

**AN EVALUATION OF SOME READING COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES
ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT FACULTY OF
EDUCATION, MISURATA UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to study some problems which sometimes encounter the students of English major at Faculty of Education during dealing with reading comprehension courses. The first chapter includes the introduction, statement of the problem, the objectives, the significance, the scope, and the methodology of the study. The second chapter deals with literature review. The third chapter includes data analysis and the findings of the study. Finally, chapter four includes the conclusion and some recommendations. The results of this study showed that many factors such as teachers' technique used for teaching this skill, some writers' style of writing such as using unfamiliar words in different fields such as using new idioms and special expressions, students' background in some linguistic aspects and other factors could be considered as a kind of difficulty which caused students lack of understanding many information during dealing with reading comprehending texts.

Key Words: English majors, Teaching reading skill activities, foreign language.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem:

This study aims to investigate several factors that students encounter while dealing with reading activities in different types of English texts. It an attempt to find out some of these problems to help students avoid them as possible.

1.2 Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are as the following:

- 1-To draw an attention to the problems that encounter students in reading comprehension.
- 2-An attempt to help students of reading skill avoid having many problems which encounter them in this issue.

1.3 Significance of the study:

This study gets its significance from the weakness of English major students in reading comprehension. However, it studies the causes in order to try avoiding them as possible.

1.4 Limitation of the study:

This study will be conducted in English Department at Faculty of Education, Misurata University. The data will be gathered through a questionnaire. About 40 participants deals with the items of the questionnaire, then the questions will be analyzed to get the exact data about this problem.

1.5 Participants and Setting:

To carry out this study, forty students were chosen randomly from English Department at Faculty of Education, Misurata University to deal with the items of the questionnaire.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Reading

Reading is considered to be a skill in which students are not only involved to read words, but a process that is conceptual and a way of deep thinking. It is an interpretive skill. Decant (1982) and Williams (1996) pointed out that "reading is a process through which a reader looks at the text and understand what is written".

According to Urquhart and Weir (1998) reading is receiving information and encoding it. Doff (1997) defines reading as an active process, not passive.

Fisher (1981) revealed that reading, is a process which is complex and at the same time it consists of eye movement, encoding, decoding and using linguistic awareness. In addition, Kenya (2002) mentioned something about reading. He asserted that reading skill involves students to explore new words and new structures of sentences. Moreover, he thinks that reading assists in studying all other subjects.

2.2 Reading comprehension:

Hartney (2011) mentioned that reading comprehension is a kind of understanding and at the same time, a good reader learns and enjoys through reading materials. Reading comprehension consists of three elements: the reader, the text and the activities, Snow (2002).

Additionally, Snow (2002) said that the reader needs abilities and potentials because these capacities facilitate the process for him. These potentials consist of critical analysis, deduction, visualization, motivation, comprehension strategies and knowledge of vocal discourse. Whenever these capacities are available, the reader can comprehend the text easily.

He added "comprehension is not only eliciting the meaning from the text, at the time of reading, a reader establishes different interpretations of the text which is important part of the comprehension" (ibid).

He also pointed out that activities are one of the most important elements for comprehending. There are three operative elements of reading activities for comprehension. These elements are Knowledge, applications and engagements (ibid). Nadrah (2004: 184) stated that:

comprehension focuses on reading instruction, such as: (1) understanding words and building vocabulary, (2) understanding sentences, sentence structure, and syntax, (3) understanding paraphrases, which include finding the main idea and topic sentences, finding details, and drawing conclusion and interpreting what you read

Similarly, procedure of understanding the concept of the text and its information, then interpreting its meaning is known as reading comprehension. It is mental process in which reader focuses on some parts in a text. Such as; words and the information, understanding the main idea and details, then

creating conclusions. This is all done by interpreting the text given by a write (Eka 2012).

The comprehension needs three skills in order to be achieved. For example, the knowledge of word forms and their meaning, to be able to see the main idea of the writer, to be able to understand sentences and to be able to get a general idea of reading materials (Nadrah 2004).

However, Cain (2012) showed that "leisure time provided for reading can help in growing vocabulary stock which helps in better comprehension skill".

2.3 Reading comprehension difficulties

Fisher (1981) claimed that reading is complex process. As a result, he thinks that this complex leads to difficulties among learners. Furthermore, Gray (1936) cited that lack of vocabulary, few ideas about associate meaning with words and having no effective habit for reading can be considered as causes behind poor performance in reading among college students.

On the contrary, Hartney (2011) revealed something much deeper than the previous researchers. He claimed that one of the reasons of reading failure for adolescents is due to the fact that some problems were neglected by the students when they were young.

In the same way, Lerner (2000) described this factor. He thinks if children have poor performance in reading skill, they likely continue to be poor readers in future. He believes that "reading is not developed naturally; therefore, decoding, word recognition and reading comprehension skills need to be taught directly and systematically".

2.4 Factors attributed to emotional, motivational, personality aspects along with school adjustments

According to Kathuri (1986), some factors that affect the performance of the leaners during examinations. They are, the administration of school, quality of the teacher, previous academic knowledge of the learners, methods used by the teachers in classes and finally school environment and community. Simatwa (2007) confirmed that these factors may have impact on students from different aspects. Specially, their poor performance and bad psychological results.

If teaching process and service are well guided in secondary schools, issues that exist in students` performance may not appear anymore (c f Raffer and Johnson (1981). In the other hand, factors which are motivational such as high self-portrait and enjoyment during reading are important to comprehend the text. These factors develop the skill well. Abedi et al (2008) and Tridas (2009) stated that the environment in which a child exists in is very important in his/her life. In addition, Tridas (2009) maintained that the surrounded environment for children influences the performance and the attitude for work in schools. Likewise, Molye (1972) asserted that in order to have good performance from students, the emotions should be stabilized in a high degree.

Abu Shamla (2010) argues that many problems in reading is not only because of the effect of mother tongue, but also new learning comprehension in L2 for reading patterns is imperfect as well. He suggested that an appropriate teaching methods, activates students` prior

knowledge. Indeed he thinks that traditional methods in teaching reading comprehension should be substituted by perfect ones.

Mourtaga (2008), maintained that lack of linguistic awareness, the differences between Arabic and English language as well as misunderstanding of reading process by teachers, all can make difficulties in comprehension process for Palestine learners and all Arabic learners.

2.5 Reading strategies:

Oxford (1990) defines reading strategies as "actions that make learning task easier, effective, and enjoyable". Reading strategies contain many functions that contribute in rising students` ability in reading, enhancing students` motivation, interest along with growing the comprehension in reading.

Lenskiand and Nierstheimer (2002) think that proficient reader is the one who uses reading strategies. Aziz (2011) et al think that reading strategies help in guiding learners while reading. "techniques can be employed to enrich their understanding and enhancing the capacity of memorization of the reading materials.

There are two types of reading strategies which students need for reading: 1. Skimming: is to get the main information from the text. To have general idea about the content by using eyes, moving them rapidly. 2. Scanning: is to find specific information or details. Skimming and Scanning (n.d.).

Further, Nuttal (1942) suggested higher ordered sub-skills: 1-To predict something about the given text. 2. To guess the meaning of a word related to text. 3. To deduce from texts. 4. To interpret the text. 5. To evaluate the text critically. 6. To give personal respond to the text. 7. To relate the text with the world and personal information. 8. To distinguish the facts from opinions. 9. To find the cohesion from the ideas and coherence of the texts. 10. To transfer from text, graphs, tables and vice versa. 11. To understand writers` attitude and position. 12. To understand the temper and tone of written texts.

Cain (2011) provided us with something a little bit different. He asserted that reading is a habit. For instance, technology and media enhance the skill for academic success and helps in acquiring more vocabulary especially at the early stage of age.

3.DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Reading skill is the most difficult one among the other skills to achieve.1

Table (1)

Answer type	Percentage (%)
Agree	.48%
16strongly agree	16%
Disagree	.28%
16Strongly disagree	.8%

According to this table it can be seen that the majority of the students (48%) agreed that reading is the most difficult skill in contrast with other language skills, and also about (16%) of the students said strongly agree, while (28%) disagreed and only (8%) of them are strongly disagreed.

3.2 The allocated time for reading classes is good enough for achieving learning reading activities.

Table (2)

Answer Type	Percentage (0%)
Agree	13%
Strongly agree	0%
Disagree	.37%
Strongly disagree	50%

The second item showed that few students about (13%), agreed that the time given for reading classes is enough, whereas none of them strongly agreed. Some students (37%) disagreed and about (50%) strongly disagreed.

3.3 I spend special time for reading extra texts in English. 3

Table 3

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Always	12.5%
Sometimes	12.5%
Rarely	50%
Never	25%

This item introduces that only (12.5%) of the students specify specific time on reading extra texts, and (12.5%) said sometimes. The majority of them (50%) said rarely and (25%) said never.

3.4 New vocabulary in special fields such as (scientific/political) words can be considered as one of the problems which encounter me during dealing with reading texts.

Table (4)

Type of Answer	Percentage (%)
Agree	75%
Strongly agree	13%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	5%

This problem concerns with the new terminology in some fields. A large number of the students (75%) agreed that words in fields such as science and policy are difficult to understand, and only (13%) strongly agreed. Few of them (7%) disagreed with that. Only (5%) strongly disagreed.

3.5 New idioms and special expressions cause misunderstanding during dealing with reading texts.

Table (5)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Agree	62.5%
Strongly agree	25%
Disagree	12.5%
Strongly disagree	0%

This item pointed out that many participants (62.5%), which is the highest percentage, encountered difficulty when the texts include new idioms and other expressions. This may cause misunderstanding of the exact meaning. Ten students (25%) strongly agreed. However, few students (12.5%) insisted that they had no problem during dealing with this issue. None of them (0%) strongly disagreed.

3.6- I have difficulty in deducing, summarizing, interpreting, and predicting the ideas while reading activities.

Table (6)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Yes	62.5%
No	37.5%

This table indicates that many students about (62.5%) admitted having some difficulties in translating, summarizing, predicting and deducing the ideas in the reading texts. On the other hand, only (37.5%) said no.

3.7- Is your English background in some linguistic elements good enough to help you understand English texts easily?

Table (7)

Type of Answer	Percentage (%)
Yes	25%
No	75%

The results of this table shows that a large number of students about (75%) said that their background in some linguistic features are weak and this issue hinders them to comprehend the reading texts easily. Conversely, only (25%) who think that their level is satisfied and they can deal easily with reading skill activities.

3.8- Do the techniques your teachers adopted in carrying out class activities motivate you during reading courses?

Table (8)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Yes	87.5%
No	12.5%

This question aims to introduce if some teachers' techniques used inside the classes help the students motivation or not. Many participants (87.5%) think that the methods techniques their teacher used were not useful to facilitate reading skill difficulties, whereas about (12.5%) trust in their teachers' methodology.

3.9- The writer's belief and style in writing some texts hinder you to grasp the main idea of some text.

Table (9)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Always	27.5%
Sometimes	37.5%
Rarely	25%
Never	10%

According to this element, it is clear that some students believe that the writer's belief and way of designing some texts can be considered as a kind of difficulty which may cause an interference and become a kind of problem for them during trying guessing the meaning in some texts. About (27.5%) said always, whereas (37.5%) said sometimes and (25%) said rarely and only (10%) said never.

3. 10- Do you have large amount of vocabulary in English?

Table (10)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Yes	25%
No	75%

This table shows that the majority of the students (75%) had lack of vocabulary, while (25%) said that they had great amount of words of course this encouraged them to achieve the required aim correctly and easily.

4. FINDINGS

According to data analysis presented by this study, it could be said that students of English major at Faculty of Education suffer from many problems during dealing with reading comprehension courses. Consequently, the findings of this study can be mentioned as the following:

- 1- the majority of the students about (48%) agreed that reading skill is the most difficult skill among the other language skills.
- 2- About (50%) of students think that the time allocated for the reading courses is not sufficient to achieve this skill successfully.

3- Neglecting using extra material of reading activities in English and not memorizing large amount of words are serious problem. About (50%) said that they rarely spend time on reading extra materials and (75%) admitted having lack of vocabulary.

4- Using new vocabulary in different fields and using new expressions and idioms can be considered as a kind of difficulty too. Large number of the students (75%) agreed that many words in different fields such as policy and science are difficult to understand, and (62%) found it difficult to understand some idioms or expressions in the target language.

5- Interpreting, summarizing deducing and predicting the ideas in English texts is also a kind of difficulty. About (62.5%) of the students suffer from this problem.

6- The results showed that some teachers' methodologies are not helpful to many students to carry out some reading skill activities properly. (87%) of the students agreed that their teachers' style is not satisfactory.

7- Some writers' way of thinking could be considered as a problem to many students. About (38%) think that some writer's belief may cause misunderstanding to many texts.

8- The results also showed that (75%) of the students had weakness in English linguistic background which in turn causes many difficulties for them.

5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the conclusion of this study and contains some suggested recommendations. The conclusion has been basically extracted from the results of the data analysis as illustrated from the previous chapter. Hopefully, the recommendations should be considered by the teachers of English who deal with reading skill classes to help their students develop their level in this skill easily and successfully.

5.2 Conclusion

The results of this study has revealed that students of English Department at Faculty of Education encounter many problems during dealing with reading comprehension. It showed that the techniques of some teachers, the shortage of time given for reading courses, the students lack of some linguistic aspects, some writers' style of writing many passages, neglecting using extra materials of reading outside the classes by many students can be considered as the main problems which cause students misunderstanding of some texts of reading skill easily and ravidly.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that many difficulties which encounter many students during reading skill activities are due to both teachers and students.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following general recommendations are suggested:

1-During reading classes, the teachers should adopt reading skill techniques in teaching process such as silent reading, reading aloud, scanning, skimming...ets.

2-The teachers should give their students reading lessons from resources that are related to both their culture and real life situations to facilitate reading comprehension process for them.

3-The teachers of reading skill should encourage their students to use extra material in their leisure time, this includes reading stories, new texts and magazines and ask them to summarize what they comprehended.

4-Teachers of reading skill should help their students relate to outside real activities such as debates and competitions to get them exposed to new language for helping them enrich their knowledge, vocabulary and so on.

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