A Descriptive Study of the Major Problems that Hinder EFL Students’ Reading Comprehension:

The Case of First Year LMD Students at Mila University Centre

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in Language Sciences and Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Supervisor: Miss. Soraya GUERFI
Submitted by: Mounia BOULFELFEL
Examiner: Mr. A. TAIBI

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Dedication

This work would not have been possible without the loving support of so many people. I find myself overwhelmed in offering them all my thanks in dedicating this work to them.

The following is not a hierarchy since each person made his/her own unique contribution and none could stand above the others in that regard.

This project is dedicated, first to my Mother's memory

To my Father, who is the source of my happiness and success in life. May Allah bless him.

To my lovely Brothers, Omar, Ali, Zakaria, and Mokhtar; to my lovely sister “Sarah” and her cute baby ‘Abd el Hay’.

To my best friends Wafa, Nora and Raja

To my friends Oumnia, Nawel, Manar, Meriem, Kelthoum, Wided, Khalida, Adam, Dano, and Houssem, who have been so supportive, and who encouraged the fulfillment of this work.
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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the nature of reading comprehension difficulties, and reading strategies. It further aims to explore the major problems that stand behind students’ reading comprehension. A descriptive study, has been carried out involving (30) students enrolled in classes of the first year LMD at Mila’s university centre, all participants have been selected randomly, in order to discover which kind of difficulties that obstructs the students’ reading comprehension. Also, (12) teachers from the same department, data obtained from the teachers’ questionnaire are used to point out the common problems that face students while reading a piece of writing. Due to the importance of reading strategies, the present study based on the hypothesis that using the appropriate reading strategies helps the students to have a proficiency level in reading. The results of the study confirm the hypothesis, in the sense that the most of the students at the department of English face many problems in comprehension while reading because they read chaotically without the appropriate use of reading strategies.
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Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

Learning English as a foreign language entails the exposure of students to the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The amount of exposure to any of these skills varies according to the objectives set for the teaching procedure. In foreign language settings, reading is the eminent skill that plays a significant role in improving students’ language proficiency. Reading as a skill has come to play the most important role in learning a foreign language because of the many benefits it provides. Therefore, it is a viable means of developing foreign language ability, particularly in FL settings in which second language input sources are limited.

An important problem that may obstruct comprehension is reading without following specific models or strategies. However, there are massive amounts of researches which discuss the different reading strategies and models which suggest that reading comprehension is strengthened when students improve their reading skills. In order to become a good reader students must have the ability to apply different strategies in order to solve reading problems. In fact, there are many readers who are not aware of comprehension strategies and are not likely to develop them on their own. These strategies are taught to students in EFL courses for the purpose of handling reading obstacles. Therefore, the application of reading strategies is really desired.

2. Aim of The Study

The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the major problems that obstruct the students' understanding in reading comprehension through investigating the attitudes of both EFL teachers and EFL students. This leads us to know the
reasons behind facing such difficulties and finally the suitable strategies that lend a
hand for the students to understand the materials they read and help them to get rid of
those difficulties.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

   a. Research Questions

       This study aims at answering the following questions:

1. Do English learners face problems in reading comprehension?

2. What are the reasons behind the students unsuccessful in reading comprehension?

3. What are the main reading comprehension problems that EFL students encounter at
   Mila’s university Centre?

   b. Hypothesis

       For the purpose of this study, the following hypothesis is put forward:
       EFL teachers and First year LMD students of English agree that the students
       encounter many difficulties while practicing reading comprehension.

4. Methodology

   a. Population of the Study

       The subjects of this study are thirty (30) first year LMD students at the
department of English at Mila University. This study is going to be addressed to
teachers of English, who represent twelve (12) teachers at the same department, who
are submitted a questionnaire.
b. The Method

To investigate the attitudes and the perspectives of both EFL teachers and students two questionnaires are used as a research tool for this work. One is designed for first year LMD students in the English department at Mila University Centre, and the other one is designed for teachers in the same department. The questionnaires aim at answering the difficulties that come across the students while reading and practicing reading comprehension.

5. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is composed of three chapters. The two first ones are theoretical and contain the literature review. The third one is the practical part. The first chapter deals with the concept of reading skill, its definition and nature. Also, it deals with the various models that can be followed when reading and the different types of reading like scanning and skimming, intensive and extensive reading. Finally, this chapter emphasizes the way teachers assess their students' level of reading. The second chapter deals with reading comprehension, its definition, and the strategies used to deliver a proficiency in reading comprehension like previewing and predicting, using background knowledge, questioning and summarizing. It also sheds some light on levels and the components of reading comprehension, the different factors affecting EFL students' reading comprehension. In addition to that, the chapter provides the effective instructions used for reading comprehension and the way teachers assess their students' reading comprehension as well. The third chapter is concerned with the description of the tools used for the investigation, that is to say, the questionnaires, and it provides information about the target population and the sample on which the current research is carried out. The third chapter provides the
analysis of the teachers' and the students’ questionnaires, and also the pedagogical implications and the limitations of the study.
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The Reading Skill

Introduction

“Read to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider.” (Francis Bacon). Reading is a very important skill that learners of the first language as well as a second language should master. Because the world today is based on technology and the language of the machine, it would be impossible for an illiterate man, who has not the capacity to read to use this technology. Linguists and researchers try hard to give the appropriate description of the reading process.

This chapter consists theoretically to investigate the notion of reading, its components, and its types where has been defined in details by different researchers. Moreover, it represents some of the reading theories, which are called “reading models”, the top-down model, the bottom-up model, the interactive model, and transaction model.

1.1 Definition of Reading

Since a very long time reading has been the objective of many researchers. Indeed, many scholars and researchers have defined reading differently. Some of them, considered it as a complex process that enable learners or readers to interpret messages from the reading passage, also there is another point of view where researchers believe that reading is a complex cognitive system which involves the reader and the text as well.

Different researchers with different perspectives assume that reading is an ambiguous and it is impossible to provide the same definition of what reading is? According to McShane (2005) “Reading is a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires: an understanding of how speech sounds are related to print, decoding (word identification) skills, fluency, vocabulary and background knowledge,
active comprehension strategies, and a motivation to read.”(p 7) So, reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct meaning and it is a means of language acquisition, of communication and changing information and ideas. This definition uncovers all the aspect that surrounds reading process. McShane(ibid) believes that the purpose behind reading is to understands the meaning of words, and for this process to take place, different cognitive processes should be involved in a suitable time.

Lui (2010) claimed that reading is the ability to use symbols of writing system and to interpret what the information represent according to the reader's background knowledge. Reading is the ability to interpret and explain meaning through the interaction between the reader’s and the text being read. Here, the reader should use his/her background knowledge while reading a piece of writing.

Williams (1984) defined reading as a process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting information or meaning from them; Besides, Smith (2004) depicts reading as getting information from printed materials. Williams and Smith (ibid) believe that the process of reading means the interrelation between the reader and the text, the reader not only read, but he/she try to examine the text being read in order to find symbols on the page and what is significant and linking them with each other.

Robert (1999) said that “the fact that the acquisition of skills in reading is a highly complex matter. It depends upon a substantial amount of preparatory work in which children begin to become aware of the nature of print to realize that it conveys message and that it is possible to interpret that message.”(p 1) It could be noticed that, reading is an active means in which learners or readers have to pay attention to the written messages in order to build a comprehensive meaning, and related it
directly to cognition that reveals what exactly happens inside our brain during the reading process, this is what make reading a very complex notion as it involves ideas and thought.

Harmer (1983) described reading as a cognitive process where the brain and the eyes participate while reading a passage. Harmer believed that the brain recognizes the meaning of the word through storing the graphics. That is to say, the eyes at the beginning notice the graphics of the printed material, and then it sends this image to the brain where it uses to organize it through the meaning of the word, or through two possible activities. Firstly, the mind either perceives the meaning of the word according to its stored graphic, or according to its significant sound. If the brain fails in doing so, it attempts to present the appropriate meaning.

1.2 Models of the Reading Process

May be it is important to watch what is really going on when someone is reading. Perhaps we want to see the eyes movements of the reader how they move their eyes up and down to follow the text word by word. May be it is inquisitive when the brain of the reader allows us to see what is going on inside while reading.

The fact that the human cognition is very complicated to be evaluated, researcher and linguist try hard to prove the process of reading to different models and theories; such as, the bottom – up model, the top – down model and the interactive model.

1.2.1 The bottom up model

Harmer (2001) argued that “in the bottom – up processing, on the one hand, the reader or listener focuses on individual words and phrases and achieves understanding by stringing these detailed elements together to build up a whole.”(p 201) Harmer (ibid) notes that the reader who uses the bottom- up model reads in a
linear way which involves identification of letters and words, and then he/she detects
the meaning can be recognized the sentence level to the paragraph then in the text
itself.

Gough (1972) suggested that the bottom-up model of reading focuses on the
subsequent of letters, to sounds, to words, to sentences then meaning. In the sense that
the reader starts first by word recognition, then with the combination of words to form
sentences. Perhaps Gough looks only at reading in this model, That is to say, readers
start first by word realization as they begin from relating the letters of words together.
Also, they could understand that the eyes play a very important role by sending
symbols of letters to the brain to be deciphered. Ultimately, in the bottom up model,
in order to gets success in reading task only if the readers can succeed in word
recognition, and background knowledge logically speaking, due to the order of
Gough; however, he gives a less important to the readers as he sees them as just a
decoder of a written text. Also, what happening in the brain is more important than
what the eyes are doing?

1.2.2 The Top-Down Model

Harmer (2001) noted that “it has been said that in top-down processing the
reader or the listener gets a general view of the reading or listening passage by, in
some way absorbing the overall picture.” (p 201) On top- down approach the focus is
on what readers bring to the process of reading in order to understand the text or the
passage.

According to Goodman (1970) the top-down model is just a cognitive process
which allows the readers to take the appropriate meaning from the reading passage. At
first when the reading takes place the reader take an idea or predicts what is in the
text, the reader checks if what he / she has predicted goes with what is already
provided in the text, in this case, the readers take the information found in the text and associate it with the expected meanings that he/she has in their minds. In the sense that the reader should relate the found information in the reading text with what is already known. Although the top–down model relies mostly on the background knowledge, but the reader may probably have a poor background knowledge on which he/she can depend on.

1.2.3 Interactive Model

According to Rumllhart (1977) “an interactive model is one in which data driven, bottom-up processing combines with the top-down, conceptually driven processing to cooperatively determine the most likely interpretation of the input.” (p 37) An interactive reading model illustrates the interrelation between the bottom-up and the top-down processes together throughout the reading process; it comes to make the strengths of both the bottom-up and the top-down models. It is the sum of so many attempts to explain how the readers process knowledge from multiple sources at the same time. The reader can use what he/she know before, then checks if it is related to the text.

Richards & Schmidth (2002) defined the interactive model as follows “a theory of reading comprehension that sees reading as involving both the accuracy and sequential understanding of text based on identification of the meanings of words and sentences in the text (bottom-up processing) as well as the experiences, background information, and predictions that the reader brings to the text (i.e. Top-down processing) Both kinds of processing are involved and they modify and act on each other.”(p 265) In the sense that, reading is at once perceptual and cognitive processes in which the reader can understand the meaning of words, and sentences or by using their prior knowledge and relate the topic to something that they know already.
1.2.4 Transactional Model

The transactional model represents the meaning influences the interaction between the text, the reader, and the author, Rosenbaltt (1998) stated that reading theories come to the conclusion of reading process only as decoding. She gives more importance to the relationship between a reader and the text.

Rosenbaltt (1994) said that reading is an approach that gives a great importance to the process of knowledge transfer; also it includes the interaction between the reader and words in the text because the readers while reading are bringing background information, experience and attitudes to the text. She believes that the transactional approach of reading has a relation with different theories of behaviours that are based on the inter-connectedness of human activity. Rosenbaltt (ibid) applies a shift from separately considering the elements affecting reading as it is happening in real time giving them equal concern.

1.3 Types of Reading

Reading is a dynamic process, which involves learners with different types; every single learner may use a given type which he/she thinks. In fact, these types are organized or used according to the reading skill. Generally they are four styles: skimming, scanning, reading between the lines, extensive and intensive.

1.3.1 Skimming

Skimming is one of the types used by the reader in order to read well and quickly in a less a short of time. Indeed, many scholars define skimming and agree on that skimming is when the reader reads quickly and take the main points from the given text or chapter. Mikulecky& Jeffries (1996) depicted skimming as “[...] speed reading that can save lots of time. You skim to gather a general sense of a passage or a book.”(p 15)
Scrivener (2005) noted that skimming is all about looking for the main purpose of the written text. In the sense that, with skimming, your understanding is somehow reduced because when the reader reads only what is important and ignores the details; however, the reader has a look over a chapter or a unit-fastely in this allows the reader to look clearly for the main idea of the text or the passage.

Erfort argued that “Skimming is a technique where you gloss over an article to see whether or not it contains information that is of interest to you. This technique makes it possible for you to quickly evaluate and understand the message of the reading by looking at the main aspects.” (p 2) that is to say skimming as a tool used to see whether a piece of writing is important or not, and the aim behind this technique is to construct quickly the meaning of that written or printed text.

Richards & Schmidth (2002) said that “skimming or skim-reading, which is a kind of rapid reading, which is used when the reader wants to get the main idea or ideas from a passage. For example a reader may skim-read a chapter to find out if the writer approves or disapproves of something.” (p 468) They describe skimming as a technique at which the reader used to read fastly in order to gain the general idea of the reading passage.

Moreover, Wainwright (2007) sees that skimming is about moving the eyes up and down towards the page; however, the purpose of skimming is to make the readers focus on the key words, sentences and phrases.

1.3.2 Scanning

Scanning is another practical tool used to make your reading quickly. When the reader scans, he/she searches only for a specific fact or information without reading the whole text. In order to have an effective scanning, the reader should know how the material is structured as well as he should understand why he/she is reading.
Orr (1992) noted that scanning is “the process of scanning involves running your eyes down each page and taking of any terms in bold face print or italic, section headings, graphs and charts anything else which seems to jump off the page.”(p 55) In the previous points of view Orr means that, when the readers use his/her eyes down he/she will be able to use the scanning technique effectively. Mikulecky & Jeffries (1996) suggested that “scanning is very high speed reading. When you scan, you have a question in mind; you do not read every word, only the words that answer your question. Hence, practice in scanning will help you learn to skip over important words so that you can read faster.”(p 15) in the sense that, scanning involves the eye movement of the readers in order to find the piece of information needed.

Richards & Schmidth (2002) said that “scanning is a type of reading strategy which is used when the reader wants to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or passage. For example, the reader may read through a chapter of a book as rapidly as possible in order to find out information about a particular date, such as when someone was born.”(p 467) Thus, reading can be considered as a tool used by the reader in order to find specific information which help him/her to understand the whole text without going in details.

Scrivener (2005) believed that scanning is also the process of reading quickly or quickly in order to understand or find the information that the reader look for. However, scanning is when the reader looks for a specific piece of information or a specific word.

1.3.3 Reading between the Lines

Reading between the lines and what researcher’s call ‘inference’, is a strategy used by readers in order to infer meaning from the text, it is a strategy which is related much more to the fields of science and literacy. Moreillon (2007) said that “inferences
require that readers go beyond literal meanings, they use the print and illustrations plus prior knowledge and experience to interpret the text.”(p 76) Moreillon (idid) depicted reading between the lines as a strategy in which readers use their prior knowledge and the information stated in the text to draw a conclusion.

Brown (2003) believed that, students need explicit instruction in how to make inferences and when to apply the strategy. He states that the written text may include different meaning in just one word; so, the reader may understand the opposite of a certain word, and it might have a hidden meaning.

McNamara (2007) stated that “inference making is essential to ensure a good understanding of a text. The writer does not necessarily state every little detail: that would result in text that was lengthy and possibly boring. Instead, the reader is left to fill in details that are not explicitly stated in the text, either by integrating statements within the text or by incorporating general knowledge with textual information.”(p. 49)

That is to say, it is very important to ensure a good understanding of a written passage through inference-making as the writers do not need to involve every detail in the text. Also, the text becomes wordy and boring. Here we come to the role of the reader as an inference - maker. He/she pretends to fill up the gaps that are explicitly shown in the given text, either by combining statements in the text or by mixing a general knowledge with information found in the texts.

Teaching inference strategy is said to be very important to both readers, and teachers, as the creator are questioned to interact with the meaning of the written or printed text. Actually, teachers wonder it gets more advantage if their students become more practical in their reading process.
1.3.4 Extensive Reading

Reading is one important skill that can add to the learner’s knowledge some new information and new vocabulary. That is to say, learners need to master this skill in order to acquire the target language. Teachers should motivate their learners to read for pleasure, then, they should read what meets their needs and interest. This kind of reading refers to as extensive reading.

Extensive Reading is one essential aspect of learning English language; it influences student’s development in all fields. It helps the student to be eager, motivated and gives them the choice to read what suits their level. Harmer (2001) pointed out those students are only reading for pleasure. In addition, students are reading what is appropriate for their level.

Extensive reading is reading a large quantity of it facilitates the acquisition of vocabulary. Nation (2009) believed that extensive reading as “[…] it fits into the meaning-focused input and fluency development strands of a course, depending on the level of the books that the learners read.” (p 49) extensive reading is reading as much as possible according to the level of the learners and reading is most of the time intentional as the student read most of the time to satisfy their needs and pleasure.

Scrivener (2005) believed that “[…] extensive reading has a powerful impact on language learning. The more someone reads, the more they pick up items of vocabulary and grammar from the texts, often without realizing it and this widening language knowledge seems to increase their overall linguistic confidence […]” (p188)

that is to say, when the students read extensively this it influence and help them to develop effecting the acquisition of the different items of the language. Which
enables the students to gain reading ability, linguistic competence, vocabulary, spelling and writing. Reading extensively then, is by no means, very profitable.

Richards & Schmidt (2002) said that “reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading.” (p 193) They depicted extensive reading as a means in which the reader reads large amount of books and different kind of text in order to gain information, syntax and semantic. Its aim at developing the reading process and make learners motivated to read much more.

Grabe (2009) noted that extensive reading has the purpose of increasing the language aspect, such as, vocabulary, translation and believe that in order to have effective reading we should have a lot of resources on one hand and too much time to teach such kind of reading. From the definition above, we noticed that reading extensively is very important in learning foreign language, and its benefits may motivate teachers of English as a foreign language to raise awareness of the students towards reading in general.

1.3.5 Intensive Reading

Reading intensively is another kind of reading. Intensive reading means careful reading of difficult materials to understand every detail and word. Intensive reading happen when the students gives much importance to the language or the style of the text rather than the text itself. Harmer (2001) depicted intensive reading as giving students' interesting topic in order to motivate them to read. Harmer importantly explains the role of the teacher intervening in these types of reading, and guidance which would ensure that. To read intensively is when the reader focus in
small texts for the purpose of learning or acquiring the main rules of any language skills.

Nation (2009) claimed that “Intensive study of reading texts can be a means of increasing learners ‘knowledge of language features and their control of reading strategies. It can also improve their comprehension skill.” (p 25) Indeed the main reason of intensive reading is to make the learner enable to comprehend the written text; to make the reader aware to the types of the text in order to choose the appropriate one; to read intensively is to make the reader or the students answer all question in reading comprehension task; however, reading intensively enables students to aquire new terminology and learning different structure and grammar rules through the given text. Intensive reading is usually occur with difficult texts and unknown vocabulary that makes the eader to use different kind of dictionary. This means that reading is a very slow strategy and there are some advantages for the learner to learn to read slowly, because she/he has to stop every few seconds to work on something she/he cannot understand. This slows or prevents the development of fluent eye movements which is similar action the students do when skimming and scanning strategies, which are so necessary to improve one’s reading skill, it will help them to acquire new information and vocabulary.

In addition to that, intensive reading, in contrast to extensive reading, which is neglected from the readers (the students); intensive reading is very demanding from students, because when the students read intensively they find themselves defeated to reach the purpose of the teachers; as a result they may lose motivation to continue the reading process in general.

Richards & Schmidth (2002) said that “Intensive reading is generally at a slower speed, and requires a higher degree of understanding than extensive reading” (p 194).
According to this definition reading intensively is the appropriate type which learners follow in order to understand the text or the reading passage.

1.4 Reading Assessment

Reading comprehension assessments are the most common type of reading test that are available. It could be included in designing programs in order to teach reading strategies in class. However, it may help teachers to improve the readers’ problem while reading. This can help the trainers, and educator to adapt programs of reading, respond to the readers’ need.

Snow (2002) stated that “teachers need reliable and valid assessment closely to their curricula so that they can see which students are learning as expected and which need extra help.”(p 53) She argues that teachers need effective assessment which is related to the programs of reading in order to improve the student level and to see whether it is valid or not. She is also criticizing the currently available of reading comprehension assessment. Snow (ibid) stated that “currently available assessments in the field of reading comprehension generate persistent complaints that these instruments inadequately represent the complexity of the target domain, conflate comprehension with vocabulary.” That is to say, the means of reading comprehension assessment are constant; those assessment methods disarrange comprehension with vocabulary, the capacity of reading words, and other abilities contribute in comprehension.

Conclusion

This chapter gave us the opportunity to, theoretically, seeking the nature of reading as it is occurring in reality, even if each researcher, purposefully or accidentally, emphasizes much more on specific points regarding the reading fact. Although, most of them believe that reading is a complex cognitive process in nature
and it is systematically as they agree on the idea that reading that involves some cognitive processes to be activated.
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Reading Comprehension

Introduction

Without comprehension, reading is only a tracking symbol on a page with your eyes and sounding them out. Even though, reading comprehension research has progressed in the last decade, and the application of reading comprehension in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language is in the first steps. Most of learners face difficulties in understanding while reading; in fact, teachers are not capable to put into practice the most suitable strategies to make students avoid reading comprehension problems. In this chapter, the attempt is shed light on the notion of reading comprehension and its broader definition, its components, strategies, and finally the factors that affect reading comprehension process.

2.1 Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is an essential skill for school and social development. However, scholar and researchers do not agree about its definition. Reading comprehension is the capacity of understanding what the reader reads. It is a complex process which makes it a strong topic to be argued. It contains a cognitive development which constructs meaning.

Snow (2002) defined reading comprehension as “[…] the process of simultaneously extracting and meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.” (p 11) She meant that, reading comprehension is a process that involves constructing meaning by linking what the reader has read.

Snow (2002) argued that “comprehension entails three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity.” (p 11) She believed that reading comprehension is an interactive process between first, the reader; where he/she uses his/her cognitive potentials, motivation, knowledge and experiences. Second, the text; where students construct the personification of the text such as mentioning the word as it is, the main idea that represents the meaning of the
text. Finally, the activity; which refers to the end of the reading process, this activity has purposed to reach.

These three comprehension elements will be represent the event of socio-cultural context that constitute the interaction of the reader with these three elements. According to Snow (2002:11-12) the larger socio-cultural context which refers to the different abilities that students bring into the reading environment which are affected by their experiences.

![Chart 01: A Heuristic view for Thinking about Reading Comprehension](chart01.jpg)

McShane (2005) defined reading comprehension as clear and understandable. Indeed, reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. It is the act of understanding what you are reading. It is one of the pillars of the act of reading. For example, when a person reads a text he engages in complex array of cognitive processes. He/ she concurrently use his/her consciousness and understanding of words and the ability to comprehend and construct meaning from the text.
2.2 Reading Comprehension Strategies

An efficient reading comprehension requires an array of strategies. It is highly required from learners to make use of certain reading strategies. So, to sharpen one’s understanding of the concept of reading comprehension strategies one should know first about the word ‘reading strategies’. To start with, Guthrie, et al (2003) claimed that reading strategies are very important tool used by the students in order to understand the written text. Moreover, Guthrie et al (ibid) highlighted the importance of reading strategies saying that: “Students must be able to use […] strategies easily. They need to be able to tap into background knowledge, ask questions, and summarize frequently and appropriately” (p 4) In other words, learners who follow certain strategies are more likely to have that learning make an impact on their reading comprehension by making reference to their prior knowledge, response to different questions and make recapitulations to their readings.

2.2.1 Previewing and Predicting

Learners can call for some ‘pre-reading’ strategies such as previewing the material be it a book, an article, or a text, and making predictions to draw their objective behind reading the material in question.

Previewing helps to collect information through an overlook on the cover of the material. This means that previewing involves examining the cover of the book, the title, the authors’ name and the pictures if there is any. Previewing the material enables the learner to decide about the relevance of the material and its level of difficulty. After previewing the material, the learner can anticipate the coming content of the text before detailed reading. Hence, prediction has the potential of clarifying the purpose for reading an extract for learners. Following this line of thoughts, Mikulecky & Jeffries (1996) added that:

Previewing and predicting before you read can make a big difference. You can get some ideas about what you will read that way you will begin to process
information the information far more quickly. You will also be able to follow the writer’s ideas better. Though it takes a few minutes to preview and predict, those few minutes are well invested. You will find that later you save reading time and gain comprehension. (P. 35)

2.2.2 Using background knowledge

The reader’s background knowledge is of a high importance in building and understanding any information included in any sort of text. Most of the time learners call for their prior-knowledge and past experiences because it contributes highly in the comprehension. McNamara (2007) mentioned that: “nearly all adults have trouble comprehending technical expository text at deep levels even though they are skilled readers. Deep comprehension of technical text is a difficult challenge, because the reader has minimal knowledge of the technical terms […] and other forms of background knowledge.” (p 5) So, the reader’s familiarity with the world, language and type of text ease up the process of comprehension.

Moreillon (2007) stated that some researchers use a type of charts which called the K-W-L, and it is stand for the abbreviation of (What do we already know? What do we Wonder about? What did we Learn?). These charts are used to evaluate the students’ background knowledge. Keen & Zimmermann (1997) as cited in (Moreillon, 2007) propose that when readers use background knowledge they split it into three types or categories of connection: text-to-self it means, the relationship between the text and the reader’s personal experience, text-to-text, it means the relationship between the text being read and the already read text, and text-to-world it means, the interrelation between the text being read and what truly happen in the reader’s real world.
2.2.3 Questioning

It is worth mentioning that reading strategies are interlinked and prepare the ground for a full comprehension. For example, previewing, predicting and relying on background knowledge facilitate the understanding of the paragraph. Hence, the learners can generate questions once they encounter a new text, or feel a need to sharpen their understanding about the context they are confronted with. In this respect, Guthrie et al (2004) stated that: “background knowledge refers to previous experience or past learning, whereas questioning points toward what might be learned through reading in the immediate or more distant future.” (p 13)

According to Moreillon (2007) using this strategy starts firstly at home with students’ parents and the environment around them, the students ask questions, and their parents answer. Since the progression of the students, the questioning strategy will be changed, the teacher asks questions and the learners are supposed to answer those questions. To promote a deeper comprehension, and widens their consciousness about a particular point in the text; good readers should ask and answer questions each time.

2.2.4 Summarizing

Guthrie et al (2003) stated that “Summarizing refers to recognizing the main idea and supporting details without including less important information.”(p 12) Therefore, a good summary includes only main ideas that surrounds on the same topic. It is apparent that the summary needs to be as short as possible, and it must keep the ideas of the original text.
2.3 Levels of Reading Comprehension

Gough & Tunmer (1986) have presented the idea of reading as it could be divided into two independent elements; decoding, and linguistic comprehension.

2.3.1 Decoding

Decoding has been regarded as the capacity to exchange the written input into semantic information. It is measured to be the origin of reading comprehension, as beginner firstly you will acquire this feature before moving to the upper level of linguistic.

McShane (2005) said that:

Decoding is a word identification skill that involves using letter-sound correspondences to recognize words in print. Decoding at higher skill levels also includes using larger word parts—like syllables, prefixes, and suffixes.

Adults with weak decoding skills need explicit and systematic phonics instruction. (p. 13)

McShane defines decoding as going from the printed words to some uttered or phonological representation relying on the relationship between printed and phonemic, and it is the process that involves being able to pronounce printed words. Gough & Hillinger (1980) develop the concept of word recognition to include two types of mechanisms. Firstly, they deal with phonological coding; Gough & Hillinger (ibid) state that “phonological coding is based on knowledge of the cipher, which captures the letter-sound correspondence to the rules of the language. This will, then, be used as a door access to the meanings of words in the mental lexicon.”

Secondly, Gough & Hillinger (ibid) believed that word recognition is forced by two mechanisms. First of all, phonological coding is based on the code, which takes up the letter-sound correspondence of the language. Second, access to meaning could be reached, providing that the graphic representation of the word is mapped in the mental lexicon.
Decoding has taken different names, regardless of those implications may vary in nature with decoding. For example, “phonics” has been used interchangeably with the concept “decoding”, and “phonological coding.”

2.3.2 Linguistic Comprehension

Linguistic comprehension could seem similar, or a substitute to the term reading comprehension; although, there is a big difference between the two. According to Hoover & Ghough (1990) “linguistic comprehension is the ability to take lexical information (i.e., semantic information at the word level) and derive sentence and discourses interpretations. Reading comprehension involves the same ability, but one that relies on graphic based information arriving through the eye.” (p 131) That is to say, linguistic comprehension is a careful understanding that aims at extracting meaning from the text; in contrast of reading comprehension it aims at extracting the general idea of the text.

Gough & Tunmer (1986) believed that reading is in parallel with decoding and linguistic comprehension. However, Gough and Tunmer mentioned that reading involves two levels. First, it is a word recognition that is presented as decoding. Second, linguistic comprehension that is definitely different from reading comprehension.

2.4 Components of Reading Comprehension

Cromley & Azevedo (2004) set up a model of reading comprehension, called as the Inferential Mediation Model (IM). This model presents the liaison between: background knowledge, inference, strategies, and vocabulary. This model also produces the components of the reading comprehension process.

2.4.1 Background Knowledge

Myer and Rice (1984) stated that the background knowledge is, purely, the existing information that one already knows about a given topic. It is considered as the starting point.
for comprehension. However, the background knowledge enables learners to make predictions and connections.

The reader’s background knowledge in the top-down model is referred as schemata. According to the schema theory, knowledge is structured into units, in these units there is stored information, then, is a conceptual system for comprehending knowledge; it means, how knowledge is presented, also how can a reader use it.

2.4.2 Inference

Yuill and Oakhill (1991) as cited in Smowly and Hulme (2005) proposed three potential to describe inference-making differences between skilled and less-skilled comprehenders “(1) General knowledge deficits restrict less-skilled comprehends inference making. (2) Less-skilled comprehenders do not know when it is appropriate to draw inferences (3) Less-skilled comprehenders have processing limitations, which hamper their ability to make inferences and integrate text information with prior knowledge.” (p 232) That is to say, inference is among skills that are essential in the acquisition of the reading comprehension process. And is a logical device that the reader uses when he/she makes a combination between sentences of the same text. Perfetti (1999) cited in perfetti (2001) modified a chart, he argues that the cognitive architecture for reading gets about a certain steps; along with these steps perfetti point in influencing which is the one that creates a coherent referential model for what is being read.

Day and Jeong (2005) argued that “making inference involves more than a literal understanding. Sentences may initially have a difficult time answering inference questions because not explicitly stated. An inference involves sentences combining their literal understanding of the text with their own knowledge and intuition.”(p 63) The inference is when the reader uses a kind of combination between sentences of the same text or between his/her prior knowledge and the encountered text. Kintsch (1998) believe that making
inference is a matter of two possible ways, it involves the readers’ understanding of the text, and experience and his/her prior knowledge. Moreover, Grabe (2009) pointed out that “inferencing is not limited to a skill we use when reading. Rather, inferencing is one of the fundamental cognitive mechanisms that connect what provide our background knowledge.” (p 68) He means that inference is a very important process that a reader uses while reading a piece of writing. However the reader should use his prior experience or knowledge in order to facilitate comprehension.

2.4.3 Strategies

Guthrie et al (2004) believed that strategies are used through the three features of engaging reading, counting: reading motivation and reading comprehension. Reading comprehension includes both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which makes the reader able to understand and evaluate the reading passage.

Generally, readers are not aware about using these kinds of strategies; however, they can express themselves when someone asked the readers about those strategies. They are only conscious about which strategy they will use, and the suitable time to use it. However, beginners find difficulties to use their metacognitive strategies.

2.4.4 Vocabulary

McShane (2005) said that “Vocabulary is vital to reading comprehension in at least two ways. Oral vocabulary is the first key connection. When learning to read, a child or adult learns to connect printed words with words in his/her oral vocabulary [...] Using letter sounds, the new reader in effect “translates” the printed symbols into meaningful words. [...] Oral vocabulary is the basis for meaningful reading.” (p 59) In the sense that, one of the fundamental aspects of reading comprehension is the capacity to transact ambiguous words notified of the text. Readers used different steps in order to facilitate comprehension.

2.4.5 Word Reading
Oakhill & Cain (2007) as cited in McNamara (2007) claimed that “word reading and reading comprehension are highly related skills.” (p 47) word reading is absolutely different from vocabulary. It means, word reading does not inevitably certify effective comprehension.

2.5 Factor Affecting Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is affected by different factors. Nevertheless, great care must commit to those factors. According to Wainwright (2007) the main factors that may influence the readers’ comprehension while reading are: “speed reading, purpose in reading, the nature of the material, the layout of the material, the environment in which we are reading” (p 36) He believes that many factors influence the learners’ comprehend the text, these include motivation, vocabulary, automacity of decoding, and fluent reading. Moreover, Snow (2002) proposes that there are many factors that may affect reading comprehensions; they are the text itself, the reader, and the context. However, some of these factors are linked to the text, and the others relate to the learner.

2.5.1 Text Variables

Text variables are factors that are entirely linked to the text. There are many variables intervening in the text. Some of these factors will be discussed briefly.

2.5.1.1 Vocabulary

One of the most common problems that obstruct reading is the infinite vocabulary that each language has. When reading takes place, readers find themselves meeting with new and unknown words. This absolutely has a great influence on the learners’ reading comprehension.

Westwood (2008) pointed out that: If a student has difficulty understanding what he or she is reading, it is worth considering whether there is a serious mismatch between the student’s own knowledge of word meanings (expressive and listening vocabulary) and the words used in the text. The
student may be able to read a word correctly on the page, but not know its meaning. (p 34)

He means that vocabulary is a very important tool used as a unit measurement for reading comprehension, evaluation as long as vocabulary could be implemented in assessing difficulty. In addition, the text would be considered to be difficult if it contains a lot of concepts which are used and that makes the text difficult to be understood.

2.5.1.2 Text type

Obviously, a text may influence the reader’s understanding while reading. It lies in the structure and the organization of the text. As the text may diverge in forms and content, the reader also may express different levels of comprehension and understanding. As stated in Westwood (2008) “text that is complex in terms of concepts, vocabulary, sentence length and structure is difficult for readers to process.”(p 35)

2.5.1.3 Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion are the tasks of the writer, who is obliged to avoid making readers lost while reading. Trimmer (1995) sees coherence as the correlation between the ideas in the text. In fact, the writer should move slightly during the writing process to make a connection between his/ her ideas. Coherence is represented by the subsistence of thought from the beginning to the end without any interruption.

Cohesion is also a very prominent aspect of academic writing because it immediately affects the tone of the writing. It deals with the link between words at the sentence level. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) cohesion is meant at relating parts of the text all together. Also, it provides the readers with the ability of interpretation. Halliday and Hasan (1976) describe connectedness in term of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.
2.5.1.4 Automacity

Automacity or fluency is the aptitude to read words without using a cognitive or mental effort. It is a skill that allows the brain to become an automatic response pattern or habit. Usually it is the result of learning and practice. Breznitz (2006) believed that “people perform many actions automatically, with little effort or conscious thought. The automaticity evident in perceptual-motor skills extends to cognitive skills such as reading.” (p 36) Brenznitz highlighted the importance of automacity in developing fluency in reading.

Perfetti and Hogaboam (1975) as cited in Brenznitz (2006) stated that “[…] poor comprehenders differ from good comprehenders in the speed at which they decode single words, with good comprehenders reading words faster, especially words that are unfamiliar and low in frequency.” (p 38) They distinguish between those who are good comprehenders and the poor ones in terms of the speed of decoding single words. Both of them agree on the idea that poor readers bear on the absence of automatic word identification. However, increasing the readers’ speed while reading can shape the reading performance. Duffy (2009) argued that “fluency is the ability to orally and silently read text smoothly and with appropriate phrasing and intonation.” (p 32) It is clearly noticed that, automacity or fluency just reads a text or passages fluently without any obstacles it means in appropriate way either orally or silently.

2.5.2 Reader Variables

In the reading process, the reader needs to use his/her cognitive abilities in order to have a better understanding. These abilities consist of many factors like, language proficiency, the reader’s purpose of reading, and his/her interest about the topic, and the cultural aspects provided in the text. However, these factors should be interacted with the text variable factors in order to have a good comprehension.
2.5.2.1 Language Proficiency of the Reader

Before commencing reading any text, students need to have an understanding of the purpose of reading and viewing particular texts before they start. Once a purpose for reading is established, students should be directed about which method of reading will achieve that purpose. It means if the reader reads only for the pleasure he/she will not give much attention to the details in text. In fact, having no purpose in a reader’s mind will provoke reading, as stated by Labiod (2007) “The reader should have a purpose in his mind while reading. Reading will be a pointless activity if he gets inside a text aimless.” (p 28)

Sarosdy et al (2006) suggested that the purpose of reading could be divided into two broad classes, the first one is instrumental reading; it is used when the reader has a clear reason (i.e.) when someone reads instructions on a machine in order to know how to operate it. The second one is pleasurable reading, (i.e.) when someone reads magazines in his/her free times because they find them useful and interesting.

2.5.2.2 Interest in the topic

In the process of reading comprehension, interest or motivation is very important. A student who is motivated to read a text or book is probably to understand it. Usually the reader reads what he/she suit’s his/her interest or what he/she are motivated to read. Labiod (2007) argued that a well structured text or passage, in terms of vocabulary, style and aesthetic aspects, is the best way to attract the readers’ interest.

2.5.2.3 Culture

Culture is one aspect which affects the readers’ understanding while reading. Cortazzi & Jin (1999), cited in Usó-Juan & Flor (2006) argue that culture can be seen as a set of beliefs, behaviours, values and attitudes that are being used in a subjective way to transmit others’ action and their way of thinking. Lahuerta (2009) believed that some researchers find out that culture is a motivating factor that enables foreign language learner to adjust to the
target culture. However, the exposure to the target culture helps the learners to construct knowledge.

2.6 Effective Reading Comprehension Instructions

There are three main steps that a reader moves throughout the reading progress. These steps are called phases of reading. Thus, a reading lesson is structured into three phases, the pre-reading phase, while-reading phase, and the post-reading phase.

2.6.1. Pre-Reading Phase

Sarosdy et al (2006) stated that in the pre-reading stage the teachers’ purpose is to make the students focus on essential details mentioned in the reading passage. Moreover, at this stage the teacher should maintain the students’ awareness in the reading process of the essence.

Ringler and Weber (1984) as cited in Ajideh (2003) suggested that “call pre-reading activities, enabling activities, because they provide a reader with the necessary background to organize activities and to comprehend the material. These experiences involve understanding the purpose for reading and building a knowledge base necessary for dealing with the content and the structure of the material..”(p 06) that is to say, pre-reading activities should arouse the student’s interest and help them approach the text in a more meaningful and purposeful manner as the discussion compels them to think about the situation or points rose in a text.; however, the main purpose of pre-reading phase is to supply the reader with the appropriate strategies such as activating background knowledge, predicting…etc that suit the types of the text the reader will read.

The pre-phase strategy is considered to be as the first step that enables the reader to move to the while-reading phase without difficulties.
2.6.2. While-Reading phase

The main reason behind the while-reading activity used to help students to improve their reading strategies; it could be a difficult strategy because it takes a longer period of time more than the first phase. Williams (1984) sees that in the while-reading or the during reading activity the teacher first gives to the student a text to read and then he/she will help the students to find answers to their question to be asked after reading easily.

2.6.3. Post-Reading phase

According to Duplass (2005) the post-reading stage used to verify the readers’ comprehension of the text they are already read; however, the reader should improve some of the ideas in order to strengthen the reading process. Moreover, it is used to check the achievement of the reading tasks, and to check for an accurate comprehension of the text.

2.7. Assessing Reading Comprehension

Assessing reading comprehension is a very important task. Thus, it is the final step that the teachers do in order to measure the students’ understanding. Unlike the other skills, it is difficult to evaluate the reading skill because the reader’s performance is not observable. Ajideh and Mozaffarzadeh (2012) stated that “one of the more complex tasks facing in the testing of reading comprehension, especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) is the selection of appropriate reading text.”(p 11159) In fact, selecting the appropriate text that suits the students’ level is the most difficult task that faces EFL teachers when measuring their students reading comprehension.

2.7.1. Cloze Procedure

Cloze procedure or a test is a tool used by the teacher in order to gather information about the readers’ abilities to deal with the content and structure of texts they are reading. According to Sarosdy et al (2006) who defined the Cloze procedure as “[…] (traditional Cloze) was originally used as a test of reading comprehension. It is similar to a gap-filling
test, but the words are deleted systematically.”(p 143) It means the cloze procedure is a test used to measure the students’ reading comprehension; moreover, the cloze test is parallel to fill in the blanks test. Raymond (1988) argued that “The reader not only reads the text but must also produce a word to fit a given context. The Cloze procedure requires a search of a distribution of elements for the missing element.”(p 91) that is to say, students are asked to read first and then to fill in the blanks with the missing words using their knowledge of syntax, semantic… etc. However, the cloze procedure is where the learner used his prior knowledge and prediction.

2.7.2. Multiple choice questions (MCQs)

Multiple choice questions are often called multiple choice items because they are not always questions, and they require students to select from among various options that are proposed to them. Ajideh and Mozaffarzadeh (2012) state that, the MCQs are widely used, they have been criticized for being less reliable and less valid; in that, the test can just select the answers haphazardly, without fully understanding the piece of writing.

Conclusion

It is very hard to construct a clear idea about the notion of reading comprehension. However, different reading theorists provided diversified definitions of reading comprehension, which make it a very hard task to agree on one definition. The attempt of this chapter has been to provide the various components, reading models, and strategies that must be realized during instruction to achieve better understanding. Moreover, it has been tackled factors that affect reading comprehension by focusing on the text and the readers’ variables.
# Chapter Three: Research Design and Analysis

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Research Design and Analysis

Introduction

The present chapter is to discuss the research methodology adopted in this dissertation. Firstly, this study is carried out upon two questionnaires, one for EFL teachers and the second one first year EFL students, which will both represent the most important part of this work. However, the chapter consists of the description of the population and participants who took part in the field work on this study. More importantly, this chapter deals with the analysis of both students' and teachers' questionnaire, and the discussion of the obtained results.

3.1 Population of the Study

First year LMD students of English, in Mila University Centre, have been used as the target population for this study. It has been agreed to choose this sample for many reasons: First, because first year students of English in Mila University Centre, have a full time program covering eleven modules, which lead them to increase their reading frequency, to a very large extent. Second, first year students at the Mila University center are considered to be beginners and they have not been yet specialized. Indeed, this study will lead them to read more and more in order to have a clear idea about which branch they will be specialized in. Moreover, teacher’s views of English in the same department, are highly precious since they were helpful in order to make this investigation. The total population of the study consists of 110 students (89 females and 21 males) enrolled as first year students of English. However the total number of the teachers is 12 consist of (8 females and 4 males) in the English department at Mila’s’ university centre.

3.2 The Sample

According to Cohen et al (2000) “a stratified random sample is, therefore, a useful blend of randomization and categorization, thereby enabling both a quantitative and qualitative piece of research to be undertaken.” (p 101) This sample is randomly selected in
order to conduct the research. This target sample of this study consists of 30 students (03 males and 27 females) from the whole population, 110 students (89 females and 21 males). It constitutes more than the fifth of the population, which is largely representative. Also, this study takes all the EFL teachers in the department of English at the aforementioned university as a target sample.

3.3 Description of the Teachers’ Questionnaire

The present questionnaire consists of twenty questions which are divided into four sections. The first section focuses on background information of the respondents, their gender and the number of years they have been teaching English (Q1 and Q2).

Section two which starts from (Q3) to (Q9) shed light on the reading process. That is to say, the questions are raised to check the teachers' attitudes and perspectives about their students' reading level. Besides, the section highlights the teachers' role in motivating their students to read, also to check whether they make their students practice reading in the classroom or not. (Q7) seeks to see if the students use the appropriate reading strategies needed in reading or not.

Section three is built upon twelve questions from (Q10) to (Q20). It focuses on the teachers’ perspective about the students' reading comprehension. (Q10) is used to check the difficulties that EFL student’s encounter which obstruct their reading comprehension. (Q11) is raised to discover if the contextual factors like the length of the text and sentences affect the students’ comprehension or not. In addition, the teachers are asked about whether the text types hinder the students' reading comprehension, and about the help that teachers lend to their students to be more familiar with the reading strategies in the classroom. (Q15) is raised to check if the inability of the students to grasp the exact meaning of words and sentences can obstruct their reading comprehension. Besides, the teachers are requested about the permission they give to the students to use dictionaries when they come across difficult terms.
while reading and about the type of dictionaries the students use. The teachers are asked to define the main purpose behind teaching reading skill. (Q20) is raised to check if the students depend on their background knowledge in order to comprehend the material being read.

Finally section four is administered to make the teachers feel free to express their thoughts about reading comprehension, and the difficulties that stand as an obstacle for the EFL students to read and understand what they read. So, they are requested to provide their opinions or further suggestion that would enrich the subject being treated and offer solutions to minimize the difficulties that hinder the students' reading comprehension.

3.3.1 The Analysis of the Results

Section one: General Information

Question one

Are you?  a. Male  b. Female

Figure 01: Teachers’ Gender

Figure 01 shows that the majority of the teachers in the English department at Mila’s University are females (67%), and (33%) of them are males.

Question two

How long have you been teaching?
Figure 02: Teaching Experience

Figure 02 shows that most of the teachers have experience in teaching English. 17% of the teachers have been teaching English for four years, (16%) of them have been teaching English for five years, (17%) have been teaching for six years. (25%) of the respondents claim that they have been teaching English for eight years, (17%) have been teaching English for twelve years; however, only (8%) of them teach English for twenty one years.

Section two: reading skill

Question three

➢ How do you evaluate your students' level in reading?

a- High  b- Beyond Average  c- Average  d- Below Average  e- Low
Figure 03: Teachers’ Attitudes towards Students’ Level in Reading Comprehension

Figure 03 shows clearly that the majority (50%) of the teachers agrees that the students’ level in reading is ‘below average’, (33%) of them believe that the level of their students in reading is ‘average’. (27%) of the teachers see that their students have a ‘low’ level in reading; however, teachers believe that there is no one who has a ‘good’ or ‘beyond average’ level in reading. This means that there are many difficulties which lead the students to have such unpleasing level.

Question four

➢ Do you think that reading is very important to acquire a foreign language?

Yes  b. No
Figure 04: The Place of Reading in Acquiring English

Figure 04 shows that (100%) of the teachers believe that reading plays a crucial role in acquiring a foreign language for its numerous benefits that would empower the students' level in English in general.

Question five

➢ Do you motivate your students to read different kinds of texts?

Yes                             b. No
Figure 05 obviously shows that all teachers (100%) motivate their students to read in their free times, they claim that they advise the students to read in order to improve their learning. Teachers always support their students; they try to make them aware of the importance of reading in enhancing their level in English in general.

**Question six**

- **Explain please how do you do that?**

  - One teacher answered that reading is a source of knowledge; she believes that when the students, they will gain many benefits. The respondent adds that reading different books is preferable.

  - Another teacher agrees that reading is very important, and it is helpful in developing their language skill, and widens their knowledge

  - Another one said that teachers should motivate their students by urging them to resort to different types of library works, by insisting on them to devote time “to furnish the mind with thoughts”, also by insisting on the importance of keeping a book in the bag.

  - Another teacher believes that in order to motivate the students one should follow three steps, first through collaboration between students to help them decipher the texts, the second, giving the students the opportunity to select the appropriate texts for reading, third by choosing interesting passages.

  - Another one find that the appropriate way to motivate the students to read is by continually showing them the benefit of reading, by suggesting or giving them novels to read, also by telling them about personal experience.

  - Another teacher claims that raising the students' awareness about the place of reading in learning a foreign language since reading skill is the basic and the key ingredient’ for fostering other skills.
- Another teacher clarifies that she tries to persuade the students to spend their free time reading any kind of material, by explaining the importance of reading, and giving them exercises that contain a reading passage as a teaching procedure.

**Question seven**

- Do your students use the appropriate reading strategies (skimming and scanning) while reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b. No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>b. No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 06: The Frequency Use of Reading Strategies](image)

Figure 06 shows that (67%) of the teachers believe that the majority of the students do not use the appropriate reading strategies while reading, because they are not aware of the importance of using those strategies because they facilitate the reading process for them and improve their understanding of the text and the English language as well. However, (33%) of them believe that the students use some reading strategies like skimming and scanning correctly which make the reading process easy for them.

**Question 08**

- According to you what is the appropriate skill for students to acquire vocabulary?
  a. Speaking  b. Listening  c. Reading  d. Writing
Figure 07: The Appropriate Skill to Acquire Vocabulary

Figure 07 shows that (67%) of the teachers agree that listening is the most appropriate skill through which learner should acquire in order to learn vocabulary. (33%) of them believe that reading is also very important in acquiring vocabulary. However, they ignore speaking and writing may be because they find that writing and speaking as productive skills are somehow difficult.

Question nine

➢ How often do your students practice reading in the classroom?

Once a week  b. Twice a week  c. More than twice

Figure 08: The Frequency of Practicing Reading in the Classroom
Figure 08 shows that (33%) of the teachers in the English department claimed that they urge the students to practice reading in the classroom once a week, it is one of the objectives set to be released. (42%) stated that they generally ask their students to read in the classroom twice a week; however, (25%) of them claimed that they ask they make their students read more than twice a week in the classroom and they guide them and help them overcome their difficulties.

Section Three: Reading Comprehension

Question ten  
➢ According to you which kind of difficulties your students face while reading?  
    a. Complexity of the words  
    b. Coherence and cohesion  
    c. The length of the text

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 09: Problem that Face Students when they Read**

Figure 09 shows that (42%) of the teachers believe that the problems that obstruct the students' reading comprehension most is the complexity of the words and also coherence and cohesion. Moreover, (16%) of them think that the length of the text may affect the students’ reading process.
d. Others, please specify?

- One teacher added that the students suffer from the disability of placing information into their memories, and the lack of attention to decode words.

- Another one stated that students do not like reading at all because they feel bored while reading. Whether there are difficulties or not, they lack concentration and reading motivation, they are demotivated to read.

Question eleven

➢ Do you think that contextual factors (the length of the text and sentences) affect the student’s comprehension?

a. Yes b. No

Figure 10: The Effect of the Contextual Factors on Students Reading

Figure 10 shows that (58%) of the teachers believe that contextual factors such as the length of the text and long sentences obstruct the students’ reading comprehension. However, (42%) of them think that the contextual factors do not affect much the students reading comprehension.
Question twelve

➢ If yes, please justify?

- One teacher believes that the more complex the sentence is the more difficult it becomes comprehension will be.

- Another one sees that first year students are not so competent to read easily. For this reason, they face some difficulties with the length of the text and complex structure.

- Another teacher states that students cannot understand long sentences with the difficult words and structure, simplicity is the best way to facilitate the reading process for the students, because they are beginners.”

- Another teacher says that the complexity of sentences and structures lead to the misunderstanding of any kind of text the students read especially for first year EFL students.

- Another one states that students are too lazy, and they do not like reading long novels or even short stories. They find the task very boring that is why when they start reading they find difficulties.

- Another teacher states that the first impression that can be read on the students’ face is the reaction towards text length, they easily get bored because they do not have the habit to read. Then, because of boredom they cannot keep along with comprehension.

- Another teacher says that students find difficulty with the length of the text because they cannot identify the main idea of these kinds of texts especially for average and weak students.

Question thirteen

➢ Do you think that the difficulty to understand a type of the text hinder your students’ reading comprehension?

a. Yes b. No
Figure 11: Students’ Difficulty in Understanding the Type of the Text

Figure 11 shows that (92%) of the teachers which represent the majority of them believe that the types of the text can hinder the students’ reading comprehension. However, (8%) of them state that the texts’ type cannot stand behind the students’ reading understanding.

**Question fourteen**

➢ **What are the strategies that you use to help your students read in class?**

According to the responses of the subjects, it seems that each teacher uses a strategy that fits his/her students' level and helps them to read for instance: One teachers claimed that first assigning pre-reading and post reading activities, second applying explicit teaching of repeated reading and silent reading lend a hand to the students to be able to skim and scan the text.

- Another one states that asking the students to read voluntarily. If they do, the reading task becomes much easier in the classroom. According to another respondent, he claimed that there are three strategies which should be followed to facilitate the reading task. First, creating mental images. Second, asking questions that include inference and synthesizing. The third determining importance of the information being read.

- Another teacher states that asking the students to read the literary text before class is necessary, but in case, they do it in the class; they should be given some question to guide
their reading. A respondent claimed that explaining a general idea of the text, giving them questions, also explaining the difficult words in the text, and reading the text aloud with using gestures may help the students to comprehend what they have been read.

Another teacher believes that the appropriate strategy that helps students to read in the class is by urging and encouraging them to react to what they read and link it to their prior knowledge and social cultural factors. As to a respondent the strategies used to help students to read in class are, first reading for pleasure, think aloud strategy, making time for independent reading every day.

According to some other teachers’ responses motivation and reward are the best strategies used by the teacher to encourage their students to read in the classroom. In addition to raising their consciousness of the various strategies as skimming, scanning may help them when reading in the class, practicing silence and read aloud strategies will help them understand clearly the material. All those strategies are efficient ones and applying them will help the students to grasp the information being read.

**Question fifteen**

➢ Do you think that reading comprehension problems occur when there is an inability to grasp the meaning of words, phrases, and paragraphs?

a. Yes  

b. No

![Figure 12: The Students’ Inability to Grasp Meaning](image-url)
Figure 12 shows that (75%) of the teacher believe that the misunderstanding of the exact meaning by the students lead to reading comprehension problems; however, (25%) think that it is not important when students grasp the meaning of words, phrases and sentences because they can understand the meaning or get the general idea of the text without focusing on every single word of the text.

Question sixteen

➢ If yes, please justify?

- One teacher says that the problem of comprehension occurs when there is inability to grasp the meaning of word and sentences, only to a certain extent because the general context is very helpful to get the meaning.

- Another teacher states that if the students do not understand the meaning of words, they will not be able to create pictures in their heads based on the text they read.

- One teacher believes that there are some key words or phrases that are important to understand; otherwise, this will create a problem in understanding the entire text.

- Other respondents state that the inability stands as an obstacle to decode the reading message and that most of the time, lacking the adequate vocabulary is considered as the main problem for reading comprehension. So, when students are exposed to new and complex words and grammar structures, problems take place.

Question seventeen

➢ As a teacher what is the main objective that you focus on when you ask your students to read?

a. To acquire vocabulary.

b. To increase knowledge about the target language.

c. To explore the foreign culture.
Figure 13: The Main Objective Set for the Task of Reading

Figure 13 shows that some of the teachers (33%) believe that the main objective of reading is to acquire vocabulary, (42%) of them states that the purpose behind the reading task is to increase the students’ knowledge about the target language. However, (25%) of them believe that the objective of reading is to explore the foreign culture.

Question eighteen

➢ Do you advice your students to use a dictionary when they come across ambiguous words?

a. Yes  b. No

Figure 14: Teachers’ Attitudes toward Using Dictionary
Figure 14 shows that (83%) of the teachers advise their students to use dictionaries when they face an unfamiliar word, because they are beginners and they should use dictionary in order to learn more vocabulary; but (17%) of the teachers are against using dictionaries when students face an ambiguous word. They prefer to let the students decode meaning from the context.

**Question nineteen**

➢ Which kinds of dictionary do you think is suitable for your students?

a. Bilingual                                            b. Monolingual

**Figure 15: The Most Suitable Dictionary**

Figure 15 shows that (67%) of the teachers find that the most suitable dictionary for first year students is a ‘bilingual dictionary’ which is more helpful at this stage. Moreover, (33%) of them believe that ‘monolingual dictionary’ best suits the students of English in order to make them acquire more vocabulary.

**Question twenty**

➢ Do you think that ambiguous words obstruct your students’ understanding?

a. Yes                                   b. No
Figure 16: The Teachers’ Attitudes about New Vocabulary

Figure 16 shows that (75%) of the teachers believe that ambiguous words can obstruct the students’ reading comprehension; however, (25%) of the teachers state that unclear words cannot hinder the students’ understanding of the text.

Question twenty one

➢ Do your students go back to their prior knowledge while reading?

  a. Yes                                    b. No

Figure 17: The teachers’ attitudes toward the Frequent Use of Prior Knowledge Strategy by students
Figure 17 shows that all teachers (100%) agreed on the idea that students use their background knowledge while reading a text.

**Section four: further suggestions**

The participants were requested to add further suggestion and provide their opinions that may enrich the subject and help in finding solutions to the difficulties which EFL students come across when practicing reading comprehension, therefore among the suggestions that teachers come with the following:

- One teacher states that students have problems with reading speed and fluency, another excellent strategy is to ask students to say out loud what they are thinking about reading, to encourage students to be active readers, and teachers can make use of ‘question-answer relationships’ as a reading comprehension strategy.

- Another teacher adds that Algerian students suffer from crises of readability. They lack motivation to read, especially in this digital age. For this reason teachers have to propose literary texts which fits with the students' needs and interests.

- Another teacher says that students should increase their oral reading fluency through practice, and teachers should encourage silent reading in the class. They also have to provide their students with corrective feedback to help them read with greater accuracy and fluency, and use multiple choice question and writing tasks after reading a text.

- Another teacher states that most of the time the obstacle is a lack of sufficient vocabulary; this can be compensated if the students check their dictionaries and that will help them acquire new vocabulary. A crucial problem is the ignorance of the Foreign language culture. Since, the move now is towards socio-cultural communicative competence, students need more than Lexis.

- Another teacher suggests that the lack of motivation is the main reason behind the students’ unwillingness to read. For this reason, the first thing teachers should do is to look
for the reasons of their students' unwillingness to read, and then everything would be easy to deal with.

- One of the participants stated that students face difficulties when there is a lack of interest, students have to like what they read first, and also they should choose something easy as a first step in order to facilitate the reading process.

- One of the respondents claimed that the lack of reading in the students free times make them face difficulties when reading any kind of a text. Students do not read sufficiently; therefore, their prior knowledge which helps them understand texts is limited.

- Another suggests that in order to eliminate reading comprehension problems teachers should focus on encouraging repeated reading to increase fluency, allocate enough time for silent reading and they should offer corrective feedback.

- One of the teachers believes that the main problem is that students do not read a lot. If the students do not read a lot, they will not develop good reading comprehension skills.

- Another teacher states that apart from the difficulties mentioned above is the problem of complicated terminology, when students do not recognize or have enough information about the terms that will face problem of comprehension.

- Two teachers agree that the common problem that face students while reading is the complexity of the words and the misuse of reading strategies.

### 3.3.2 The discussion of the Results

The analyses of the teachers’ questionnaire shows that 100% of the teachers agree that reading is a crucial skill that students should acquire in order to develop their language proficiency. It is as important as the other language skills; its ignorance will affect the students' mastery of the foreign language. Though its importance, but the results shows that the majority of the teachers believes that their students have a below-average level in reading comprehension because of many reasons as a lack of interest and motivation to practice
reading, their laziness towards the use of dictionaries. So, whenever they come across difficult terms, which they do not understand, they get bored and stop reading.

In fact, (100%) of teachers motivate their students to read different kind of texts inside and outside of the classroom by making them aware of the benefits that can be gained from practicing reading and giving them insights how reading is important in their lives, also suggesting titles of books and novels that fit their needs and interests in order to encourage them to read. Assigning pre-reading and post reading phases, repeated and silent reading, may help students to be practicing reading.

The findings of the teachers’ questionnaire portray that not all the students use reading strategies that help in decoding meaning of a text like skimming and scanning. So, only (33%) of the teachers claimed that their students use appropriately those strategies while reading written passages. However, most of them (67%) clearly declared that their students read every single word in the text which may complicate their understanding. This fact may explain that students are not aware enough with the effectiveness of using reading strategies.

The results show that the reading task is always presented as an important tool in the English classes. Moreover, knowing the difficulties that the EFL students face while reading may help the teachers to select the appropriate reading materials for them. Among those difficulties which stand as an obstacle for the students to comprehend while reading are the complexity of the words, coherence and cohesion matters, the length of the texts can obstruct the students reading comprehension too because most of the students get bored while reading a very long text.

Figure 12 used to describe the teachers’ attitudes toward reading problems that face students in case they do not grasp the exact meaning of the words; (75%) of the teacher states that student face comprehension problem at the level of the text, may be because they do not read the text many times which make them misunderstand the text. In contrast, (25%) of the
teachers think that the inability to grasp the meaning of each word cannot be a comprehension problem, maybe because they use to understand the general meaning of the text.

The result illustrates that the majority of the teachers advice their students to use dictionaries while finding new vocabulary or difficult items in the texts; however, only a few of them advice their students to predict meaning from context instead of using dictionaries. That is to say, those few teachers ask their students to avoid the blind use of dictionaries. Moreover, the findings drawn illustrate that (67%) of the teachers who urge their students to check their dictionaries when finding difficult terms, prefer bilingual ones because the students are beginners and they use their mother tongue unconsciously. However, (33%) of them claimed that they advice their students to use the monolingual dictionary for not depending too much on their mother language.

Finally, most of the respondents think that first year EFL students suffer from problems of understanding while reading, because they lack motivation to read, and the lack of interest. This means that the students may lack enough background knowledge in the English language, especially if they are just limited to study a language that deals only with a particular academic discipline.

3.4 Description of the Students’ Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of nineteen questions which are divided into four sections. Section one focuses on personal information of the respondents (Q1) to check whether the majority of the students are males or females, and to know how many years they have been studying English (Q2). Section two which starts from (Q3) to Question (13) sheds light on the reading process in general that is to say, to check how often the students read, what do they read, that is to say, the students' preferences of the reading material, and whether they like practicing reading or not, and it also seeks to investigate the objective of the students behind reading and the strategies they use when they read any material.
Whereas Section three built on six questions from (Q14) to (Q19). They focus on the students' reading comprehension. (Q14) is raised to know whether the students use dictionary when they come across difficult terms or not. (Q15) investigates the type of dictionaries, students use monolingual or bilingual ones. This section tries to exemplify the environment of the target population and its influence on the students’ reading comprehension and understanding capacities. The fourth section intends the students to provide some suggestions and recommendations about the difficulties that obstruct the EFL students' reading comprehension. It aims at giving the students the opportunity to express their ideas freely about the reading comprehension disabilities.

3.4.1 The Analysis of the Result

Section One: Background Information

Question one

- Gender: a. Male  
  
- b. Female

![Figure 01 Student’s Gender](image)

**Figure 01 Student’s Gender**

Figure 01 show that the number of girls in the first year LMD students in the department of English at Mila’s’ University is more than the males’ number. So, this result shows that the majority of the students are actually girls.

**Question two**
How many years have you been studying English?

Figure 02: The Number of Years of Studying English

Figure 02 shows that 76% of the first year LMD students at Mila’s University have been studying English from the middle school to the university for eight years, and only 24% have been studying English for nine years.

Question three

What is your preferred skill that you want to master?

a. Speaking  b. Listening  c. Writing  d. Reading

Graph 03: Students’ Preferable Skill

Figure 03 shows that most of the students like to master or acquire the speaking and the reading skill. (50%) of the students like speaking, the reason behind their choice is that
they enjoy speaking in English to express their feelings and thoughts, speaking is considered as a mirror that reflects to the extent they master the foreign language. Besides, (20%) of them enjoy reading; they did not ignore reading, because for some of them reading is the best way to acquire any language. In contrast with the other skills; listening and writing are almost ignored, only (17%) of the whole sample like listening, maybe they like listening to the English songs; however, 13% of the students like the writing skills, because the majority of the students disfavours writing because they get anxious when they begin to write.

**Question four**

- How often do you practice reading?


![Figure 04: The Frequency of Reading](image)

Figure 04 shows that the majority of first year students are less motivated to read outside their classes, only (17%) of them appear to be aware of the importance of reading; however (20%) of them claim that they rarely read, and (03%) do not practice reading at all. One can say that those students are demotivated, and disencouraged to read because they do find someone who makes them like reading. Those students do not find who help them to see
how reading can enhance their development in all aspects; actually, 47% of the first year students are interested in reading in their free times.

**Question five**

- **When do you generally read?**
  
  a. Free Time  
  b. When you are obliged  
  c. During holidays

![Bar chart showing reading preferences](chart.png)

**figure 05: Time Preferred for Reading**

Figure 05 shows that (47%) of students read when they are obliged to read, they do not practice reading in their daily life. They may practice reading only if their teachers ask them to read. However, (40%) of them claim that they read in their free time because they are aware of the importance of reading and they like reading. In fact, (13%) of them practice reading during holidays.

**Question six**

- **How do you find reading?**
  
  a. Easy  
  b. Somehow difficult  
  c. Difficult
Figure 06: Degree of Difficulty in Reading

Figure 06 shows that (74%) of the students find that reading is somehow difficult because of the complexity and some other factors which inhibit them from practicing reading. Only one student thinks that reading is difficult. (23%) of the students find that reading is a very easy process because they do not find difficulties while reading any kind of a text.

Question seven

➢ What do you like to read?

a. Short Stories  b. Novels  c. Books

Figure 07: Students’ Preferences Concerning Reading Materials they like to Read
Figure 07 shows that (63%) of the respondents enjoy reading short stories because they find them simply with a less complicated structure and vocabulary, and (23%) of them tend to read books that seem to be interesting for them and appropriate in level. However, only (13%) of the whole population enjoy reading novels because of suspense and imagination that distinguish the short stories from other types of writings.

**Question eight**

- When you read a book, do you start from the beginning or from the point that attract you?
  a. Yes (from the beginning)       b. No (from the point that attract me)

![Bar chart showing reading strategies](chart.png)

**Figure 08: The Use of Reading Strategies**

Figure 08 shows that only (33%) of the first year students use a reading strategy that is called “scanning” which is presented from the behaviour of moving directly to the point that attract their attention. However, the majority of the students, which represent (67%) of the sample do not use scanning as a reading strategy, but they spend their full time reading from the beginning till the end.

**Question nine**

- Do your teachers motivate you to read?
Figure 09: The Role of the Teacher in Motivating Students to Read

Figure 09 shows that (63%) of the students agree that their teachers always encourage them to read outside the classes and in their free times. They believe that their teachers are helpful and supporting for their students to read, to get more vocabulary and knowledge about the target language. However, (37%) of the students think that their teachers are not helpful, they do not motivate them to read. In fact, this reality shows that those students are not likely to read.

Question ten

➢ How many books did you read in a year?

a. 0-2       b. 2-4       c. 4-6       d. 6-8
Figure 10: Students’ Reading Amount

Figure 10 shows that first year students do not read a lot, and if they do, they only read for the sake of reading. They do not have the motivation to start a book and complete it in a week or in a month. They ignore reading because they think that reading is a waste of time. They do not enjoy reading. The table above shows that 50% of the respondents read only one or two books in a year, and 50% read from two to four books per a year. The displayed results indicate the demotivation of the students towards practicing the reading skill.

Question eleven

- According to you what is the main target of reading?

a. To acquire vocabulary

b. To increase your knowledge about the target language

c. To raise your awareness about the foreign language culture
Figure 11: The Purpose behind Reading

Figure 11 shows that (43%) of the students believe that the main purpose behind the reading process is to acquire vocabulary. (34%) of the student tends to read with motivation to increase their knowledge about the foreign language. However, (23%) of them claim that they read for the sake of raising awareness of the target language.

Question twelve

➢ How can you depict your level in reading?

a. Very good                                b. Average                             c. Poor

Figure 12: Students’ Level in Reading
Figure 12 shows that (60%) of the students think that their level in reading is ‘average’ (23%) of the whole sample think that their level in reading is ‘very good’; however, (17%) state that they have a ‘poor’ level in reading. Though reading is a basic skill in the learning of any foreign language, but the results show that the students' level in reading in general is not pleasing.

**Question thirteen**

➢ When you do not understand a word while reading, do you

a. Ignore it                      b. Check its meaning in the dictionary

Figure 13: The Use of the Dictionary of the Students

Figure 13 shows that the majority of the students (90%) check the ambiguous words in the dictionary in order to facilitate the reading comprehension, because those ambiguous words can be the key words which lead them to misunderstand the text. However, (10%) of them ignore the difficult terms and do not use dictionaries to explain those words.

**Question fourteen**

➢ What is the type of dictionary you generally use?

a. Bilingual (English-Arabic)              b. Monolingual (English-English)
Figure 14: The Types of Dictionary

Figure 14 shows that (50%) of the students use a bilingual dictionary. So, those students depend on their mother tongue to get the meaning of the difficult terms. Besides, (50%) of the respondents claim that they use monolingual dictionary, that is to say English-English dictionaries.

Question fifteen

➢ a. Do you think that ambiguous words obstruct your understanding?

   a. Yes    b. No
Figure 15 shows that (60%) of the students think or agree that ambiguous words obstruct their reading comprehension. However, (40%) believe that they can understand the meaning of the text from the context so even if they come across some difficult words that would not stand as an obstacle for them to understand the meaning of the material they read.

➢ c. If (yes) please, explain.

The respondents who claim that difficult terms obstruct their understanding see that since their level in English is still low the vocabulary that they know is limited to the most common words. So, when they read they always face difficult terms that would stop them sometimes from continuing to read. There are some who use their dictionaries to explain those words, but doing that make them feel bored and unmotivated to read.

**Question sixteen**

➢ Do you go back to your previous knowledge during reading?

   a. Yes                     b. No

![Graph](image)

**Figure 16: The Relation between the Students’ Background Knowledge, and the Text**

Graph 16 indicates that (90%) of the students activate their prior knowledge while reading a text because this strategy may help them to understand the text. However, (10%) of
the students read without using their background knowledge they only rely on the existing written passage.

Question seventeen

➤ What is the difficulty you face while reading

a. The complexity of the words or vocabulary
b. The length of the text
c. Coherence and cohesion

![Cylinder chart showing distribution of difficulties faced while reading.](chart)

Figure 17: Problems’ Obstructs Students’ Reading Comprehension

Figure 17 shows that (60%) of the subjects face the problem of the complexity of word vocabulary because they are considered as beginners and they have deficiency in vocabulary. However, (27%) of them think that the lengths of the text obstruct their reading comprehension, and most of them feel bored while reading a very long text or passage. Only (13%) of the students face the problem of coherence and cohesion.

Question eighteen

➤ What is your feeling while reading?

a. Pleased  b. Anxious
Figure 18: The Psychology of the Students while Reading

Figure 18 shows that most of the respondents feel comfortable while reading, (90%) of them feel pleased while reading any kind of text, but only (10%) of them feel uncomfortable or anxious. This latter may happen because they do not appreciate reading and those students read only when they are obliged to do by their teachers.

Question nineteen

➢ How do you feel when you read aloud in front of your teacher and classmates?

a. Confident  b. Afraid

Figure 19: Students’ Feeling when Reading Aloud
Graph 19 shows that of the students feel confident while reading in front of their teachers and classmate. However, (33%) of them feel afraid while reading out loud in the classroom.

3.4.2 The discussion of the analysis

The findings of the students' questionnaire portray that the majority of the students prefers to speak and read in English, they enjoy reading and speaking, but they ignore listening and writing. Though these results, but most of them do not read a lot, especially, outside their classes, because they are not interested in reading in their spare times due to the lack of motivation to read and deficient vocabulary and inability to decode the meaning of the words that seem to be difficult for them to be understood from the context. The results show that the majority of the students (74%) finds that reading is somehow difficult. Their level is not really pleasing because of the difficulties they encounter when they practice reading.

The findings are drawn so that the majority of the students enjoys reading short stories, because they find them appealing with simple structure, vocabulary, and grammar. Moreover, concerning the use of reading strategies while reading. The data show that the majority (67%) of the students mentioned that they read the whole passage from the beginning till the end. However, only 33% of them stated that they go directly to the point that attracts their attention or their interest. This shows the fact that those students are conscious of the purpose behind avoiding reading word after word in some particular cases. Here the students use one of the reading types that is called scanning.

The results portray that (63%) of the students claim that their teachers motivate and encourage them to read in order to get more, also to make the idea clear that reading is a very important skill that one should master. However, (37%) of the students agree that there are some teachers who do not motivate them to read which affect them negatively and discourage them to read.
The data shows that (43%) of the respondents stated that their main purpose behind practicing reading is acquiring vocabulary. (34%) of them claimed that they read for the purpose of increasing their knowledge about the target language. Also, (23%) of them agreed on the idea that the purpose of the act of reading is to raise their awareness of the foreign language culture because one cannot understand truly the foreign language without understanding the cultural aspects within that language.

The results show that the majority of the students (90%) rush, blindly, to check the meaning of the ambiguous terminology in the dictionary they find when reading. Absolutely, this result shows that those students are far from using “prediction” as a reading strategy. In fact, the students may predict the meaning of some words without using a dictionary. However, (10%) of the students claimed that they ignore the unclear terms, trying to understand the general idea of the text.

The results show that (90%) of the students claimed that they use their background knowledge to understand the text they read. While, (10%) of them do not go back to their prior knowledge while reading. This result shows that students are aware of the importance of using their prior knowledge while reading, because it facilitates the reading process.

The psychological status of the students is very important, the findings of the students’ questionnaire illustrate that (67%) of the students declared that they feel confident when reading out loud in front of their teachers and classmates, because they are self confidence. However, (33%) of them admitted that they feel afraid, when reading out loud in the classroom, because they feel threatened when they make mistakes in pronunciation, they feel shy, they hesitate a lot and their self-esteem will be lowered. One can say that there are many difficulties that EFL students encounter when they practice reading comprehension and teachers play a significant role in motivating their students to keep on reading and motivating
them to change their attitudes towards reading because of its efficiency in learning a foreign language.

3.5 The Pedagogical Implication

Based on the findings of this research that the students' level in reading is very weak that is due to many reasons. Hence, some pedagogical implications could be suggested.

According to the findings of the students' questionnaire it is claimed that the majority of the students like reading, but they do not practice it often according to Krashen (2004) “reading for pleasure is the major source of our reading competence, our vocabulary, and our ability to handle complex grammatical constructions...” So if the students do not enjoy reading they will be able to finish a book. For this reason, teachers should lend a hand in creating a good atmosphere for their students to read as for instance to let their students select by themselves novels and books that interest them and ask them questions when they finish reading those books. Reading in the classroom makes the students build up a link between them and reading. This leads the teacher to bring different materials to the class in order to satisfy the students’ need.

The second suggestion is about the choice of reading simple and understandable books or passages that will push them to finish reading what they read and even to read more books and literary books as well. Simplified structure and non-ambiguous terms can encourage the EFL students to acquire a habit of reading and though time they will enrich their vocabulary and read more books and novels that contain more complex structure and enhance their mastery of the language through training their pronunciation and acquiring grammar, vocabulary and so on...

3.6 Limitation of the Study

This study consists of some potential limitations even if the methodology that has been followed in this study has used to confirm many previous studies. The first limitation that
faced this study is that in our universities, we do not have a module which is entitled ‘reading’. Reading is practiced in the other modules as literature, oral expression, civilization...etc. The study would be more successful if there is a module of reading and reading comprehension.

Moreover, the questionnaire does not include all the reading strategies and problems that stand behind the first year LMD students misunderstanding of the text they read. The tool used to measure the reading comprehension is the use of two questionnaires that both include open-ended, close-ended questions, and multiple choice questions. It would be more practical if an observation is used as a tool for investigation to check the students' reading behaviour in the classroom and to record the teachers' feedback while asking their students to read.
General conclusion

Learning a foreign language requires the mastery of the four language skills: listening, reading as receptive skills and speaking and writing as productive skills, without an ignorance of any one of them. Moreover, it is always believed that reading is very effective in an early stage of learning a foreign language. Thus, it is always needed to reach a proficient level in that language.

It was attempted through this work to shed light on the comprehension difficulties that come across the first year EFL students at Mila’s University Center while reading a written text. Besides, this work aims at exploring if the students use the right strategy, and models, while reading a written text because if the students make use of the appropriate strategies they will understand the material they read, and that would benefit them in enriching their vocabulary, decoding meaning and acquiring grammar and developing their writing skill as well through reading different texts.

Two questionnaires were addressed one for EFL teachers and the other for the students to check their perspectives and see whether the assumption is approved or disapproved. The results obtained from the analysis of data revealed strongly that the students do not have a pleasing level in reading comprehension, though, as a rule reading is one of the first skills to be acquired by any learner of a foreign language. The data gathered reflected that most of the EFL students do not practice reading in their free time, they even do not enjoy reading, and they lack motivation and interest. In fact, they find the task very boring, and they are affected by different reading comprehension factors such as the complex of new words, the length of the text they read and lack of knowledge about the target culture.

The result obtained from the two questionnaires come to confirm our hypothesis that EFL students they encounter many difficulties when they practice reading comprehension.
Consequently, the students are not aware of the importance of reading itself and the use of different reading strategies that lend a hand in improving their level in English.

This study suggests that reading is very important in learning a foreign language and students should give much attention to reading and reading strategies. Besides, it suggests that teachers should devote some time for practicing reading and reading comprehension, they also have to make the students aware of the various strategies that help them in decoding meaning and understanding what they read. Teachers should always boost their students' confidence towards the importance of reading, and they should try to provide a positive atmosphere in which students can develop positive attitudes and motivation towards the act of reading.
References


Snow, C. (2002). *Reading for Understanding Towards an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension*. RAND.


Appendices:

Appendix 1: Teachers’ Questionnaire

This questionnaire is an attempt to gather information about the main problems that EFL students encounter in reading which obstruct their comprehension.

We would be grateful if you accept sharing your experience by answering the questionnaire. Your ideas are highly valued and your cooperation is genuinely appreciated. Please, tick (√) the choice that best represents your answer. You may choose more than one answer.

Section one: general information
Q.1. Are you?
   a. Male ☐   b. Female ☐

Q.2. How long have you been teaching?

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

Section two: Reading Skill

Q.3. How do you evaluate your students' level in reading Comprehension?
   a- High ☐ b- Beyond Average ☐ c- Average ☐ d- Below Average ☐ e- Low ☐

Q.4. Do you think that reading is very important to acquire a foreign language?
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

Q.5. Do you motivate your students to read different kinds of texts?
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

Q.6. Explain please how do you do that?..........................................................

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Q.7. Do your students use the appropriate reading strategies (skimming and scanning) while reading?
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

Q.8. According to you what is the appropriate skill for students to acquire vocabulary?
   a. Speaking ☐
   b. Listening ☐
Q.9. How often do your students practice reading in the classroom?
   a. Once a week  
   b. Twice a week  
   c. More than twice  

Section Three: Reading Comprehension

Q.10. According to you which kind of difficulties your students face while reading?
   a. Complexity of the words  
   b. Coherence and cohesion  
   c. The length of the text  
   d. Others, please specify  

Q.11. Do you think that contextual factors (the length of the text and sentences) affect the student’s comprehension?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

Q.12. If yes please justify  

Q.13. Do you think that the difficulty to understand a type of the text hinder your students’ reading comprehension?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

Q.14. What are the strategies that you use to help your students read in class?
Q.15 Do you think that reading comprehension problems occur when there is an inability to grasp the meaning of words, phrases, and paragraphs?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

Q.16 If yes, please explain.

Q.17. As a teacher what is the main objective that you focus on when you ask your students to read?
   a. To acquire vocabulary.  
   b. To increase knowledge about the target language.  
   c. To explore the Foreign culture.  

Q.18. Do you advice your students to use a dictionary when they come across ambiguous words?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

Q.19. Which kind of dictionary do you think is suitable for your students?
   a. Bilingual  
   b. monolingual  

Q.17. Do you think that ambiguous words obstruct your students’ understanding?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

Q.20. Do your students go back to their prior knowledge while reading?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  
Section Four: Further Suggestions

Please, write any further comments or suggestions about the difficulties that EFL students encounter when practicing reading comprehension.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 2: Students’ Questionnaire
This questionnaire is an attempt to gather information about the main problems that EFL students encounter in reading which obstruct their comprehension.

We would be grateful if you accept sharing your experience by answering the questionnaire. Your ideas are highly valued and your cooperation is genuinely appreciated. Please, tick (✓) the choice that best represents your answer. You may choose more than one answer.

Miss. Boulfelfel Mounia
Department of English
Larbi Ben Mhidi University
Oum El Bouaghi

Section One: Personal information

☐ ☐
1. Gender  a. Male  b. Female

3. How many years have you been studying English?
........................................................................................................................................

2. Was it your choice to study English at university?
   a. Yes  □  b. No  □
   If no, say why…………………………………………………

3. Do you like reading in English?
   a. Yes  □  b. No  □

Section Two: The process of Reading

4. What is your preferred skill that you want to master?
   a. Speaking
   □
   b. Listening
   □
   d. Writing
   □
   c. Reading
   □

5. Do you practice reading?
   a. Always
   □
   b. Often
   □
   c. Sometimes
   □
   d. Rarely
   □
6. When do you generally read?

a. Free Time
b. When you are obliged
c. During holidays

4. How do you find reading?

a. Easy  b. somehow difficult  b. difficult

7. What do you like to read?

a. Short Stories  b. Novels  c. Books

Others: Please, specify…………………………………………..........................................

8. When you read a book, do you start from the beginning or from the point that attract you?

a. Yes (from the beginning)  b. No (from the point that attract me)

9. Do your teachers motivate you to read?

a. Yes  b. No

10. How many books do you read in a year?

a. 0-2  b. 2-4  c. 4-6  d. 6-8

11. According to you what is the main target of reading?

a. To acquire vocabulary.
b. To increase your knowledge about the target language.
c. To raise your awareness about the foreign language culture.
12. How can you depict your level in reading?

a. very good  

b. average  

c. poor  

Section three: Reading Comprehension

13. When you do not understand a word while reading, do you

a. Ignore it  

b. Check its meaning in the dictionary  

14. What is the type of dictionary you generally use?

a. Bilingual (English-Arabic)  

b. Monolingual (English-English)  

15. Do you think that ambiguous words obstruct your understanding?

a. Yes  

b. No  

c. If yes, please, explain..............................................................................................................................

16. Do you go back to your previous knowledge during reading?

a. Yes  

b. No  

16. What is the difficulty you face while reading?

a. The complexity of the words or vocabulary.  

b. The length of the text.  

c. Coherence and cohesion.  

17. What is your feeling while reading?

a. Pleased  

b. Anxious  

18. How do you feel when you read aloud in front of your teacher and classmates?

a. Confident  □  b. Afraid  □

19. if your answer is (b) please, say why

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Section four: Further suggestions

Please, write any further comments or suggestions about the difficulties that EFL students encounter while reading which obstruct their comprehension.

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Thank you for your cooperation.
Résumé

Cet étude vise à explorer les problèmes majeurs qui se tiennent derrière la compréhension en lecture des étudiants de première année ALE. On a réalisé une étude descriptive contenant un questionnaire pour (30) étudiants inscrits dans les classes de première année LMD au Centre universitaire de Mila, les participants ont été sélectionnés au hasard, et un second questionnaire a été remis à (12) enseignants de l'ALE au centre universitaire suscité. Ils visent à découvrir les diverses difficultés qui entravent la compréhension en lecture des étudiants et trouver les stratégies adéquates qui peuvent aider à surmonter ces difficultés. Ainsi, en raison de l'importance des stratégies de lecture, cet étude basée sur l'hypothèse que l'utilisation des stratégies de lecture appropriées aide les étudiants à avoir un niveau de compétence en lecture, et selon les résultats obtenus l'hypothèse est confirmée. En ce sens la plupart des étudiants du département d'anglais envisagent de nombreux problèmes dans la compréhension lors de la lecture, et la plupart d'entre eux ne pratiquent pas la lecture, seulement s'ils sont obligés de le faire. Cela est dû à l'absence de motivation et d'intérêt à lire, et aussi parce que lors de la lecture ; ils lisent d'une façon chaotique sans suivre une utilisation correcte de stratégies de lecture. Celles-ci une fois prouvées efficace pour aider les étudiants à comprendre ce qu'ils lisent.
ملخص:
وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف المشاكل الرئيسية التي تلف وراء الفهم عند القراءة لدى طلاب السنة الأولى ب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وقد تم إجراء دراسة وصفية تتضمن استبيان لـ (30) طالباً مسجلين بالصفا لدراسي سنة أولى الماجستير في مركز الجامعة، وقد تم اختيار المشاركين عشوائياً، وتم تسليم الاستبيان الثاني إلى (12) استذاً باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المركز الجامعي المذكور أعلاه. أنها تهدف إلى اكتشاف مختلف الصعوبات التي تعترض الطلاب في واقع الفهم عند القراءة، وإيجاد الاستراتيجيات المناسبة التي يمكن أن تساعد في التخلص من تلك الصعوبات.

وبالنسبة لأهمية استراتيجيات القراءة، فقد بنيت الدراسة الحالية على أساس فرضية أن استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة المناسبة يمكن أن تكون مستوى الكفاءة في القراءة، وفقاً للنتائج التي تم الحصول عليها، تم تأكيد هذه الفرضية. بمعنى أن معظم الطلاب في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية يواجهون العديد من المشاكل في الفهم أثناء القراءة، ومعظمهم لا يمارسون القراءة إلا عند الإضطرار. وهذا يرجع إلى عدم وجود التحفيز والاهتمام، وأيضا لأنه عندما يقررون يقومون بذلك بطريقة عشوائية دون اتباع الاستخدام المناسب لاستراتيجيات القراءة. وهي تثبت أنها فعالة في مساعدة الطلاب على فهم ما يقرأون.