindrances in reading comprehension. In reading classes, students require to use various reading strategies that help students to handle their reading effectively. These reading strategies used by learners need good control of English to help students achieve their goal in reading a text. Yet, Students` lack of vocabulary and grammar may be the hindrance behind their lack of reading and also make it hard for them to apply any kind of subskill or a strategy. Thus, this research is conducted to find solutions to help the students overcome their problems with reading comprehension.

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

Drawing on the preceding studies, the purposes of the research is to examine the difficulties in reading comprehension that encounter third semester students at The Department of English at the faculty of Arts at the University of Zawia. Another goal is to assist teachers in upgrading reading skills. In addition, the findings may add to our understanding various teaching approaches and how students determine their own reading rehearses. The research also pursues to create the link between reading challenges among students and reading strategies.

## **4. Research Questions**

1. What are the problems Zawia EFL university students encounter in reading comprehension?
2. What are the causes behind these problems?

## 5. Significance of the Study

This study is important because it can contribute in improving the consciousness of how to overcome and decrease the difficulties that third semester at Zawia university students encounter in reading skill. It helps in drawing attention of teachers who are accountable of the importance of reading. It emphasizes on the importance good and suitable curriculum to provide the third semester students and teachers with modern reading concepts, theories to conduct better classes. Moreover, the results of this study ought to recommend plans to enhance and assist teachers in improving reading skills among students.

## 6. Literature Review

### 6.1 Types of Reading

Reading skills refers to the capacity to comprehend written text. Abeeleh & Al-Sobh (2021) defined reading as an active procedure in which the reader dynamically contributes in the formation of meaning, and operates reading strategies in order to construct meaning from a printed text. Reading skill permits the reader to make sense of the written text. It is necessary for passing achievement examinations and even for being able to read efficiently for one's career. Strategic reading approaches can help students attain not only their academic needs, but more importantly their life objectives. (Laxmi Basnet, 2021). According to many researchers such as Cross (1992) reading can be categorized into the following:

1) Silent Reading: which means to read without making any voice. It is suitable at highest progressive level and is considered as one of the best kind of reading. It is used to understand the message of the text. It includes looking at sentences and comprehending the message carried.

2) Reading Aloud: means oral reading. It is concerned more with pronouncing the words and sentences with understanding the inner thoughts. Reading aloud is as beneficial for the students of primary stage. This kind of reading used to check the students' pronunciation, speech, tone, pitch etc. it is also used to read poetry, rhymes and dialogues.

3) Rapid Reading: or faster reading. In this kind of reading students read the text rapidly and to accomplish greater degree of understanding.

4) Skimming: it is a type of reading where the reader read quickly as the eyes run through the text very wisely to discover the gist or theme of the text. It needs an overall understanding of the text and implies a certain reading competence. It is the rapid review of the text to grasp the dominant idea.

5) Scanning: it is one of the precise reading method in which readers read the text to realize specific piece of information. It is used to detect specific information and often we do even trail the linearity of the passage

6) Extensive Reading: It is a kind of reading where the reader does it for emotional gratification\pleasure. It is a self-reading method where students read

without the assistance of a teacher. It includes reading silently and rapidly to develop the whole meaning without necessarily considerate each individual word or structure.

7) Intensive Reading: it is detailed reading. Readers when reading intensively means they obligatory to comprehend everything they read and they are able to response the comprehensive questions. This method is used particularly for the study of words, phrases, sentences patterns and other related features of the language.

## **6.2 Strategies of Reading Skill**

Reading skill relay on the appropriate strategy used in dealing with a text. Many observed studies have connected success in reading to the quality and quantity of approaches used. (N. Nordin, S. Rashid, S. Zubir, R. Sadjirn, 2013). It has been noticed that active readers were more aware of strategy use than less effective readers (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Then for the students to be good readers they need to learn more about the strategies of reading a text. Reading strategies are used to build meaning effectively from any given written texts. Researchers have defined reading strategies as any procedures that the readers are conscious of performing with the intention of constructing meaning from written texts. Singh (2014). When readers used these strategies they are using their conscious knowledge and controlling of cognitive processes to understand a text. According to many researchers these strategies involve three periods, pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

strategic readers actively create meaning as they read and interrelate with the text. Brown (1994). They set determinations for reading, select approaches of understanding these determinations, monitor, and repair their own knowledge as they read, and assess the complete task. Conversely, poor strategic readers tend to start reading without thinking about the procedure of reading, neglect meanings of unacquainted but vital words, and do not include prior knowledge in endeavoring to understand the given text. Reading strategies include also checking understanding, confirming guessing, asking questions, and others. They are all interfere in the process of reading intentionally or unintentionally.

## **6.3 Reading Difficulties**

Most EFL teachers and students had reading difficulties. This problem created by some factors that affect their reading performance include concentration, overall knowledge, reading fluency, inspiration, and retention. (Khalid M. Alotaibi, 2022). Students who have comprehension difficulties get confused about the meaning of words and sentences. Also, they are unable to join ideas in a passage. They might also have a problem to distinguish significant information from minor details. There are many factors that influence poor reading comprehension such as lack of reading engagement, lack of using strategies, difficulties with word recognition and decoding and lack of Vocabulary. Moreover, limited preceding knowledge of the reader with incapability to

integrate new information to the former one. (W.M. Albdour, 2015). According to many researchers reading difficulties that students face constantly can be summarized as lack of curiosity, structural complication, insufficient vocabulary, lexical inefficiency, poor reading skills, and lack of schemata among others. Thus, they believed that learners need to learn how to use reading strategies that can successfully enhance their understanding of a text when they happenstance difficulties in their reading. (Singh, K. K. M., Chu, I. L. Y., Bee, A. A. M., Lourdunathan, J., Keat, Y. C., & Rahmat, N. H. 2023).

As a summary, previous studies showed that the problems of reading comprehension caused by inadequate knowledge of vocabulary and sentence building. Moreover, types and strategies of reading skill are required to help students to understand the text efficiently. Students' difficulties in reading skills must gain serious consideration from teachers and students as well.

## **7. Methodology**

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used a questionnaire for the teachers to collect as many information as possible for the study. Similarly, teachers were asked questions related to the study in an interview. 10 teachers at Zawia university were the sample of the study.

### **7.1 Methods of Data Collection**

#### **7.1.1 The Teachers` Questionnaire**

The researcher communicated with the teachers online to conduct the questionnaire. Teachers were asked about their obstacles when giving reading classes activities and also when explaining a new lesson in reading comprehension. The researcher predicted to attain support method from teachers' responses in their background information about teaching reading comprehension.

#### **7.1.2 The Teachers` Interview**

The researcher communicated with the teachers on the phone and online to conduct the interview. The researcher wanted to collect more information about their obstacles with reading comprehension. Teachers were asked open ended questions for more explanations in their background about teaching reading classes and reading strategies. Likewise, the interview spotted light on the syllabus, teaching techniques and strategies and their interaction with the students inside the class.

## **8. Research Design**

Reading comprehension is one of the skills that is hard to obtain. The approach of teaching reading comprehension for the third semester at the department of English has been the same for years. The classes were taught using the old-style method, students practice at the class is very rare. The students attended lecturers but their roles in the classes are passive as the teacher explain the lectures. Students rarely contribute and read the text and if the teacher ask one student to read others will listen silently. Homework assignments are asked by

the teachers but with rare comment. Consequently, some of the teachers used new techniques to develop their ways of teaching yet still time and student` number were the problem to conduct such classes. The researcher asked 10 teachers to answer the questionnaire and then conducted the interviews with them. Therefore, the teachers` questionnaires and interviews used to collect data to help both the students to learn better English and be good at reading also for the teacher to conduct a fruitful class in reading comprehension.

## **9 Discussion**

This study discusses the difficulties of the third semester students and teachers of Zawia University in reading comprehension and the issues that cause them. Based on the outcomes of the study, the researcher discovers that almost both teachers and student had problems in reading skill. These difficulties designate that students do not have adequate strategies of reading skill, and this is due to several factors. The discussion of the research outcomes below demonstrates the difficulties of students in reading comprehension and some factors that cause them. Moreover, the outcomes of the teachers` interview reveal the obstacles that faces teachers when teach reading classes.

### **9.1 Result of the Teachers` questionnaire**

In this section, the researcher asked five teachers to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire directed to discover the potential factors hindering both of the teachers and the students of reading comprehension texts. The first item required to identify whether the participant had difficulties in preparing and teaching reading classes. The replies stated by the teachers showed that most of them indicated that they did not have difficulties in preparing the classes. Over 70% said that they accomplish most of their lessons as well as they use reading strategies. Most of the responses stated that reading strategies are very effective with their students. However, (90%) of the teachers answered that their students cannot really read well. (88%) reported that their students found it difficult to understand reading comprehension practices and hard to answer too.

### **9.2 Result of the Teachers` Interviews**

Teachers were asked in the interview some questions about the hindrances that they face when teach reading comprehension. One teacher said "students suffer a lot because they do not have the ability to connect ideas and grasp the meaning of the text". another teacher said that "it is so challenging for students to answer reading exam especially for unseen passages". Laxmi Basnet (2021) found out that students felt difficulty in terms of using tough words in reading comprehension text and they found difficult words which they never read even heard. Most of the teachers agreed that students find it difficult to comprehend reading texts because they suffer from lack of vocabulary. The time for preparing the lesson is another hindrance to teachers as some of them said if they need to prepare a fun way to deliver the text they need a long time to prepare it. Other teachers believed that reading lessons take time depending on

the length of the lesson. Another teacher said that preparing classes are not a big problem as they are the same way every class.

The researchers asked the teachers if they teach students any reading strategies or techniques to the students. one teacher said "the techniques utilized by any teacher is chosen according to the level of their students". some other teacher said that students need to learn skimming and scanning to grasp the meaning of the text. Intensive reading and extensive reading are good strategies to be taught to students as another teacher assumed. Therefore, they supposed that students need to learn how to use reading strategies that can successfully enhance their understanding of a text. (Singh, K. K. M., Chu, I. L. Y., Bee, A. A. M., Lourdunathan, J., Keat, Y. C., & Rahmat, N. H. 2023).

Most of the teachers agreed that new vocabulary, techniques, connect ideas in a text and motivation are the main obstacles for the students to learn and understand reading texts. Moreover, teachers find it hard to teach students reading comprehension because of the students' low level make it a hard task for them. Teachers paid less attention for preparing lessons which is one of the solutions to some of the teachers` and students` problems.

## **10. conclusion**

As a result, we should bear in mind that reading comprehension is not a simple task for both teachers and students as it needs a lot of time and effort. Henceforth, this research is an effort to examine major reading issues faced by English-major students and teachers at Zawia university. These conclusions highlight the requirement for more regular exposure to reading texts in order to increase the ability to read accurately, comprehensibly, and fluently. It was vital for the teacher to find best technique of teaching based on the students' ability, background and previous knowledge as well as motivation to advance their understanding in reading comprehension aspect. The study came up with some findings and here are some of the main problems:

1. Teachers need to provide resolutions such as giving unique treatments to low performers or changing their approaches of teaching.
2. Teachers should encourage students to read different materials such as stories and science fiction in their free time as well as at the class.
3. Teacher must highlight to the students the purpose of reading for their future use.
4. Teachers must empower their students with reading strategies to help them comprehend the texts and to overcome their reading challenges.
5. Students having poor vocabulary, lack of reading habit and interest in reading English texts and pressure with the lack of time.
6. Students should share their responsibilities for their own learning.



## 11. Recommendations

In light of the results described in this study, the researcher would like to give some recommendations and advices to both the teachers and the students to overcome difficulties in reading comprehension.

1. It is highly recommended that teachers of reading comprehension should pay more attention to teaching vocabulary in a way that permits for active learning.
2. It is also recommended to adopt new methods of teaching reading comprehension such as task-based activities.
3. For the students, it is recommended that they should read more and get more exposure to reading materials as well as learn and use the reading strategies to help them understand the texts easily.

## 12. Appendix

### 12.1 Teachers` Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire. It is prepared to obtain data for this researcher student` and teachers` problems in reading comprehension in the Department of English in the faculty of Art University of Zawia. The information provided will only be used for research purposes and will never be revealed to any party under any circumstances.

#### I. Background Information

- Name: (optional) .....
- Year(s) of experience .....
- Degree .....
- Specialized in.....

#### II. Linguistic problems

- Choose the right number in every question:

- How difficult is to prepare and teach reading classes?

4: very hard / 3: hard / 2: easy / 1: very easy

- How much do you accomplish in your reading classes?

4: 100% / 3: 80 % / 2: 50% / 1: 20 %

- How well do you use reading strategies in the class with your students?

4: very well / 3: well / 2: ok / 1: not well

- Are reading strategies effective in achieving your reading goals?

1: yes / 2: No

- How well your students can read at the class?

- How well your students work with reading practice in the class?

- 4: very well / 3: well / 2: ok / 1: not well

### 12.2 The Teachers` Interview

Dear teacher,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. It is a research that is intended to investigate students` and teachers` problems in reading comprehension. The information provided will only be used for research purposes and will never be revealed to any party under any circumstances.

### Teacher background

Name (if possible) .....

Age.....

Year(s) of experience .....

Degree .....

Specialized in.....

### The interview questions

1. What kinds of difficulties do you face while teaching reading classes?
2. What are the major challenges do you face in reading comprehension texts?
3. How much time do you spend for preparing the lesson?
4. Do you think, reading exam is challenging for the students?
5. How does lack of time effect students' learning?
6. Do your students feel difficult while doing reading comprehension text in terms of vocabulary?
7. Do they feel difficult to understand meaning of all reading paragraphs?
8. What are the reading techniques that you teach to your students?

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