

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
Abd Elhafid Boussouf University - Mila



Institute of Literature and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages
Branch: English

The Impact of Reading Comprehension Difficulties on Students' level: A Case Study of Third Year EFL Learners at the University Centre of Mila

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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2022/2023

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Chiraz's Dedication

Initially, I would like to thank Allah who gave me health, courage, ability and strength to accomplish this work.

I chiefly dedicate this work to my father in heaven who left the world but never my heart and mind, who taxed himself greatly over the years for my education, who sacrificed for what I am accomplishing now. Who wished seeing me in the graduation costume. Today I would like to say that even though you are not present by my side but here I am, I did it for you.....and am quite sure that you can feel everything and every single detail... may God have mercy on your pure soul.

I want to thank myself, for believing in myself, I want to thank myself for the battles I fought all these years, I want to thank myself for having some days off, but never quitting.

To the person who encouraged me all the time: My mother Thank you for your love, patience, guidance and support

You are the best mother a daughter could ever ask for!

To my beloved brothers: Akram & Qussay

To my sweet prettiest sisters in the world: Anfoula & Malouka

Djanette's Dedication

All praise to Allah for giving me the guidance to finish this work.

This dissertation is dedicated

To my parents for their permanent support and care.

*To my dear sisters Nour and Loubna, thank you for being by my side during my life, I wish
you all the best.*

To my sister s 'children Nafaa and my sweetheart Waad, God bless them.

To my grandfather and grandmother who are encouraging me through my whole life.

*To my beloved, and kindest step- mother Zahra who is supporting and giving me the pure
love, thank you so much.*

To my supervisor Meriem Abid, thank you for your help, guidance, and advice.

To my future husband Sife who is encouraging me and never left my side.

To all those who love me.

Acknowledgement

All our deepest thanks and gratitude go to our remarkable supervisor Dr Abid Meriem for her patience, guidance, her priceless sources, her recommendations, her generosity and encouragement through the stages of the research. We would not successfully complete our work without her reflections and help.

We address a special thanks and gratitude to the members of the jury who accepted to examine this work.

A special thanks to Third year students of English for their cooperation.

My thanks also go to all those who contributed to my work in one way or another

Abstract

The reading comprehension skill is considered as one of the four fundamental language skills that an EFL learner must perform. In fact, it is not an easy skill since most of learners have many reading issues. The present dissertation is an attempt to explore the reading comprehension difficulties and their impact on Third years EFL students at the department of English University Center of Mila, and to identify some of the reasons behind their weaknesses in performing the reading task. The questionnaire and test have been opted as research instruments which are designed and handed respectively, to teachers and third-year EFL learners at Mila's University Center to collect the necessary data. The results reveal that most of the learners face difficulties in reading comprehension which are due to their limited vocabulary, poor comprehension, and their lack of reading habits.

Key words: EFL Learners, English language, Reading Comprehension, Students' Difficulties.

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List of Abbreviations

CL: Cooperative learning

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ER: Extensive Reading

Et al: And others

ETC: and the rest

i.e.: which means

IR: Intensive Reading

P: Page

Q: Question

RC: Reading Comprehension

RCS: Reading Comprehension Strategies

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

Nowadays, in the field of language teaching and learning, the English language becomes an essential area of education in which it relies on mastering the four basic skills which are: speaking, writing, listening and reading. Reading is considered one of those skills which plays an important role in improving literacy and general knowledge since it enhances people's vocabulary and allows them to comprehend a various kinds of texts. For example, Nunan (2003, p.133) defined reading as "fluent process for readers to combine information from the text and their background knowledge to build meaning". This means that reading can easily help to gather information from texts in order to construct meaningful meanings, and it keeps students informed on political, social, and cultural issues of languages. In addition, reading can help students to develop reasoning skills and gain better performance in many subjects. Furthermore, reading affects the student' attitudes, beliefs, thinking and their general behavior. However, it has been noticed that many students have difficulties in reading comprehension tests and this is due to several reasons for example: the difficulty of the text, limited experience with reading, lack of vocabulary and motivation as well as other reasons.

2. Statement of the Problem

Reading comprehension (RC) is an important skill that all people need in order to achieve language proficiency and fluency, it requires understanding and comprehending meanings of written texts; therefore, most EFL learners may suffer from difficulties in

reading comprehension, this is due to a set of problems because of the problems such as: lack of vocabulary, poor understanding, etc. This study will focus on some reading comprehension difficulties that are faced by third year English students at the University Center of Mila, and point out the reasons behind these difficulties.

3. The Aims of the Study

The reasons behind conducting this study are three folds:

(1) to detect the difficulties encountered while reading, (2) the reasons behind such difficulties, and (3) to offer some solutions for the subject matter.

4. Research Questions

This study attempts to find an answer to a very fundamental question which is:

1. What are the difficulties that third year English students may face when they read texts?
2. What are the causes behind students' reading comprehension difficulties?
3. Which kind of reading comprehension activities are used among EFL learners?
4. What are the available solutions to overcome those difficulties?

5. Research Hypothesis

On the basis of the afore-stated questions, it is hypothesized that:

If reading comprehension difficulties did not impact third year EFL students' level, their level would be higher.

6. Research Methodology

The research was conducted at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila, involving third year EFL students as a population. To carry out the purpose of this study,

both quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted. A questionnaire was directed to a group of teachers. In addition to a questionnaire was administered to a sample from the chosen population. . Both research tools aim at gathering data about students and teacher's points of view to determine the difficulties of EFL learners in understanding reading texts.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first part deals with the literature review, it represents the theoretical part which is divided into two sections. The first section discusses a number of definitions about reading skill, its different types and models. The second section deals with the reading comprehension difficulties and the reading activities that are used among the English learners. At the end of the section there will be some important solutions to overcome the student's reading comprehension difficulties. The second chapter includes the practical part in which the focus is on gathering data and analyzing the participant' s answers from both the questionnaire and the test, in order to answer the research questions and to find out the conceivable issues that may result from the reading comprehension skill.

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Introduction

This first chapter sheds lights on one of the four major language skills which is reading. The first chapter offers some definitions of reading from different points of views, dealing with the reading types, models, and the importance of reading. Also deals with some definitions about reading comprehension and the difficulties that English learners may face in the reading comprehension task with highlighting the activities, solutions, and strategies which are very important for enhancing and monitoring comprehension. Also determining the impact of the reading comprehension difficulties on third year EFL learners.

Section One: The Reading skill

1.1. Definition of the Reading Skill

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are considered as the four major skills to acquire/learn a foreign language. The reading skill is an essential skill for a language acquisition because it has positive effects on vocabulary knowledge, spelling as well as the learners' writings. Reading is regarded as an interactive process between the reader and the writer in which the former has to understand the message of the passage and then to decode it. Moreover, it is a dynamic process in which information from the text and knowledge possessed by the reader interact to enable him to construct meaning before, during and after reading. In this respect, Bader (2007, p.40) stated that: "reading is an interactive process between the reader, interacting dynamically, and the text." Goodman (1973, p.162) stated that "the learner interacts with a message encoded by the writer". He concentrates his total prior experience and concepts he has attained, as well as the language competence he has achieved. In the same way, Dubin (1982) assumed that the task of reading is a complex skill that contains a number of psychological, physical and social elements.

Reading is the action of getting and understanding information received from a written texts. Nunan (2003, p.68) mentioned that “reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from text and their own background knowledge to build meaning.” Reading is totally an individual activity. It is generally said to be a complex activity.

According to Mebarki (2008) reading is an unobservable mental activity and a multi-faceted skill which involves lower and higher skills. Moreover, Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.172) said that

....so it is with some reluctance that we begin this part with an attempt to define reading, to say what we mean by the term. Our excuse is that people do use the term in different ways, and that while this may be permissible when everybody is conscious of the differences, on occasions it can cause real confusion and difficulty.

However, Alderson (2000) defined reading both as a process and a product. As a process, it is the numerous operations which happen during the process of reading, they include looking at print, recognizing words, deciding what they mean and how they are related to another. As a product, reading is comprehension or the understanding constructed by the reader. Alderson (2000,p.04) said “Although readers may engage in different reading processes, the understanding they end up with is the same...What matters, then, is not how you reach that understanding ,but the fact that you reach it” . Moreover, reading is a necessary skill for language learning because it has positive effects on different aspects such as: vocabulary knowledge, spelling, as well as learner’s writing. Debate has gone over the years on whether reading is made up of a set of distinct skills that are separately identified or whether these skills are related to common underlying abilities, and thus they are indivisible.

A reading skill is defined by Urquhart and Weir (1998) as a “cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with a text.” p.8. This definition takes a broad view about the term skill and does not say anything about what is exactly involved under this cognitive ability. Experts who adhere to this view argue that if reading is a skill, then it

must be possible to break it down into underlying components for the purpose of teaching and testing. Hence, teachers and testers should reject the several activities and tasks used in reading comprehension tests such as guessing the meaning of unknown words, identifying the main ideas in a text and so on.

Reading is not a passive task, but rather an active one. In fact, reading requires both the learner's mental and experiential inputs of who is expected to comprehend the written message. In highlighting the importance of reading comprehension, Rivers (1981,p.47) stated that "reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending ones which are knowledge of the language". Reading is composed of two parts: the written form, and the meaning of the conveyed message. In this regard, Penny and Ur (2004, 1996, p.138) defined reading as follows: reading means "reading and understanding, a foreign language learner who says, I read the words but I don't know what they mean is not, therefore, reading in this sense. He or she is merely decoding translating written symbols into corresponding sounds." As a result, reading is considered as the most difficult language skill, which involves the interaction of multiple cognitive, meta-cognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects. i.e.; some other sub-skills operate all together in order to perform the task. According to Rosenblatt (1982, p.268) "reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances." Her description of the reading process is harmonious with the definition of reading comprehension, which is the process in which readers involve in to gain meaning through particular interaction with a text .Thus, in spite of the large number of the different definitions of reading; no one has won general acceptance.

1.2. Reading Types

All over the long history of reading, only two types were distinguished by researchers, intensive reading and extensive reading. Hafiz and Tudor (1989,p.5) compared between the two type: “In intensive reading activities learners are in the main exposed to relatively short texts which are used either to exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic or discoursal system of the L2, or to provide the basis for targeted reading strategy practice; the goal of extensive reading, on the other hand, is to flood learners with large quantities of L2 input with few or possibly no specific tasks to perform on this material.”

1.2.1. Intensive Reading

It is an activity that is typically done in the classroom under the help of the teacher where learners are reading for general understanding and practicing the language. In Palmer’s opinion (1964, p.111) on intensive reading (IR), the learner focuses on using the dictionary in which he has to analyze, compare and translate while reading texts. He argued that intensive reading means “take a text, study line by line, referring at every moment our dictionary and our grammar comparing, analyzing, translating and retaining every expressions that it contains.” Therefore, the use of a dictionary helps the learner to progress in his language learning process. However, this may interrupt the learner’s reading speed. In the same line of thought, reading comprehension, when reading intensively; students deal with relatively short and difficult texts and focus on the available details and analysis of the expressed relationships between the ideas. As Grellet (2010, p.4) said “an accuracy activity that involves reading in details, considered to be active reading it is looking for special details, it develops language skill.” Also it develops the strategies of the learners. In this respect, Nuttal (1962, p.23) claimed that “the intensive reading lesson is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies. However, sometimes the learner may prefer to read

the text in which he/she divides it into parts and then to read each part alone in order to comprehend it very well”.

1.2.2 Extensive Reading

To many scholars such as Palmer (1964) and Grabe (2002) extensive reading is considered as a powerful method for improving our language skills; it is basically quickly reading books, newspapers, magazines or other materials which are easy and interesting. Extensive reading (E.R) is essential and important because it helps learners to improve their reading abilities and enrich their vocabulary knowledge. Besides, it helps learners to understand the language faster and better, and to develop reading habits.

In this regards, Palmer (1964) claimed that extensive reading is “rapidly reading book after book.” Hafiz and Tudor (1989, p.5) mentioned that “the pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce a beneficial effect on the learners’ command of the L2. In other words, extensive reading is generally defined by researchers as reading for fluency. It is based on having students select their own reading texts. Hedge (2003) assumed that extensive reading varies according to learners’ motivation and school resources. He also states that it enables them to achieve their independency by reading either in class or at home.

Moreover, extensive readers read for the sake of pleasure. Day (1998) called this type “joyful reading”. Through extensive reading, the reader enriches his background knowledge, and expands his vocabulary; he also recognizes the spelling forms. Therefore, the learner chooses his\her own books and reads at his\her pace. Then, the teacher has to guide learners to select books depending on their levels of comprehension that lead to comprehensible input. According to Day and Bamford (1998), extensive reading is a part of

second language curriculum. Thus, students have to rely on themselves and gain knowledge from their readings outside the classroom.

1.3 Reading Models

Many scholars and researchers are active in research on reading; however, there are still different points of view on what reading is, these views are often grouped into three reading models. Many researchers like Alderson (2000) and Clarke (1977) have suggested three basic models of how reading happens; in which they play a significant role in managing and facilitating the comprehension process, as well as assisting readers to better understand a written passage and overcome their reading comprehension difficulties while engaging in the reading process. These models include the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model. The three models differ from one another based on their concentration of the method that readers apply in order to obtain meaning from a written passage. It was agreed that the interactive model is the complete one in reading comprehension because it includes the interaction of both (bottom-up and top-down model).

1.3.1 The Bottom-up Reading Model

This view highlights the written and printed text (data driven), it assumes that the reader constructs meaning from letters, words, phrases, clauses and sentences found within, and then processes the text in a linear way. Moreover, the bottom-up model suggests that learning to read processes from learners learning the parts of language (letters) to understanding the whole text (meaning). In this regard, Nunan (1991, p.64) said:

[...]These letters or graphemes are matched with The Phonemes of the language. Theses phonemes, the minimal units of meaning in the sound system of Language are blended together to form words. The derivation of meaning is

thus the end of process in which language is translated from one represent action to another.

This model ignores the contribution of the reader background knowledge to reading comprehension, as Alderson (2000, p.17) criticized the bottom-up approach since it considers that “readers are passive decoders of sequential graphic phonemic”. Simply, in this model the reader begins with smallest units to the whole units and builds up the comprehension of what is being read. This model of reading focuses on decoding the language i.e. the learner is supposed to decode the words without understanding the entire text.

Even though having the ability to quickly decode is important for improving reading comprehension, the bottom-up model has been criticized for several reasons. First, according to Grabe and Stoller (2002 p.32), “the bottom-up model suggests that all reading follows a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little interference from the reader’s own background knowledge.” Second, this model requires readers to apply the vocabulary-by-vocabulary decoding process, which is considered slow process that requires a lot of time and attempts from the reader to understand a text. Trying to decode each word in the text can weigh the reader's short-term memory; therefore, the reader is more likely to forget what he has read by the time they finish their reading process. As a result, instead of gaining a solid understanding from the written passage, the reader may only be able to understand different isolated words. Without having comprehensive understanding of the text, the reader will not be able to engage in reading and activate his critical thinking skills, which might also negatively impact his motivational level to read on a regular basis. Next, this model has been criticized because it does not take into consideration the role that the readers’ prior knowledge plays in facilitating reading comprehension process. In other words, the

constructing of the bottom-up model (letters→ words→ sentences) can limit the readers' ability to notice the processes that exist during the overall reading process. Adams (1990), Eskey (2005) and Grabe (2004) argued that the limitations linked to the bottom-up reading comprehension model contributed to the produce of the top-down reading model.

1.3.2. The Top-down Reading Model

Unlike the bottom-up model where the students' background knowledge is not considered, this reading model focuses on the readers' background knowledge in the reading process in which meaning takes precedence over structure. The readers move from the top, the higher level of mental stages down to the text itself, they begin with the largest element, use background knowledge and put down towards smallest units to build their understanding of what is being read in this sense. Hence, it tends to neglect that grammar is important for the use of higher levels. In this context, Clarke et al (1977) maintained that the reader brings information, ideas and attitudes from the text, in which this knowledge is accompanied with the capability to make linguistic predictions. Alderson (2000) highlighted the importance of the students' prior knowledge and expectations in helping them to construct meaning from reading texts.

This approach stresses the reconstruction of meaning rather than the decoding of form, the interaction between the reader and the text rather than the graphic forms of the printed pages. Anderson (1996, p.1) mentioned that "reading is not a passive process but an active fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning." Obviously, the reader proves his active role in the reading process by bringing to the interaction his available knowledge of the subject, expectations about how language works, interest and attitudes towards the content of the text. Meaning of the reading materials does not reside only on the printed page, nor is it only in the head of the reader.

As it is mentioned above, in the current model, reading is seen as the combination of the words on the printed page with the reader's background knowledge. Due to the limitation that the amount of time required for the generation of predictions is greater than the amount of time required to simply recognize the words; the interactive models of reading emerged. Eventhough the top-down reading comprehension model emerged to address the limitations within the bottom-up model, it has been criticized due to its heavy dependence on readers' prior expectation, information, and background knowledge, and its disregard of the significance of the text. Also, the top-down model is criticized for its neglect of the potential problems that readers might encounter while building their expectations or predictions about a specific passage, especially when the topic is not familiar to them. Therefore, Ahmadi et al, (2013) Pearson(1979), Samuels, Kamil (1988) and Wang (2009) argued that the limitations and weakness of both the bottom-up and top-down reading models in clarifying the reading comprehension process have resulted in the birth of the interactive reading model.

Finally, this approach is recommended by many researchers among them: Nuttal (1996) who claimed that this approach is used when the reader interprets assumptions and draws inferences, because it is directly related to the readers' personal knowledge and experiences.

1.3.3 Interactive model

Unlike the two previous models, and since the interactive model emerged to address weakness and limitations that were found in both the bottom-up and the top-down reading comprehension models, it tends to integrate features of each. Today, according to Ahmadi and Gilakjani (2012) the interactive model is the most widely conclusive model for explaining the process of reading comprehension and confirms the importance of the interaction between a reader and the text. The interactive model recognizes the interaction of

bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously throughout the reading process. It strikes a balance between the differing processes of bottom-up and top-down, in other words, an interactive process requires the use of background knowledge, expectations and context. It tends the reader to use both knowledge of word structure and background knowledge to interpret the texts they read. Hence, it relies on both graphic and textual information, which means that there is a mixture of both surface structure systems (bottom-up model of reading) with deep structure systems (top-down aspects of reading) to construct meaning . In the same line of thought, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p.557) regarded the processes involved in this interactive process where both bottom-up and top-down processes occur at the same time as follows:

The data that are needed to instantiate, or fill out, the schemata become available through bottom-up processing; top-down processing facilitates their assimilation if they are anticipated by or consistent with the listener/readers' conceptual expectations. Bottom-up processing ensures that the listeners/readers will be sensitive to information that is novel or that does not fit their ongoing hypotheses about the content or structure of the text; top-down processing helps the listeners/readers to resolve ambiguities or to select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data.

The interactive model made an attempt to suggest a model that would make clear how readers use various sources of information during the reading process. As Nunan (1989) stated, both top-down and bottom-up are effective for reading in which the interactive process fills the gap between two models since it emphasizes both letters and background knowledge. This model accounts for both bottom-up and top-down models, since students are supposed to use the bottom-up model from their early reading, then develop their accuracy and move to fluency and predictions using the top-down model. In brief, this

model views reading as an interaction between the reader and the text, and not simply a one-way exchange of information.

1.4. Importance of Reading

Reading is a habit that gives us knowledge and inspiration, it is an essential skill for EFL learning; it makes learners smart. It offers a wide range of important and interesting information such as language expressions and structures which have a great usefulness for developing other language skills. This reflects the fact that the study of reading is both theoretically interesting and practically important. Many experts like Brown, Nunan and Pothitha (1991) argued that reading is important. According to Phantharakphong and Pothitha (2014 .p 497) “reading is the single most important fundamental skill a person can acquire”. The reading skill is a fundamental skill in language acquisition skill because it has positive effects on different aspects such as: vocabulary knowledge spelling as well as learner’s writing. Cunningham, Stanovich (1997) and Sloat, Beswic, Willms (2007) highlighted the importance of reading as an essential skill which students need to gain in the early grades because it will be the foundation of learning in all academic subjects throughout their education and their personal lives.

Section Two: Reading Comprehension

1.5 Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to read a text, process it and understand its content. Woolley (2011, p.15) claimed that "reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from the text." Similarly, Snow (2002) defined reading comprehension as a "process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning throughout interaction and involvement with written language", it means that reading comprehension is not a matter of decoding but more it focuses on understanding and drawing connections between different portions of a text. According to Klinger, Vaughn & Boardman (2007), reading comprehension is a multicomponent, extremely complicated process that involves various interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (prior knowledge, method use) as well as variables connected to the text itself (interest in the text, understanding of text types). In short, reading comprehension is a difficult skill which emphasizes the relationship between the reader and the text, readers need to use their background knowledge, current level, and following specific strategies in order to help them understand an entire meaning of a text. Moreover, Okhill et al (2015, p.1) argued that "reading comprehension is a complex task which requires the orchestration of many different cognitive skills and abilities". It is therefore critical to connect the various skills throughout some reading activities which are classified as follows:

- Reading and writing like discussing reading letters, making notes, etc.
- Reading and listening such as comparing an article with a new bulleting and using audios to solve a written problem

Furthermore, the word comprehension have been defined from different perspectives, Smith (2012) explained that comprehension is a sort of up-market synonym for understanding in conversations that are technical and scientific. In addition, Housel (2010, p.4) assumed that "comprehension is the goal of every reading task." That is to say, readingskill can be achieved only when readers interpret it and comprehend it. Thus, according to Bruggink, et al (2022), there are four main processes used to comprehend a written text, which are mentioned as follows:

- **Focus on retrieve explicitly stated information:** readers focus on and retrieve information in a variety of ways to find and comprehend material pertinent to the readers' objective. In this style of processing the reader needs to concentrate on the text at the word, phrase, and sentence level in order to build meaning.
- **Make straightforward inferences:** simple inferences require the reader to make connections between two or more pieces of data, recognizing a relationship even when it is not explicitly mentioned in the text.
- **Integrate ideas in the text:** readers try to build a more detailed or comprehensive comprehension of the text by fusing their own knowledge and experience with the meaning that is included as they interpret and integrate it, while readers participate in this interpretive process, they are making connections that are both implicit and perhaps susceptible to some interpretation based on their own perspectives.
- **Evaluate and critique content and contextual features:** the emphasis changes from creating meaning to analyzing the text itself as readers assess the substance and

components of a text in this process, readers take a step back from a text to study and evaluate it.

1.6 Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Reading comprehension difficulties have been studied by many researchers. In fact, the decoding problem is regarded as one of the comprehension problems that foreign learners may suffer from when they read texts. Decoding is defined from different perspectives, accordingly to, Vacca, et al (2014, p. 27) "decoding process is based on learners attention by which he / she breaks down a word into individual phonemes and recognition based those phonemes". It means that readers decode a text into small pieces based on letters and sounds of the language. Cornoldi & Oakhill (2013) stated that comprehension difficulties are a component of learning disabilities more broadly; however, these problems can be related to understanding written texts such as language disorders or text decoding difficulties. In this context, Cain & Oakhill (2008 as cited in Perfetti, 1994) pointed out that problems with understanding may occur when decoding and reading comprehension are both difficult, slow or inaccurate. Reading may have readers with insufficient processing power to calculate the relationships between succeeding words, phrases, and sentences to construct a coherent and meaningful representation of the text. Moreover, Kasim and Raisha (2017) stated that the literal translation of some meanings of words like in proverbs and idioms is another decoding problem that may lead learners to lack understanding of the desired and intended content.

According to Kasim & Raisha (2017), EFL learners face difficulties in reading comprehension on the level of two main processes which are namely linguistic reading problems and non - linguistic problems.

1.6.1 Linguistic Reading Problems

The linguistic reading problems include the problems that are existed in the semantic, lexical, and syntactic areas of language. First, the semantic difficulties involve lack of vocabulary knowledge particularly about acceptable collocations. Westood (2001) stated that students with limited vocabulary struggle to understand a text which is understandable, unless the language is very simple. The comprehension of any text is linked to the vocabulary knowledge of readers about the meaning of different utterances especially complex ones. Thus, according to Thornbury (2002, P.27), there are some factors that can make the vocabulary more difficult to understand like [“pronunciation, spelling, length, meaning ‘’. Second, lexical difficulties refer to limited knowledge about derivation and word classes. Third, syntactical difficulties include lack of understanding of proper sentences and grammar. Koda (2005, p.96) stated that “texts ... with complex sentences are harder to understand”. That is to say, unqualified knowledge about syntax can affect the overall comprehension of readers. Moreover, (Aljarah & Ismail, 2018 as cited in Nuttal, 2000) confirmed that coordinating conjunctions, prepositional phrases, nominalization, and participial expressions can cause a lot of difficulty in reading comprehension. Having said so, syntax is one major problem that can inhibit the students’ competence and performance in language learning.

Those kinds of problems may occur among a variety of contexts, for example EFL learners may find it difficult to distinguish between the different meanings of the same word, such as to distinguish between this two words homonyms and homophones, also the word left can be used for several meaning. In addition, the word rite is spelled with four different pronunciations and multiple meanings which are namely rite, write, right, in this

sense learners who only know one meaning of the word right may easily misunderstand the exactly meaning of this word in speech.

1.6.2 Non – linguistic Reading Problems

All reading issues that are unrelated to the readers' linguistic skills are referred to as non-linguistic reading problems, and they are listed as follows:

- The difficulty in making connections between ideas in the text.
- Diffusing the main ideas from the text supporting ideas.
- Poor reading strategy.
- Lack of cultural familiarity.
- Lack of background information.
- Poor working memory.
- Length of the text.
- Lack of speed reading instruction.

Furthermore, another problem that can affect the student's comprehension is retention problem, retention necessities both decoding and comprehending what is written .This task requires advanced cognitive abilities, such as memory and the ability to group and retrieve related ideas. As students progress through the grades, they are expected to retain more and more of what they read. Reading to learn is an essential part of classroom work beginning in this grade. There are some signs of retention difficulties which are classified as follows:

- Difficulty recalling or summarizing what was read
- Difficulty relating what is read to prior knowledge
- Difficulty connecting content of a text to personal experience

1.7 The Impact of Poor Reading Comprehension on Students' Level

Poor reading comprehension is a general problem in language disabilities that obstructs learners' attention and concentration, as it has a negative impact on a wide range of fields and paths of students' life. First, poor reading comprehension may affect students' academic performance. Ezeala (2020) defined the word performance as a task that show how successful it is performed. It is the fulfillment of a work determined by certain established standards for correctness, completeness, cost, and speed. In a contract, performance is understood to be the accomplishment of a duty in a way that absolves the performer of all obligations under the agreement. According to Nanda & Azmy (2020), poor understanding may decrease the learning academic achievement of learners. The students learning achievement declines because they are unconfident and have a low self-esteem as a result of their difficulty interpreting text. Also this type of reader frequently feels undervalued in their schools. Acheaw and Larson (2014, p.4) stated that "the problem most students have that contributes to their poor performance in tests and examinations is lack of proper reading habits". It means that, students who do not like to read automatically they have difficulties in comprehension and this may lead them to have bad behaviors and ineligible level for success in language acquisition and learning. In this regard, Karanja (2010) argued that learners who have difficulties in English reading can have problems in school performance in general. In short, the inability of learners to develop their reading skill prevent them from achieving their general academic performance and it gets them into a lot of troubles such as writing, listening, and speaking problems . Second, poor reading comprehension have a negative impact on the emotional and social levels of learners. According to McArthur & Castles (2017), poor readers may have problems with their cognition and emotional health. Weak reading skills have an emotional impact on students by lowering their self-esteem. Many students feel incompetent and dumb when they struggle with a talent that many of

their peers pick up readily .According to Barnet (2010), this is unfortunate because reading difficulties are rarely the consequence of the students own efforts. This indicates a lack of structured literacy instruction. There is a clear need for teachers to improve the teaching of reading, especially since ineffective teaching can easily damage student' confident, leaving them feeling inadequate

Moreover, Barnet (2010) stated that poor reading skills also have a social effect on students. A common finding in sociology and psychology is that students naturally become friends with peers similar to them in academic standing. Academic success is frequently associated with involvement in other positive activities and significant decrease in truancy and other types of experimentation. When students are not given the necessary instruction to help effective reading skills, it is difficult for them to make friends with peers who encourage them to make positive life choices.

1.8 Reading Comprehension Activities

In order to assess students' comprehension of a written text, different kinds of activities are used. According to Grallet (1981, p.9) "reading comprehension activities should be suited to the texts and to one's reasons for reading them". That is to say, the selection of reading comprehension activities must have a relation with the text and with students' needs.

Davis (1944) has categorized nine basic skills that should be tested during reading comprehension, and they are listed as bellow:

- Comprehension of word meaning.
- The ability to choose the appropriate meaning for a word or phrase based on its specific contextual environment.

- The ability to follow the structure of a paragraph and recognize antecedents and references within it.
- Ability to identify the main idea of a text.
- Capability to respond to questions that are clearly addressed in a paragraph.
- Ability to answer questions in a passage but not in the words with which the question is asked.
- Ability to draw conclusion about its content based on a passage.
- Ability to identify literary devices used in the episode and to set its tone and mood.
- Capability to determine the purpose, intent and purpose of the author point of view i.e. draw inferences about the author.

Moreover, according to Burgess & Head (2005), reading component in most tests reflects a vast range of objectives for which people read in real life, there are various types of reading activities that are used to test a specific combination of reading skills in comprehending texts, and they can be classified as follows:

1.8.1 Multiple Choice Activities

The first activity according to Burgess & Head (2005) is multiple choice activity. This reading assignment is probably the most familiar to students. It consists of a text (or texts) of almost any type (narrative, argument, descriptive, etc) followed by one or more multiple choice elements (in which students must choose from options, for example a, b, c or d it could be a list of statements, a questions with possible answers, or an incomplete sentence with a list of phrases or words to finish it. In most cases there are three or four possibilities but only one of them is accurate, it is often the case that items correspond to specific parts of the text, but there can also be items that check understanding of the text as a whole.

1.8.2 True /false Activities

The second activity according to Burgess & Head (2005) is true/false activity. This is another activity type that most students will be familiar with. Again a text or collection of texts is accompanied by a set of statements, and learners need to decide from the text whether the statements are true or false, sometimes a third option is added in cases where the text does not give the reader enough information to judge whether the statements are correct or incorrect. A variation of this task is to simply ask "yes" or "no" questions about a topic covered in the text.

1.8.3 Matching Activities

The third activity according to Burgess & Head (2005) is matching activity. Perhaps less well known, but increasingly common are matching tasks. They are utilized by a number of test boards, some of which have many corresponding tests. In matching tasks, learners pick up from a variety of prompts. The latter may take the form of headings, sentences or whole questions for instance, learners might be asked to match words and expressions with their meaning. The texts used are often descriptive, but can be of various genres (book reviews, biographies, travel guides, articles, etc). Low level and students reading assessment make extensive use of matching tasks, because images can be used as well as short texts such as notes or characters.

1.8.4 Gapped Text Activities

The fourth activity according to Burgess & Head (2005) is gapped text activity. This type of reading comprehension test consists of texts or diagrams from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs have been removed. These filling the blanks activities can also be used to assess grammar and vocabulary. Some tasks require learners to decide what to fill in the gap with, while others (as in multiple choice tasks) require them to choose from a set of options one correct option. In cases when sentences or paragraphs have been deleted, there is typically one

item among the alternatives that does not belong to the original text. In some cases, the learner fills the blanks in a diagram, summary, or chart that follows the main text. There are many different kinds of these, but the descriptive narrative is the most common. They could be based on fiction, biography, articles or letters. Gapped texts provide the right task for using visual material, and therefore can also be found in reading texts for younger students. This type of activities may also be implemented in lowerlevel test dialogues.

1.8.5. Proofreading

This type of tasks involves deliberate faults or errors of various types in the provided text. Although proofreading activities are included in grammar and vocabulary tests, they can be used in reading comprehension assessment. In fact, the texts can be of any genre, and is visually made up of numbered lines, some lines may contain an extra, a misspelled word, or a punctuation error, while others are correct. In this sense, learners need to read the material, mark the proper lines, delete unnecessary words, and repair spelling and punctuation errors

1.8.6 WH- Questions

Day & Park (2005) argued that questions which start with where, what, when, who and how are known as wh questions. They are effective in assisting students with a literal interpretation of the text, and creating evaluations, personal responses and predictions, also, they are used as follow ups to other questions types, such as ; yes /no and alternative. The use of this kind of questions can be highly beneficial in encouraging learners to become more interactive readers.

1.8.7 Open Ended Questions

Badger & Thomas (1991) stated that open ended questions are not multiple choice questions with no options. They are not single answer questions. They depend on students' comprehension, reasoning skills, and capacity to apply knowledge in nontraditional contexts. Open ended questions on the other hand, address the basic concepts, processes, and skills that go beyond the specifics of instruction to define a subject area. In general, they necessitate complicated thinking and produce various solutions. Open ended questions necessitate and use multiple criteria in evaluating responses such as inquires need more from students than merely memorizing data.

1.9 Solutions to Promote the Reading Habit and Overcome Students Reading Comprehension Difficulties

1.9.1 The Role of Library in Enhancing Reading Culture

Aina, et al (2011) clarified that libraries give students access to reading materials that allow them to learn and develop their reading skills. Librarians assist in the introduction of the use of reading for knowledge, pleasure, examination, and personal improvement during a life time of learning. They supply materials that are more comprehensive and diverse than classroom study alone. Voluntary reading improves reading abilities and language proficiency and aids them in their academic work. Students and youths who read are more likely to have prior knowledge of new topics or subjects, making learning easier and more enjoyable. Libraries role in promoting reading is especially important for developing scientific, introspective, and creative thinking. They can assist students in developing critical and independent thinking skills by exposing them to a wide range of instructional resources and learning opportunities, in addition, the library function in establishing reading

culture may be seen in the development of readers' values, attitudes and appreciation. They are challenging to teach in a classroom setting.

Moreover, encouragement of the library usage by teachers is also essential in promoting reading, in which teachers should encourage students to make the best use of the library and its resources by assigning homework or projects that require regular trips to the library. Such tasks and projects must be applicable. These could involve reading and summarizing a novel or using library resources to solve an environmental problem.

1.9.2 Word Knowledge and Vocabulary

According to Koda (2005, p.186), "Vocabulary knowledge correlates more highly with reading comprehension than any other variable". It means that, there is a strong and intertwined relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, learners are more likely to understand words meanings when they read texts. Smith (2020) stated that vocabulary is one of the most important factors influencing reading comprehension both directly and indirectly in which it affects word recognition fluency. Students with a strong vocabulary find it easier to interpret texts and become fluent readers ...more background information aids learners comprehension of more difficult texts. In addition, Koda (2005, p. 256) pointed out that "text meaning construction is virtually impossible without functional knowledge of the words appearing in the text". In short, the comprehension of the different contexts in which words are used can help learners to determine the real and desired meaning of a written text .Moreover, according to Harry (2023), there are some considerations are used by learners to improve their vocabulary knowledge in texts, they can be classified as follows:

- Tacking an online vocabulary test to identify current vocabulary comprehension.

- Students can use flashcards to evaluate themselves on words they do not know one or twice a week.
- Ensure that newly learned words are used in both oral and written communication.
- The use of extensive reading in order to establish an idea of what a word means in a certain situation.
- The use of dictionary to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words while reading a text.

Furthermore, Thornbury (2002), suggested various ways to develop teaching vocabulary, and they are listed as follows:

- Learners require tasks and strategies to assist them in organizing their mental lexicon by constructing networks of association - the more the merrier.
- Teachers must accept that learning new words involves a period of "initial fuzziness".
- Words must be presented in their natural contexts so that learners can get a sense of their meaning, register, collocations, and syntactic environment.
- Learners should strive to build a threshold vocabulary as quickly as possible.
- Learners must be actively involved in their word learning.
- Learners need to make different decisions about words.

1.9.3 Enhancing Grammar and Syntax Awareness

Syntax refers to the pattern or structure of word order in sentences, clauses, and phrases.

Syntax investigates the numerous ways in which words can be joined to create meaning.

The direct teaching of syntactic patterns is important for comprehension of higher level text (Perak & Bobrow, 2010). According to Zhang (2012), reading comprehension and syntax are inextricably linked because reading comprehension requires coherence and good grammar. In other words, Smith (2020) claimed that understanding syntax and grammar improves students comprehension by making it easier to chunking sentences into

comprehensible units, confirming the meaning of unknown terms, and clarifying the meaning of confusing words or words having various meanings. Similarly, Pollatsek and Treiman (2015, p.343) argued that “syntactic knowledge will be needed in order to derive meaning from sentences in text, and it will be fairly crucial since sentences are the building blocks of the meaning of a text “. It means that, knowing and interpreting the grammatical structures of words and sentences can help learners to understand the intended meaning of a text.

Moreover, according to Akbarai (2014), there are some useful techniques can help learners to resolve their grammatical problems that obstruct their reading comprehension, they can be listed as bellow:

- Raising students’ consciousness about the role of punctuation marks in reading comprehension.
- Restoring the deleted sections to their original location.
- Recognizing the main sentences and the dependent sentences in complex compound sentences and comprehending their semantic and syntactic relationship.
- Enhancing the use of pronouns.
- Simplifying language sentences by removing pre - and post – modifiers from restrictive and not restrictive noun and adjective clauses.
- Understanding how to apply the grammatical knowledge found in monolingual dictionaries.
- Learning to break and recognize phrases in long sentences to improve reading comprehension speed.
- Encouraging students to look for the grammatical elements in their reading materials, will help understand the relationship between grammar and reading comprehension.

- Understanding the role of implicit and explicit conjunctions to increase reading comprehension skill.

Furthermore, Grabe (2009) mentioned many types of knowledge and benefits that grammar provides for understanding a text. First, grammatical structure identifies parts of speech categories for words, the semantic roles of noun phrases in relation to the verb, and the links between phrasal and clausal units for comprehension processing. Second, it distinguishes main from subordinate information and signals given and new information in the sentence. Third, it helps us to identify important referents in the text, (throughout demonstrative determiner relative clauses and focused instruction), continue of referents, and contaminate or change of events and ideas through the use of tenses, aspects, modalities, and location information. Third, grammatical information clarifies and enhances the information being conveyed, and it severely restricts the possibility of interactive interpretation. Fourth, it conveys the authors' opinions toward events and ideas through prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases, and various vocabulary choices. Finally, the potential meaning of an alternative is constrained by the grammatical terms.

1.9.4 Reading Fluency

According to Grabe (2009, p.86), fluency is "an essential component of efficient reading comprehension abilities". In other words, Perak & Bobrow (2010 p. 149) assumed that "fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension". That is to say, recognition of language words is almost impossible without a well – developed fluency, so it can help learners to read smoothly and accurately, also it increases their comprehension and concentration in a specific area.

1.9.5 The Use of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning (CL) is a necessary process in which it helps learners to accomplish their common purposes in language learning. Johnson et al (1991, p. 5) stated that "cooperative learning as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other learning".

Hollingsworth et al (2007) defined Cooperative learning as a teaching strategy that proven to be a useful tool for students to master their comprehension strategies while encouraging pleasant interactions among peers, the students improve their academic performance by boosting their reading levels and comprehension knowledge, as well as their existence and motivation to read . According to Jalilifar (2010), cooperative learning aims to reduce the burden on individual students by grouping students together to solve reading problems without over – reliance on the teacher.

Moreover, Koda (2005) argued that students get the chance to model, discuss, and assess the value of comprehension skills through cooperative learning while they read. A wide range of activities, such as cognitive modeling, oral reading, peer tutoring, peer editing, and composition revising, should be incorporated in order to increase strategy awareness and improve strategic manipulation.

Furthermore, Zakaria & Iksam (2007, p. 36) explained that "cooperative learning is grounded in the belief that learning is most effective when students are actively involved in sharing ideas and work cooperatively to complete tasks". It means successful understanding of multiple meanings can be enhanced by engage learners in cooperative activities.

1.9.6 Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies

1.9.6.1 The Definition of Strategy. Learning and teaching any language needs to use and follow effective strategies that, in turn, contribute to the development of the learners' intellectual and cognitive competence. In this regard, Anderson (1991) defined the word strategy as deliberate, cognitive actions taken by the learner to assist in the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information. Brown (2007, p. 119), claimed that "strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or a task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs, for controlling and manipulating certain information", that is to say, strategies are considered a beneficial technique used by learners to fulfill a desired goal.

1.9.6.2 The Definition of Reading Comprehension Strategies. The ability to improve students' general reading comprehension and stimulate their background knowledge requires achieving a set of Reading Comprehension Strategies (RCS). According to McNamara (2007, p.6) "reading comprehension strategy is a cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual conditions". This means that reading comprehension strategies are important because they are used to fix the ambiguous knowledge of readers in specific situations. Moreover, Block (1986) explained that reading comprehension strategies show how readers comprehend and make sense of what they are reading ;thus, Baker & Boonkit (2004,p.306) clarified that "reading strategies are techniques and methods readers use to make their reading successful ".In brief, fluent and good readers use various strategies to establish their proficiency level in reading skill.

Furthermore, Koda (2005; as cited in Paris et al 1991) talked about the importance of using reading strategies in school learning. He listed them as follows:

- Readers can use strategies to expand, organize, and evaluate information acquired from a text.
- The development of different cognitive strategies to enhance attention, memory, communication and learning coexists with acquisition of reading strategies.
- Strategies are individualized cognitive tools that can be applied with flexibility and judgment.
- Strategic reading displays metacognition and motivation since readers must have both the knowledge and disposition to utilize strategies.
- Teachers can immediately teach their learners the strategies that can develop their reading and thinking.
- Reading strategically can improve learning across the curriculum.

There are many reading comprehension strategies used to enhance reading and they can be classified as bellow:

Skimming: Skimming is an important technique which focuses on achieving a particular effective reading. Grallet (1981, p.19) argued that "skimming requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading competence". According to Brown (2000), skimming is the process of quickly scanning an entire text for the gist. It allows readers to anticipate the objective of the piece, the major theme, or message, and perhaps some of the emerging or supporting concepts. This gives students a difficult start when they begin more focused learning. In this sense, teachers should invite students to read the material and answer a series of questions connected to the reading subject.

Scanning: According to Grallet (1981), scanning is quickly going throughout a text to provide a particular piece of information. Scanning exercises may require students to look for names, data, an explanation of a crucial concept, or a particular quantity of supporting

details. Brown (2000) argued that the goal of scanning is to get information without having to read the entire document, it is absolutely necessary for academic English. In vocational or general English, scanning is vital when reading with genres such as schedules, manuals, forms, etc.

Making inferences: According to Clarke, et al (2013), successful reading comprehension depends on the capacity to infer and connect disparate pieces of information in a text. Amin (2019) defined inferring as a strategy that needs reading between lines, students are expected to apply their own knowledge as well as information from the text to reach a conclusion. In this sense, Oakhill, Cain & Elbro (2014 , p.16) emphasized that "readers need to make numerous inferences while reading, to connect up the idea in the text, and to connect information in the text to what they already know .This means that, drawing connections and meaning of a text focus on students' previous knowledge.

Comprehension monitoring: it is a strategy that evaluates the current level of students' comprehension. According to Yang (2002), the ability to monitor comprehension especially important for foreign second language readers because L2 readers have more limited grasp of vocabulary and grammar and must decode meanings of texts by using techniques, they also require comprehension of monitoring to see whether the strategies have successfully overcome their reading problems. Moreover, Grabe (2009) defined the comprehension monitoring as a matter of metacognitive control rather than as a specific approach may be more suitable because comprehension monitoring is not a straightforward process of recognizing important ideas and detecting difficulties. For this, he suggested several strategies for comprehension monitoring, they can be listed as follows:

- Identify reason and awareness of reading
- Recognize text structure

- Identify key information and essential ideas
- Connect text to background knowledge
- Cautious reading
- Remove ambiguity

- a) **Previewing:** According to Graves, Cooke, & Laberge (1983), previews are introductions given to students before they read specific choices. They provide students with a framework of understanding a selection as well as particular information on the contents of the material itself. Klinger & Vaughn (1998) claimed that the previewing strategy can help students to understand as much about the passage as possible in a short period of time. In addition, it assists students in making predictions about what they learn. Also it motivates their interest in the subject matter and engages them in active reading from the start.
- b) **Prediction:** According to Grallet (1981), prediction is the process of guessing what is to come next, using grammatical, logical, and cultural cues. This skill is at the heart of techniques like anticipation and skimming. It may be beneficial to spend some time on systematic training by giving the students incomplete passages to complete or by reading a text slowly while pausing after each sentence to predict what is likely to come next.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter deals with the literature review that explores the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' level. The purpose of this study is to deliver background knowledge about reading comprehension and its main difficulties. It has started with general information about reading skill and moved on to determining the problems and global level of students in reading comprehension with suggesting some available solutions to enrich their academic achievement in learning the English language.

Chapter Two: The Field Work

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Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from both the questionnaire that is designed for the English teachers and the test that was conducted with third year students in the Department of English at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila. The aim of this study is to inspect the students' difficulties in reading comprehension as well as the impact of these difficulties on their level. This chapter includes the description of both test and questionnaire analysis, and discussion of the main findings to finish with some suggestions and recommendation for both teachers and students.

2.1 Research Methodology

To achieve the purpose of the present study, a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research were used in the questionnaire and the test. The purpose is gaining necessary data from both learners and teachers and to test the validity of the hypothesis.

2.2 Population and Sampling

This research is assigned to both students and teachers of English, the questionnaire was answered by 10 teachers. They were selected randomly to present the population. The test includes 25 students, it aims to confirm the level of students and their difficulties and weaknesses in reading comprehension.

2.3 Means of Research

2.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

2.3.1.1 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to the English teachers at Mila University Center. It consists of fourteen questions divided into three sections. The first section refers to the

teachers' profile which presents their basic personal information like their gender, degrees held, and years of teaching English. The second section is about reading comprehension difficulties, which contains eight multiple choice questions. It aims to investigate the teachers' views about the kind of problems that students may face in reading comprehension and the reasons behind those difficulties. The Third section consists of three questions divided into open-ended and multiple choice questions that are set to find out the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' achievement and the available solutions to overcome these obstacles.

2.3.1.2 Administration of Teachers 'Questionnaire

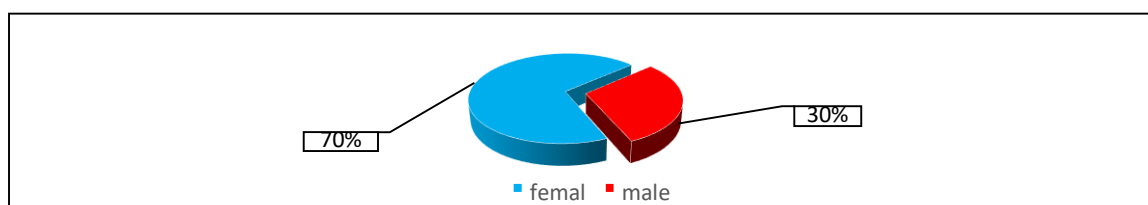
The teachers 'questionnaire was done online. An online version created throughout Google forms, it was sent via Facebook groups and e-mails for the English teachers at Mila University Center, the data collection took about three weeks, from April 15th to May 5th, 2023.

2.3.1.3 Analysis of Results

Q1: What is your gender?

Figure 01

Teachers' Gender



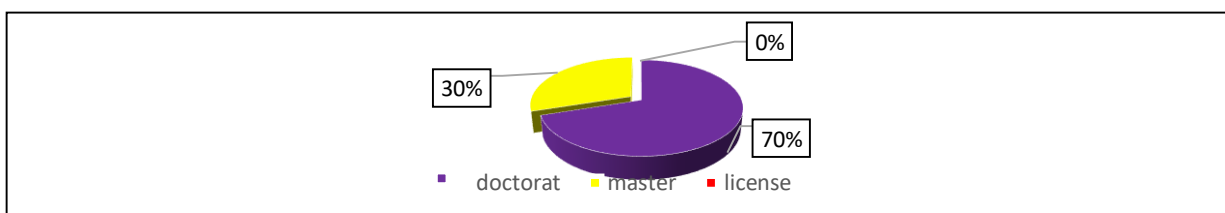
This question aims to collect data about teachers' sex , the figure above shows that most of the samples are 7 females (70%) whereas a few of them 3 are males (30%) .

This result shows that most of teachers are females at University Center of Mila. Also females are more interested in answering questions more than males.

Q2: Degrees held

Figure 02

Teachers' Level

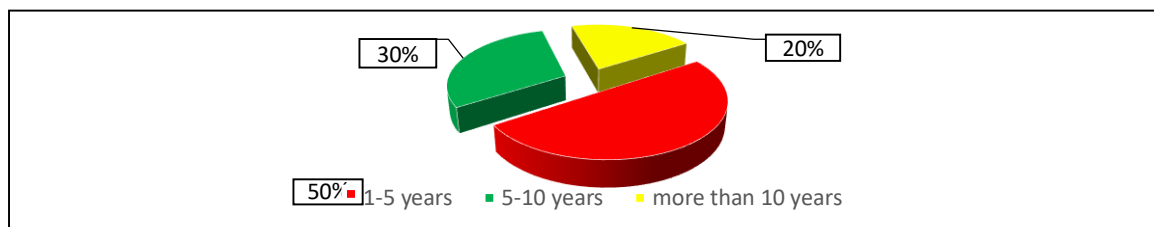


When asked about degrees held, 70% of teachers argue that they have doctorate in English, few of them (30%) state that they have master degree whereas no teacher is mentioned in license. The results show that most of the teachers have a good experience in teaching English which means that they can teach in a professional way and they can know their students' level in English.

Q3: How long have you been teaching English?

Figure 03

Teachers' Period of Teaching



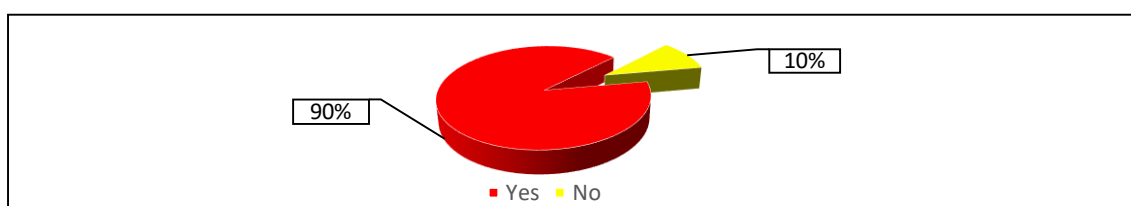
These results show that 50% of teachers have short experiences in teaching English for the category of (1–5 years) and some of them (30%) have a long experience in

teaching it ; whereas only 20% of teachers have an average experiences which is between (5-10 years).

Q4: Do your students have problems in English?

Figure04

Teachers' Estimation about Students' Problems in English

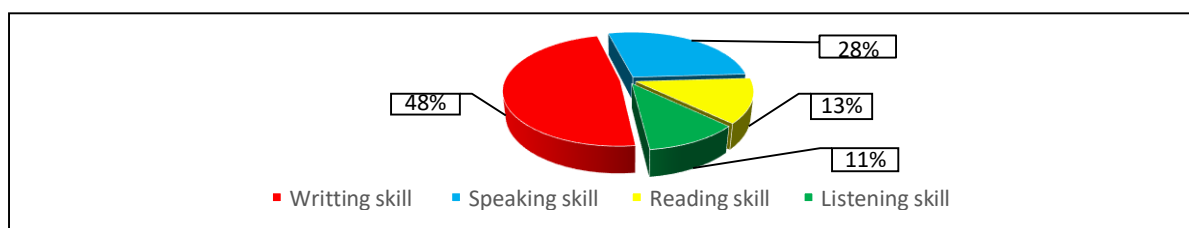


The results in the figure above states that most of teachers (90%) argue that their learners have problems in English which means that students have a various obstacles and weaknesses that prevent them from learning the language, and only 10% of them answer that their learners don't have problems in English.

Q5: In which skill do your students have problems?

Figure 05

Teachers' Estimation about the Skills in which Students Have Problem



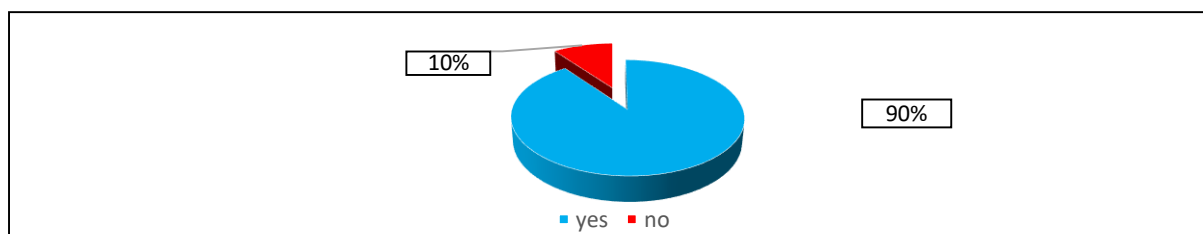
The reason behind this question is to see the kind of problems that teachers observe in their English. The responses from the figure above reveal that most of teachers (48%) say that students suffer mainly from writing problems which means that they are unable to develop a well-structured essays or paragraphs or even understand the

vocabulary or grammar of any language, 28% of them reveal that other students have problems with speaking skill this means that students do not have a good proficiency in communication with others , 13% of teachers argue that some students have difficulties in reading skill and only 11% of them answer that few numbers of students suffer from listening difficulties .

Q6: Do your students have difficulties in reading comprehension?

Figure 06

Teachers' Opinion about Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

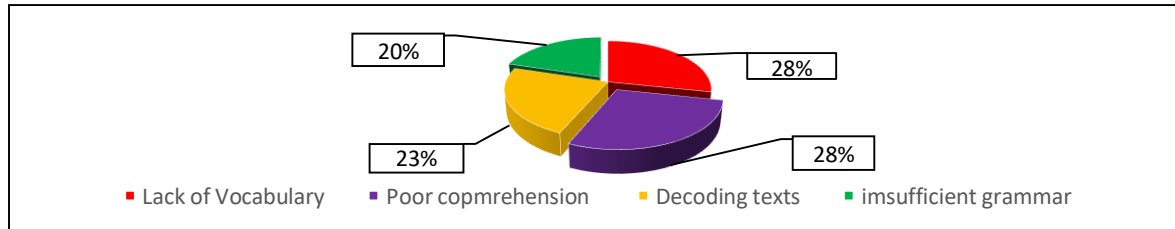


In this question the majority of teachers (90%) answer that students have difficulties in reading comprehension, whereas only few of them (10%) said that student do not face problems in reading comprehension. The data shown above demonstrate that most of students are unable to understand what they read in a pieceof utterance or a discourse and just few number of students don't have problems in reading comprehension.

Q7: What kind of reading problems students face?

Figure 07

Teachers' Estimations about the kind of Reading Problems Students Face



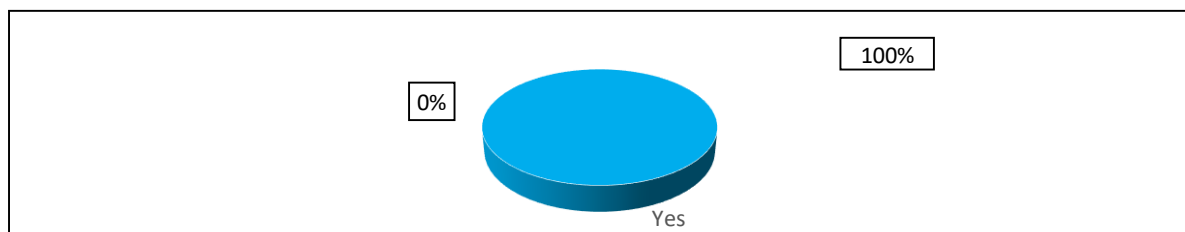
The aim of this question is to know what kind of reading problems students face when they read, we can observe that most of teachers (28%) said that lack of vocabulary and poor comprehension are considered as major difficulty among EFL learners, 23% of teachers answered that other students have problems within decoding a written texts while 20% of them stated that only a few number of students suffer from insufficient grammar.

The finding show that most of teachers agree that learners suffer more from lack of vocabulary and poor comprehension which prevent them from mastering the reading comprehension skill.

Q8: Do you think that reading is a beneficial skill? Why?

Figure 08

Teachers' Opinion about the Benefit of Reading Skill



This question aims to figure out the teacher's point of view about whether reading is a beneficial skill in learning or not. The results in this diagram show that all teachers (100%) answered by "YES" which means that reading is a beneficial skill. However, teachers have not opted for "NO". According to this data we can say that reading is an important skill in which it helps learners to develop their level in English language.

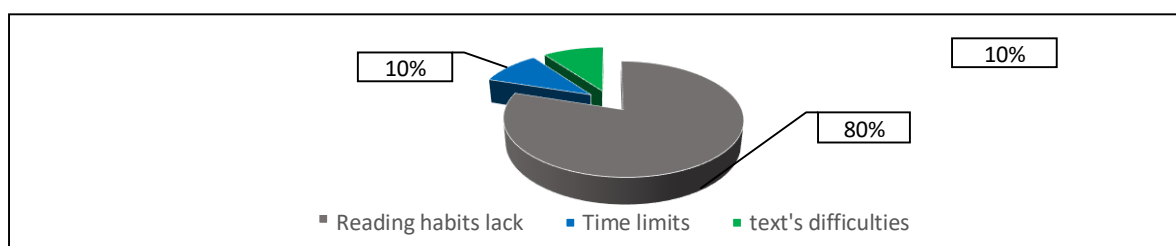
Why?

Almost all teachers stated that reading is a beneficial skill because it boosts and enriches student's vocabulary and grammar knowledge, other teachers confirmed that reading has got many advantages such as developing a good style of writing and also improving the speaking skill. However, a minority of teachers added that reading can help students to develop their critical thinking in acquiring a language.

Q9: Do you think that students' difficulties in reading comprehension are due to:

Figure 09

Teachers' Estimations about the Reasons behind Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension



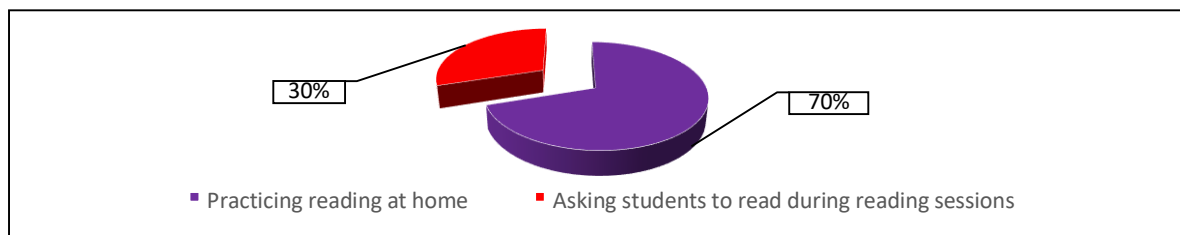
From the gathered data, 80% of teachers answered that students' difficulties in reading comprehension are mainly due to reading habits lack whereas only 10% of them stated that time limits and texts difficulties constitute a few percentage as a cause of reading comprehension difficulties. These results might confirm that most of students

have problems in reading comprehension because they are not interested in the reading skill and this can negatively affect their academic achievement in other skills.

Q10: How do you know that your students have problems in reading comprehension?

Figure 10

Teachers' Ways in Discovering their Students Reading Comprehension Problems

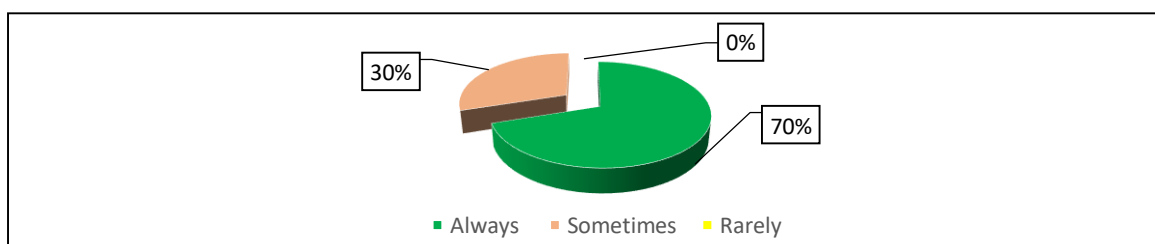


This question aims to determine the way that teachers know the difficulties of their students in reading comprehension. From the obtained results (figure 10), most of teachers (70%) ask their students to read during reading sessions, whereas only 30% of them ask students to practice reading at home. The results show that teachers teach the reading skill at The University from time to time in order to enhance the vocabulary knowledge of students and also to develop their overall thinking.

Q11: How often do you ask your students to read?

Figure 11

The Number of Times Teachers Ask their Students to Read



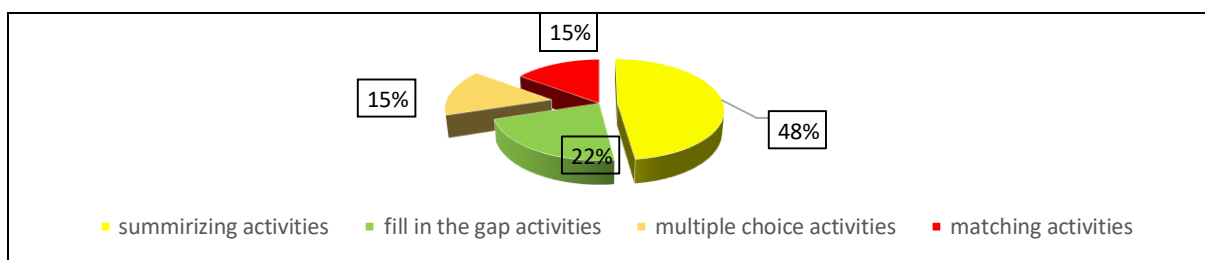
This question aims to know the number of times the teachers ask students to read as shown in the figure 11, the majority of teachers (70%) answered that they ask their students to read always whereas only 30% of them asked their students to read sometimes. However teachers have not opted for rarely.

From the obtained data, it is demonstrated that teachers who choose “Always” in this figure are more interested in reading in order to develop student’s level in learning the language.

Q12: which activities you use to assess your students ‘level in reading comprehension?’

Figure 12

Types of Activities Used by Teachers to Measure Students’ Level in Reading Comprehension



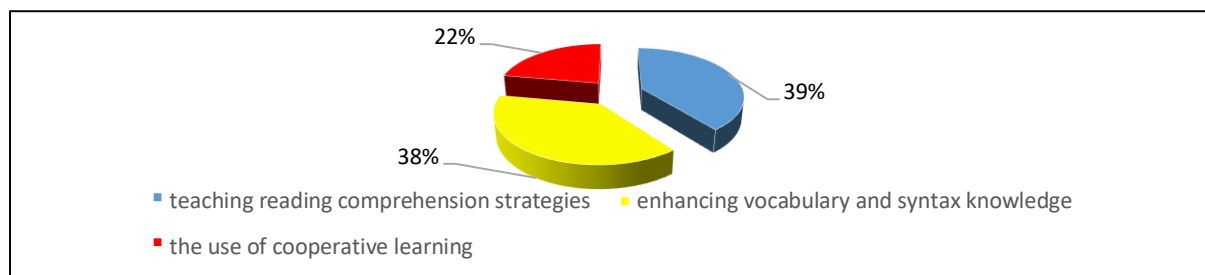
The aim of this question is to determine the types of exercises that the teachers use to evaluate students ‘reading comprehension. As it can be seen from the figure. Most of teachers (48%) use summarizing activities, on the other hand 22% of teachers declared that they use filling the gap activities, whereas only 15% of them choose both multiple choice and matching activities. Hence, we assume that teachers use various kind of reading comprehension activities which can help learners to realize their strengths and weakness in reading skill.

There are some teachers who added extra answers about the other reading comprehension activities, the results of the analysis revealed that half of the participants claimed that they use synonyms, antonyms also WH questions, open ended questions. Others stated that they use reflection activities, some of them answered that they ask their students to read literature, paraphrasing works and write essays about some specific pieces at home while only few number of teachers have not suggest any reading comprehension activities.

Q13: In your opinion, what are the possible solutions to overcome reading comprehension difficulties?

Figure 13

Teacher's Point of View about the Suitable Solutions to Overcome Reading Comprehension Difficulties.



This question aims to know teacher's point of view about the possible solutions to overcome reading comprehension difficulties. According to the results of participants 39% of them suggest teaching reading comprehension strategies, some of them (38%) suggest enhancing vocabulary and syntax.

Q14: In your opinion, what is the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' Level?

The current question seeks to have information about the opinion of teachers about the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on student's level. The results obtained from this question are summarized in the following points:

- Reading comprehension difficulties decreases self-esteem, self-confidence, and motivation to learn.
- They affect negatively student's level in all skills especially in both speaking and writing

Some of teachers claimed that reading comprehension difficulties may have a positive impact on student's level, in which the more difficult and complicated it is, the best of student's qualities could be shown. In addition, reading comprehension difficulties may enhance grammar as well as vocabulary and knowledge.

2.3.1.4 Discussion of the Results

The purpose of this dissertation is to discuss the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' level. Therefore, the teachers' questionnaire analysis shows the main findings in relation to the research hypothesis. Those findings are classified into three main sections.

The results obtained from the first section confirm that most of teachers are females and have doctorate in English. The majority of them have a short experience in teaching English which is between 1-5 years.

In the second section of the questionnaire, teachers' answers stated that the majority of third year EFL students have problems in English (90%). The results show that students

have problems in reading comprehension. They suffer more from lack of vocabulary and poor comprehension. This evinces that students are not much interested to develop their level in reading. Moreover, participants declared that those difficulties in reading comprehension are more due to reading habits lack (8%). Which means that students have bad level in reading comprehension.

The third section reveals that teachers use different kinds of activities to test reading comprehension's level of their students when they read texts, which are: multiple choice activities, fill in the gap activities, wh questions and synonyms. Also, the results reveal that some of the teachers demonstrate that reading comprehension difficulties may have a positive impact on students 'level in which they can develop their grammar vocabulary and skills whereas some of the teachers argued that reading comprehensions have a negative impact on the academic achievements and emotional aspect of students. In addition, the participants suggest that teaching reading comprehension strategies are considered as a good solution for students to overcome their reading difficulties.

2.3.1 Students' Test

2.3.2.1 Description of the Test

This test is designed to third year EFL students at Mila University Center. It consists of a text and eight (8) tasks about reading comprehension. The first task is suggesting a title to the text, and it looks for students' general understanding of the text. The second activity is about identifying the type of the text, it contains three multiple choices of questions. The third exercise is demonstrated to choose the nearest equivalent of some expressions, it entails four expressions and each expression has three multiple choices, this question aims to check the vocabulary wealth of students. The fourth task is to give an explanation to the meaning of group of words. The fifth exercise is about true \ false questions and correcting the wrong

statements. A further task is about wh questions where three questions are raised. The seventh activity includes matching the main sentences of the text according to their order in the paragraphs of the text. The last task is about fill in the gaps with a group of words in a short paragraph.

2.3.2.2 Administration of the Test

The test was designed to third year students of English at Mila University Center. It was given hand to hand inside the classroom, the data collection took about one week: from May 1st to May 7th, 2023.

2.3.2.3 Analysis of the Test

Q1. Suggest a title to the text

In the first question shown above, 22 students have answered this question correctly, though their answers vary from one participant to another about the title of the text, more or less they mean the same thing. Most of the students find out a lot of titles that seem appropriate to the text meaning such as ; Electric Vehicles, The Revolution of Electric Vehicles, and The Introduction of Electric Vehicles in the World . Whereas Three (3) students give wrong and unrelated answers to the overall desired content.

Only one student does not give the answer which demonstrates that he \ she is not interested or unable to understand the text.

Q2. Identify the type of the text

The results of the second question reveal that the majority of students 24 ones choosethe first choice to identify the type of the text which is a" report" and it is a wrong answer while only one student who selects the right choice which is a web site article.

This means that most of learners could not understand the specific details of the text and they cannot distinguish between the characteristics of texts' types.

Q3 Choose the nearest equivalent of each of the expressions

16 students answered this question, their answers vary between correct and wrong. on the other hand, 5 students answer correctly which means that they have enough information about the meaning of each expression. Moreover, 3 students have answered inappropriately, whereas only one student who doesn't answer this question. The result reveal that most of students have insufficient level of understanding of the meaning of words.

Q4 Explain in your own words the meaning of the following words.

In this question participants are asked to explain the meaning of a group of words in their own words. The results obtained from this question show that most of students (16 members) give varieties of opinion, some of them are correct and others are far from the original meaning, while 5 students explain all the words correctly and 2 students don't give any right response, only 2 students don't answer this question.

Q.5 Say whether the statements are true or false

This question aims to determine whether the students understand the text's ideas or not. The results mentioned in the fifth question show that most of students ' answers vary between wrong and correct, other times they either do not correct the error or give a wrong correction, and in some cases they do not give a complete and formal answers . On the otherhand, 2 students have answered all the three statements correctly whereas only one student who keeps the exercise empty or unsolved. The data above demonstrate that the majority of students are less interested in doing this activity.

Q.6. Answer the questions according to the text

In this question, students are asked to read the text and then answer three of questions, the results obtained from this question reveal that 19 of students have different ideas which are correct and incorrect answers. For example, in one question we demonstrate that there are some students who answer it right and some of them do not give full answers whereas the rest of students give wrong answers. Furthermore, 5 participants ignore the answer of all questions. While just 1 participant who answers the whole questions appropriately. The data of this activity show that most of EFL learners suffer from poor comprehension of texts.

Q.7 Match each sentence to the appropriate paragraph according to its order in the text

As it can be seen from the result of the question above, most of the students choose the correct answer that describe the appropriate arrangement for the placement of each main idea in the text, for example they match the first paragraph and the last sentence to the third paragraph. Whereas only few numbers of students do not give any answer to the whole sentences. So from the obtained data we can say that students have a higher level of understanding of the main ideas and details of each paragraph in the text.

Q.8 Fill in the gap

In this question, participants are asked to fill in the blank where necessary in a piece of paragraph. The results show that 12 of the students have answered this activity correctly in which they put the missing words in their proper place, on other hand 7 students do not get the whole mark in this question because they make a mistake in recognizing the right meaning of some words in the paragraph, while 4 of students keep the exercise as it is without any answer. Only 2 students have a wrong answer to the activity. According to the

obtained data from this question, we observe that the goal of this activity is approximately achieved by most of EFL learners.

The following table illustrates the students' marks in the reading comprehension test described above.

Table1

Students Marks in Reading Comprehension Test

Number of students	Marks
1	12
2	14
3	4
4	13
5	4
6	5
7	11,5
8	14
9	11,5
10	10,5
11	8
12	15
13	12
14	10,5
15	10
16	3
17	12,5
18	15
19	13
20	11
21	14,5
22	12
23	13
24	9,5
25	15
The mean	10.96

- The table above shows the student's marks obtained from the reading comprehension exercises, which range between 3 and 15. After we have calculated the results of all

students, we got an average of 10, 96 or approximately 11, which shows that the students' level is average in understanding reading texts.

2.3.2.4 Discussion of the Results

The analysis of the test shows many perspectives on different student's level and their intellectual abilities in reading comprehension. As it shows their strengths, weaknesses, and their overall understanding of the text by doing a set of suggested exercises.

Based on student's answers and data collected, a significant number of students have a good level in reading comprehension, and this is evident throughout their correct answers to each of the first, fourth and fifth activities. Moreover, their answers reveal that they are more interested to answer these questions and have a rich vocabulary which can help them to interpret the words meaning of the text.

Additionally, from the analysis of the test, it is noticeable that most of EFL learners have difficulties in reading comprehension as it is confirmed in other activities like in true/false, wh questions and explanation of word's meaning activities. We observe that student's answers differ from one student to another, as some of them do not answer the questions and others do not give a formal and full answer, only few number of students who have answered correctly their activities. So, as it is shown in the whole results of questions and the students' averages, we say that even though the English learners have an average rate in reading comprehension, but they still have problems like lack of vocabulary and poor comprehension which prevent them from understanding and accomplishing the basic goal of the text.

2.4 Pedagogical Recommendations

2.4.1 Teachers' Recommendations

Based on the results, the recommendations that can be thought of for development and better experiences are the following:

- . Teachers should ask and motivate their learners to read during sessions

- . Teachers should give students various opportunities throughout engaging them in pre-reading activities, this help them make connections and predictions before reading

- . Teachers should teach basic vocabulary words before reading and encourage students to understand unknown term by using context clues, words analysis, skills, and dictionaries

- . The cooperative learning inside classroom can help learners to share ideas and overcome their difficulties in reading comprehension

- . Teacher should teach the students the way they ask and answer different types of questions in order to enhance student's critical thinking and help them understand the text

2.4.2 Student's Recommendations

- . Students should know their own source of difficulties in reading comprehension and try to fix them.

- . Students should read a variety of texts on a regular basis to expose their self to diverse writing styles, genres and increase reading skills and comprehension.
- . Students should enhance their vocabulary and grammar wealth in order to understand and interpret the desired meaning of texts.
- . Students should pay attention to enhance their overall level in other skills like writing, speaking and listening.

2.6 Limitation of Study

The most major limitations that have been found in this research are:

1. Since reading is not taught at University Center of Mila, the English students find it difficult to learn and understand the entire meaning of a text.
2. The difficulties which are shown in the test confirm that students don't take them into account because it is not a real test given by their own teachers.
3. The limited time is considered as reason which prevent researchers from evaluate and determine students' level clearly in reading comprehension.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the results of the questionnaire and the test performed by both teachers and students of Mila University Center, the results of this study show that the responses of the teachers' questionnaire confirm the research questions and the hypothesis that students have difficulties in reading comprehension. Also they provide some available solutions to help their students overcome those difficulties. Additionally, the results collected from the test demonstrate that EFL learners do not have a higher level in reading comprehension, they suffer from some problems that prevent their general understanding of the text.

General Conclusion

Reading is an important skill in the learning process of any language, it offers a wide range of interesting information as well as a variety of language expressions and structures. In addition, the ability to understand academic texts is considered one of the most essential skills that EFL students need to develop. Throughout this study, we have tried to explore the difficulties encountered by third year EFL students while reading texts.

This dissertation was divided into two chapters. The first chapter encompasses two sections. The first one is about reading in the EFL context where we defined the reading skill, its different types, models, and its importance. The second section deals with the reading comprehension definition, difficulties, activities, the impact of poor reading comprehension on the student's level and the possible solutions to overcome reading comprehension difficulties of EFL learners. However, the second chapter is the practical part of our research work. It is divided into two main sections, the first section explains the research methodology and the sample population that the study is concerned with, as well as the research instruments, data analysis and the main results. The chapter ends with limitation, and the pedagogical recommendations for both students and teachers.

Our study is descriptive. It describes the main reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners at University Center of Mila. In order to complete this research, we adopted the mixed-method which consists of the qualitative and quantitative methods based on the questionnaire through which we collected the necessary data.

The main results of our study reveal that Third year EFL learners at University Center of Mila face problems in reading comprehension performance at the level of vocabulary and grammar which prevent them from understanding the passage. It has been also noticed that the reading materials and text selection have an impact on the learners' reading achievement

The four language skills are interrelated, so learning a language needs the proficiency in these important language elements. Finally, it is important to make a deeper investigation on the impact of reading comprehension difficulties and background knowledge on the learners' level.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teachers

This questionnaire is a part of our research work, it is designed to the English teachers at the university center of Mila. It aims to collect information about the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' level. You are kindly requested to answer our questionnaire by putting a tick (/) in the right box, or answer in the space provided. Your help is completely voluntary and all your responses are confidential and anonymous, and we would thank you in advance for your collaboration, your answers are really needed to achieve the basic goal of this research.

Section one: Teachers' Profile

1- Gender

Male Female

2- Degrees held

License Master Doctorate

3- How long have you been teaching English language?

1-5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years

Section two: Reading Comprehension Difficulties

4- Do your students have problems in English?

Yes No

If yes mention three of them:

5- In which skill do your students have problems?

Writing Speaking

Reading Listening

6- Do your students have difficulties in reading comprehension?

Yes No

7- If yes, what kind of reading problems students face?

Lack of vocabulary insufficient grammar

8- Do you think that reading is a beneficial skill?

Yes No

Why.....

9- Do you think that students 'difficulties in reading comprehension are due to:

Time limits Reading habit's lack

Texts difficulties

10- How do you know that your students have problems in reading comprehension?

Practicing reading at home

Making students to read during sessions

11- How often?

Always

Sometimes

Rarely

Section Three: The Impact of Reading Comprehension on Students' Level

12- Which activities you use to assess your students' level in reading comprehension?

Multiple choice activities

matching activities

Fill in the gap activities

summarizing activities

Others:

13. In your opinion what are the possible solution to reading comprehension difficulties?

Teaching reading comprehension strategies

Cooperative learning

Enhancing vocabulary and syntax knowledge

Others, please:

14- In your opinion, what is the impact of reading comprehension difficulties on students' level in reading comprehension?

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

Thank you very much for your collaboration

Appendix 2

Students' Test

Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center

Reading Comprehension Test

Third Year Students

Electric vehicles have arrived. With technology led by Tesla, and all of the world's major car manufacturers following along behind, electric vehicles are now a common sight on the roads of most developed countries. Yet the situation in less developed countries is rather different; the only African country to have started the change to electric vehicles is South Africa and even there, electric vehicles still account for less than 0.01% of the total number of cars on the roads. In South America, the situation is better, with all Latin American countries beginning the move towards electric vehicles, particularly Columbia which, in 2020, had a third of the continent's total electric car fleet. In Russia, the wealthy are investing in imported electric cars, but no electric cars are yet manufactured locally, while in India the government is promoting the purchase of electric vehicles with tax exemptions and other incentives. So electric cars have arrived, and their share of the market is increasing almost worldwide. Does this mean, therefore, that the world is on track to phase out the use of petrol-driven vehicles in less than thirty years? And does it mean that electric vehicles are the sustainable solution to our transport needs for the second half of the century? Unfortunately, to the disappointment of some people, the answer to both of these questions has to be "no".

The massive development of electric vehicles can only be possible if two conditions are met. Firstly the expansion of electric vehicle manufacturing is dependent on the fragile ability of manufacturers to source vastly increased quantities of vital components and

elements without which electric vehicles cannot operate; these include lithium, cobalt and "rare earths" such as neodymium and tantalum, as well as silicon chips which have already been in short supply since 2020. Secondly, few countries currently have electricity grids that are anywhere near being able to cope with the huge increase in demand for electricity that will accompany any rapid growth in electric vehicle ownership. Without adequate supplies of all the vital ingredients of electric motors and batteries, or without power supplies that are able to provide the electricity needed to recharge millions of electric batteries every day (as well as supplying the current we need for everything else, such as lighting, heating, trains and electric devices), the electric car revolution will run up against insoluble problems.

Reading Comprehension Activities

1. Suggest a title

.....

2. Identify the type of the text:

The text is a:

- A report
- A letter
- Website article

3. Choose the nearest equivalent of each of the following expressions: click down arrow and select the correct answer.

1. Phase out :

- Increase Slowly start Gradually end

2. Been in short supply :

Been hard to find Been easy to find Been smaller

3. Supplies :

Sales Quantities Orders

4. To run up against :

Go faster than Be helped by Be hindered by

4. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following words.

Sight.....

The wealthy.....

Components.....

Grids.....

5. Say whether the following statements are true or false, and correct the false one

- Electric cars are manufactured locally in Russia
- The electric vehicles are considered as a perfect solution to our transport needs for the second half of the country
- The development of electric vehicles requires two important conditions

6. Answer the following questions according to the text.

- What is the only African country that adopted electric vehicles?
- What are the conditions necessary for the development of electric vehicles?

- Does electric vehicles beneficial as a gadget of transport?

7. Match each sentence to the appropriate paragraph according to its order in the text

- The usefulness of electric vehicles in the system of transportation 1
- The introduction of electric vehicles in the world 2
- Basic factors for the involvement of electric vehicles 3

8. Fill in the gap with the following words: reduction, discourage, aware of, predict, electric vehicles, come up, reasons

Governments and vehicle manufacturers are fully.....these issues, but the consensus among policy-makers seems to be that somehow technology will.....with the answer, as it often has in the past. Analysts alsothat changing social attitudes and environmental awareness will lead to ain private vehicle use and a fall in the numbers of vehicles on the roads. This prediction is likely to be right, though not necessarily for thosealone; any shortage of essential components will force up the cost of....., and any shortage of battery recharging facilities or capacity willpeople from buying electric vehicles, leading to a fall in the number of vehicles on the roads.

Best of Luck

Appendix 3

Samples of Students' Test

Abstrait

La compétence de compréhension de lecture est considérée comme l'une des quatre compétences linguistiques fondamentales qu'un apprenant EFL doit accomplir. En fait ce n'est pas une compétence de base puisque la plupart des apprenants ont de nombreux problèmes de lecture. La présente thèse est une tentative d'enquêter sur les difficultés de compréhension en lecture et leur impact sur les étudiants de troisième années EFL au département de centre universitaire anglais de Mila et d'identifier certaines des raisons de leur faiblesse dans l'exécution de la tâche de lecture. Le questionnaire et le test ont été choisis comme instruments de recherche qui sont conçus et remis respectivement aux apprenants EFL de troisième année et aux enseignants du centre Universitaire de Mila pour collecter les données nécessaires. Les résultats révèlent que la plupart des apprenants rencontrent des difficultés de compréhension en lecture qui sont principalement dues à leur vocabulaire limité, à leur mauvaise compréhension et à leur manque d'habitude de lecture

Mot clés : apprenants EFL, langue Anglaise, compréhension de la lecture, lecture

المخلص

تعتبر مهارة فهم القراءة واحدة من المهارات اللغوية الأساسية الأربعة التي يجب على متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية القيام بها. في الواقع، انها ليست مهارة سهلة لان معظم المتعلمين لديهم العديد من مشكلات القراءة. الاطروحة الحالية هي محاولة للتحقيق في صعوبات الفهم القرائي وتأثيرها على طلاب السنة الثالثة من اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية بالمركز الجامعي ميله وكذلك تحديد بعض الاسباب الكامنة وراء ضعفهم في اداء مهمة القراءة. لقد تم اختيار الاستبيان والاختبار كأداتين بحث تم تصميمهما وتسليمهما على التوالي لمتعلمي وأساتذة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة ميله لجمع البيانات اللازمة. كشفت النتائج معظم المتعلمين يواجهون صعوبات في فهم القراءة والتي ترجع في الغالب الى محدودية مفرداتهم اللغوية وسوء الفهم وقلة عادات القراءة لديهم

