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The Effects of Reading Skills on the Development of Language Proficiency:

Case of 1ˢᵗ Year EFL Students. University of Tlemcen.

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DEDICATIONS

I Dedicate This Work To

My Parents

Acknowledgments

Abstract

Reading is considered as an essential component of ELT and functions as a crucial element to develop language proficiency. In fact, researchers have revealed that there are strong links between reading and language learning achievements. It can be considered as a valuable source of foreign language learning. Certainly, reading is one of the most important skills that EFL students should properly learn as it is a key element that increases their language learning gains. Therefore, this thesis tries to shed light on the impact of reading on the development of students' language learning. Indeed, the central goal of this research is to illustrate the roles of the reading skills in enhancing the English language proficiency. It attempts to clarify how reading can be used to improve the language skills including writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar. Still, this research tries to reveal and point out the difficulties and the obstacles that cause students' reading failure and tends to provide plans for a successful reading instruction for first year EFL students. To explore this research, a case study was conducted at the Department of English at Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. The informants of this research are first year EFL students and EFL teachers. The results obtained from the two questionnaires and the classroom observation revealed that reading plays important roles in improving language skills. Both classroom and extensive reading have abundant language learning benefits. Moreover, the results showed that the lack of motivation and language competence are the main obstacles that cause poor reading. This put great challenges and demands on teachers as they are required to use effective classroom strategies, provide adequate reading instruction to first year EFL students, and set extensive reading programmes.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL. English as a Foreign Language

ELT. English language Teaching.

ER. Extensive Reading

ESL. English as a Second Language.

ESP. English for Specific Purposes

Etc. Etcetera

L1. Mother Language

L2. Target Language

LMD. Licence-Master-Doctorat

M1. Master one

M2. Master two

MAA. Maitre Assistant (A)

MAB. Maitre Assistant (B).

MCB : Maitre de conférence (B)

RWL: Reading while Listening.

TBI. Text-Based Instruction.

TEFL. Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

VS. Versus

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

For literate communities, reading is considered as an essential part to life. It is central to learning in school, work, and in everyday life. It is an important tool in education and individual development as it plays central roles in individuals' careers. It is seen by some scholars as a life-long activity that is conducted for specific purposes. Indeed, reading is central to learning as it sets the foundations for learners' future success.

Reading can be viewed as the process of creating meaning through the dynamic interaction between the reader's existing knowledge, the text information, the author, and the context of the reading situation. It includes the integration of various skills which lead to good text comprehension. In fact, readers implement reading strategies, pick out information from the text, and use their background knowledge in order to achieve their reading purpose. For advanced learners, reading should be taught at higher levels. Actually, students should know how to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, understand the sequence of events, find out the main ideas, evaluate content, discover the author's purpose, and give personal judgments.

As far as ELT is concerned, reading is one of the chief purposes of the teaching-learning process. Indeed, it is a valuable source of foreign language learning as it involves several tasks that provide students with copious opportunities to develop their language knowledge and to practice reading for language learning purposes.

The reading instruction is a particular challenge to language teachers as they need to acquire a sound knowledge of theories, methods, and materials. In fact, they are required to apply adequate strategies and useful techniques in order to reach higher achievements. Certainly, high quality reading instruction involves an integration of many processes and approaches which are imposed by students' levels and interests. In this respect, researchers have argued that effective

teaching of reading includes devoting sufficient time to the reading task in order to meet various objectives because time has an impact on the choice of methodology and materials.

Needless to say that reading is one of the most important skills that EFL students should accurately learn. At university level, reading is among the increasing demands placed on EFL students as they will confront many complex reading materials than ever before and will be required to read, decode, infer, analyse, understand, evaluate, and discuss content. Therefore, it is important to develop text's understanding, to enhance fluency, to expand vocabulary knowledge, to build up background knowledge, and to practice reading skills and strategies. At higher levels, students need to adopt higher learning standards. With respect to reading, they should deal with more advanced texts with different genres and purposes in order to practice complex strategies, reach good learning outcomes, and build significant knowledge.

Recently, there has been significant concern about the role of reading as a useful means to develop language learning. In fact, considerable research has revealed that EFL students can benefit from reading in many ways. Indeed, learners who read constantly are better able to read fluently, write skilfully, have a good mastery of grammar, and possess a large vocabulary amount. Certainly, reading can engage students actively in the foreign language and culture. When opportunities to speak or hear the foreign language are rare, reading is the only practice that gives learners access to boundless amount of the language patterns such as ; idioms, sentence and paragraph structures, vocabulary, contextualized grammar, and other cultural clues of the native speakers. The more they read, the more they become proficient in the target language. In fact, they become good readers, writers, speakers, and listeners.

More importantly, this research tries to show how reading can contribute to the improvement of language proficiency. It explores the language learning benefits of both intensive and extensive reading and demonstrates their roles in

developing the communicative competence, the writing skill, the listening ability, vocabulary amount, and grammatical knowledge. Moreover, it investigates the factors that affect students' reading and attempts to examine the difficulties and the problems that cause reading deficits. It tries to illustrate the issues that help teachers offer a successful reading programme and tends to suggest the steps and the procedures necessary for providing an effective reading instruction.

This study tries to investigate reading and its effects on the development of language proficiency. In this respect, it tries to provide answers to the following research question:

1. What are the obstacles and the difficulties that cause students' poor reading?
2. What are the language learning benefits of reading?
3. How can reading be exploited to develop the English language skills?
4. How can effective reading instruction be provided to EFL students?

These research questions are explored on the bases of the following hypotheses:

1. Lack of motivation, guidance, and language knowledge could be the main reasons of students' reading difficulties.
2. Reading has ample learning benefits which leads to the development of language proficiency.
3. Reading can be used to develop the language skills through the use of multiple activities.
4. A successful reading instruction combines classroom intensive reading and extensive reading programmes.

This thesis includes four main chapters. The first chapter provides a literature review of both reading and language proficiency. In fact, related studies, theories, and approaches are provided in order to clarify the different

views and concepts. Indeed, the first part of this chapter is devoted to reading where definitions, descriptions, types, components, levels, skills, strategies, and processes of reading are provided. The second part of this chapter is devoted to language proficiency. In fact, it deals with language proficiency domains with reference to ELT including, writing, speaking, listening, and reading proficiency. In this respect, different visions, explanations, levels, and fields of language proficiency are addressed.

The second chapter aims to shed light on the English language teaching in the Algerian ELT departments. It brings an overall view about the university systems,   problems, and reforms and highlights the syllabus, the methods, and the objectives of ELT in Algeria. Principally, this chapter emphasises the position of reading in the curriculum and brings a description of how reading is taught to the Algerian EFL students. In fact, this chapter emphasises reading as a language skill in the the Algerian ELT departments within the LMD system.

As for the third chapter, it is considered as the essential part of this study. It is the empirical phase of the research as it elucidates the research objectives, instruments, methodology, and participants. Further, it entails the data collection and analyses, and gives the interpretation of the main results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, the students' questionnaire, and the classroom observation. It is important to mention that the research was carried out in the department of English at the University of Tlemcen where a sample of first year students and EFL teachers were involved. Still, a group of EFL teachers from other ELT departments were included.

The fourth chapter is the concluding chapter. It is intended to give some recommendations and proposals about reading and its effects in the development of language proficiency. First, this chapter provides recommendations about how reading should be taught in the ELT departments. Second, it offers some suggested reading   activities and techniques that can be used to improve each

language skill. In other words, this part of the study shows how classroom and extensive reading can be useful in enhancing students' proficiency in writing, speaking, and listening.

This study attempts to provide some procedures that help teachers establish reading habits amidst learners and lead them to make use of their reading. Indeed, ELT departments in Algeria should reconsider the reading skills module and place it at the heart the language learning.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One: Key Concepts of Reading and Language Proficiency

1.1 Introduction

Achievements in reading literacy are arguably a foundation for success in other subject areas within the educational, the cultural, and the social systems. In other words, reading literacy skills are needed for language learning, scientific development, individual growth, economic contribution, and citizenship building.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part aims to shed light on the reading process and tries to explain its key concepts. Besides, it attempts to bring a comprehensive account and provides some definitions and descriptions of the nature of reading. The second part is intended to demonstrate the domains of language proficiency. It deals with the components of proficiency of the English language and tries to clarify its notions and concepts.

In brief, this chapter is more concerned with two major concepts: reading and language proficiency. In fact, it deals with reading as a process and includes some trends that identify its aspects and concepts. It reveals the components, the types, and the strategies that are involved in reading. Besides, it provides a literature review about the language proficiency areas.

1.2 Part One: Reading

Looking at reading as a process is different from looking at it as a product. According to Alderson and Urquhart (1984), a product view to reading relates only to what the reader has gained from the text, while a process view investigates how the reader can make particular text's interpretation.

Experts in foreign language reading have contended against the point that texts are self-contained objects and have suggested a dynamic connection between the text and the reader. This view means that texts do not really involve meaning but they have potential for meaning. That is to say that meaning is produced in the course of reading as the reader draws both on linguistic and schematic knowledge (Wallace, 1992).

Reading entails several sub-processes and skills that differ according to types and purposes. In fact, there is a set of processes that take place when the reader makes interactions with the text. According to Grabe and Stoller, reading involves lower-level processes and higher-level processes; each of them entails specific elements and procedures. The following table lists some of these processes:

Lower-level Processes	Higher-level Processes
1-Lexical access.	1-Text model of comprehension
2-Syntactic Parsing.	2-Situation model of reader interpretation.
3-Semantic proposition formation	3-Background Knowledge use and inferring.
4-working memory activation.	4-Executive control process.

Table 1.1 Reading Processes

(Grabe and Stoller, 2002 : 20)

The lower level processes involve the more automatic linguistic processes which include grammar and vocabulary knowledge. The higher level processes generally represent comprehension processes that make much more use of readers' background knowledge and inferring skills.

Smith (2004) was one of the first scholars who described reading as a process by charting the reader's path through a text rather than making decisions of comprehension based on reading outcomes. He described reading as "the reduction of uncertainty". That is to say, as readers progress through a text, their choices of what to choose are confined by both features within the text itself and those external to it.

The famous example given by Smith (2004)*: " The captain ordered the mate to drop the an…"* leads to his discussing the reduction of uncertainty under four headings: graphic information, phonetic information, syntactic information, and semantic information. For example, readers decrease uncertainty by using their syntactic knowledge which informs them that only an adjective or noun phrase can follow the item *"the"*. They can also draw on specific schematic knowledge to expect what kind of things captains could ask mates to do (Wallace, 1992).

Goodman (1970), views reading as psychological guessing game. In this account, readers make use of three sign systems represented by three levels of language within the text namely; graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic. In other words, readers first make use of their knowledge of the visual and phonetic features of English; second, they draw on knowledge of syntactic constraints; third, they are aware of semantic constraints related to their knowledge of words' meanings.

Still, reading can be seen as a unitary selective process. This view points that it is not possible to identify specific skills to produce an effective reader. Lunzer and Gardner (1979) conducted a research about reading and found that there was no relationship between effective reading and performance and what really characterized effective readers was their want to reflect on their reading. According to Goodman:

Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are

made to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses.

(Goodman, 1970: 260).

Certainly, good readers, pick up information, make predictions, and select the information consistent with their expectations. Selectivity, ability and willingness to reflect are the key to effective reading. This selective approach of the reading process has pushed researchers to focus on reading strategies rather than skills. In fact, operative readers draw selectively on a number of reading strategies that are determined by purpose, text's genres and type, and context. (Wallace, 1992).

Widdowson (1979) marked that modern studies of reading have characterised it as a reasoning activity whereby the reader builds up meaning on the basis of textual clues. This view of how meanings can be negotiated in discourse is consistent with Goodman's comments on the reading process.

Additionally, what Goodman (1970) reveals is a broad discourse processing strategy in which reading is simply a particular realization. Thus, reading is seen as an act of participation in a discourse between interlocutors. In fact, reading is regarded not as a response to a text but as an interaction between the author and the reader mediated through the text.

In short, reading includes different kinds and levels of cognitive and meta-cognitive processes that are interrelated in different ways and contribute in building the reading skills.

1.2.1 Definitions of Reading

Reading has been defined mainly as an interactive process between the reader and the text. In fact, the reader interacts dynamically with the text in order

to elicit meaning. In other words, reading is the activity of word recognition, phonemic decoding, and text comprehension. Meaning is constructed through a process which includes dynamic interactions between the reader background knowledge, the information in the text, and the reading situation context (Dutcher, 1990).

Still, reading can be viewed as a guessing game in which the reader builds, as best as possible, the message which has been encoded by the writer. Grabe views reading as follows :

> *Reading can be seen as an active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently, for example, guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context ,etc.*

(Grabe, 1991: 377)

In other words, reading can be seen as an interactive process between the reader and the text which leads to automaticity. Readers need to use to use strategies such as skimming, inferring, and guessing in order to find out meaning. Grabe (1991, 379) lists and sums up some of the reading components skills :

> *1. Automatic recognition skills.*
>
> *2. Vocabulary and structural knowledge.*
>
> *3. Formal discourse structure knowledge.*
>
> *4. Content / word background knowledge.*
>
> *5. Synthesis and evaluation skills and strategies.*
>
> *6. Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.*

These component skills, according to Grabe (1991), make or form together the reading skill. Besides, reading has been defined by some researchers as a complex skill which entails a series of lesser skills and involves the ability

to correlate the formal elements of language with meaning. In fact, the reader needs to make a link between the text as a physical and linguistic object and meanings that it involves (Geoffrey et al., 1980). In this respect, students use their knowledge of language and their world knowledge to build up expectations and make predictions in order to decide about the meaning of the text.

According to Urquhart and Weir (1998 : 22) : **" *Reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print".*** This means that the message conveyed by the text is decoded and interpreted through the vocabulary items, the grammatical points, and the rhetorical structure of the text. Moreover, Anderson (1999 :1) views : **" *Reading is an active fluent process which involves the reader and the reading materials in building meaning".***

The word " *reading*" may have different interpretations. For example, it could mean "*reading aloud*" which is considered as an oral matter that relates more to pronunciation rather than to comprehension. In this sense, it is recommended to introduce simple and familiar text which do not exceed the linguistic capacities of learners. On the other hand, the term « *reading* » could also mean " silent reading". It is likely the nearest approach to the process of reading.

In addition, reading can be viewed as a receptive skill in understanding the words in a written form. It is believed that understanding the purpose of someone is not only in spoken language but also through reading because it is the next step in writing.   According to Nunan (1991:70): " ***Reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text, in this case most particularly with the reader's knowledge of content of the text***". That is to say that readers combine different factors in order to build up the text meaning. They rely on their background knowledge, their language knowledge, and the text content in order to reach adequate comprehension.

The complex nature of reading includes the correlations of language elements with meaning. The failure to recognise particular lexical items could lead to false understandings and wrong text interpretations. Therefore, students need to understand the relationships between words and the semantic patterns of lexical items. Moreover, in order to be efficient readers, learners should have a good understanding of the grammatical devices and the lexical patterns so as to grasp meaning in particular contexts (Geoffrey et al., 1980). Furthermore, the process of reading includes students' ability to acquire the skills of gathering information from the lexical and the grammatical signals in order to detect the architecture of sentences and paragraphs and derive adequate comprehension of the text.

Skilled readers are able to discover the link between the text and its author and are aware of the writer's attitudes, goals, and intentions. For example, the author could intend to describe an experience, inculcate an ideology, narrate a story, or to develop an argument or a scientific theory. Another relationship that concerns the reading process is that which exists between the reader and the text. Obviously, the reader's reaction to the text builds a particular point of view and leads to conclusions and judgements about the text (Geoffrey et al., 1980).

Further, reading and reading comprehension may have several definitions that could move beyond word recognition and phonemic decoding to the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between the reader, text, and context. In other words, reading can be seen as an interactive process in which the reader's background knowledge, the information deduced from the text, and the reading situation context are gathered to construct meaning (Dutcher, 1990). Still, reading is seen by Goodman (1970) as a selective process which involves partial use of available language cues selected from reader's expectations.

According to Widdowson (1979), research has presented reading as a reasoning activity in which students can construct meaning according to the clues included in the text. In short, one can sum up the main ideas of reading as follows :

➢ The idea of meaning.
➢ The transfer of meaning from one mind to another.
➢ The transfer of a message from writer to reader.
➢ How to get meaning by reading.
➢ How the reader, the writer, and the text contribute to the process of reading.

1.2.2 Reading as an Interactive Process

Recently, the term *"interactive"* has been largely used to describe the second language reading process. This term can be understood in different ways. For example, it describes a dynamic relationship between the reader and the text as he struggles to make sense of it (Hedge, 2000). In their trying to get meaning from the text, readers become involved in an active process and a kind of dialogue is created between the text and the reader (Widdowson, 1979).

In the interactive process, the reader may be interested in building a personal interpretation of a text or may be more interested in trying to get the writer's real intentions. In doing so, the reader use different types of knowledge such as; syntactic knowledge, morphological knowledge, general world knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, and topic knowledge (Hedge, 2000).

Another interpretation of the term "interaction" refers to the interactions that take place between various kinds of knowledge that a reader activates in processing through the text. These types of knowledge such as; linguistic, schematic and systematic knowledge help the reader to decode the language of the text and interpret its meaning (Hedge, 2000).

1.2.2.1 Schematic Knowledge

       A schema is a hypothetical mental structure for demonstrating generic concepts kept in memory. It is a kind of framework, or plan, or script. Schemata are shaped through experience with people, objects, and events in the world. The schematic knowledge in reading was defined by Cook (1989: 69) as: "***…mental representations of typical situations…used in discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situations which the discourse describes***".

       Schematic knowledge can be viewed as the organized background knowledge which leads us to anticipate aspects in our interpretation of discourse. Some studies have focused on using a recall procedure where students are required to write down what they can remember from the text. In fact, they are pushed to connect and order ideas as they appear in the original text. Carrel (1984) viewed that reading can be eased by recognizing the nature of the rhetorical settings used in texts, often known as the formal schemata of texts.

       As far as ELT is concerned, modern studies about the role of schematic knowledge in reading have focused on the reading methodology, the reading material, and the reading activities which help leaners activate different types of prior knowledge. Some words and phrases in the text can activate the prior knowledge of some kind in the mind of the readers. For example, readers can predict possible contents from the title by using both their knowledge of the world and the topic knowledge (Hedge, 2000).Therefore, Alderson and Urquhart (1984) point that the reading methodology should pay attention to activating schematic knowledge before reading.

       In the same sense, Cook (1989: 69) states: "***The mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context activates a knowledge schema***." Cook points that readers are not essentially dealing with conscious processes, but

rather with automatic cognitive reactions given to external stimuli. This vision reveals that schemata are activated in one of two ways:

1. New information from the outside world can be cognitively received and linked to already known information stored in memory through retrieval or recalling. In this case, new concepts are adapted into existing schemata which can be altered or extended;
2. New information can be denoted by new mental structures. In this case, in lack of already existing schemata, new knowledge constructs new schemata.

More importantly, the EFL teacher must offer learners the suitable schemata they need, and must also teach them how to build bridges between the pre-existing knowledge and new knowledge. Undoubtedly, making these links is needed for text comprehension.

1.2.2.2 Language Knowledge

The knowledge of language helps students to work on the text and extract its meaning. Proficient readers decode quickly and accurately words in different contexts as they recognize grammatical structures and other linguistic features in different texts' situations. In other words, fluent reading requires a good knowledge of language (Hedge, 2000).

Certainly, EFL students could have difficulties in processing texts which entail unfamiliar aspects of English. For instance, inability to understand the cohesive devices in texts could hamper understanding of the functional links of sentences. Cohesive devices comprise things such as; reference items (for example, they, these matters, the former), lexical cohesion through a chain of synonyms (for example, financing, funding….), and deletion of items such as relative pronouns (for example, which and that).

It is important to say that EFL readers are partly dependent on processing syntactic structures accurately so as to gain access to meaning. Therefore, understanding of complementarity of schematic knowledge and language knowledge should be the basis of classroom reading instruction. In reading, students may use discourse signals of different types to process the text. These signals could be connectives such as "besides, furthermore, whereas, but…" in order to express addition or contrast. They could be also words that order and organize discourse. Among these words in the English language, one can cite "method, issue, matter, situation, question…" (Hedge, 2000). Moreover, vocabulary is another important component of reading. Students generally encounter a degree of difficulty which varies according to the text's demands and the reader's prior and lexical knowledge.

A concern that learners should exploit their language knowledge effectively implies a number of points for the methodology of the reading class. In fact, they should be encouraged to read extensively in order to build vocabulary knowledge and awareness of written texts. Besides, texts and tasks should be carefully and purposefully selected for the reading instruction.

1.2.3 Reading as a Thinking Process

Research has revealed that there is a strong link between reading and thinking as readers become massively strategic and metacognitive when they read. They use thinking as part of decision making in order to construct the final meaning (Pressley, 2009). In this sense, Griffith and Ruan argue:

> *Readers must constantly make decisions that impinge on their comprehension of text: when to reread a portion of text, when and what type of inference to make, what information of importance to retain in memory and what information of lesser importance to discard, when to move on in the reading of text and at what rate.*

(Griffith and Ruan, 2005: 5)

That is to say that the thinking processes included in the reading process are related to a metacognitive framework. Indeed, thinking is considered as the most important strategy in reading. While reading, students are engaged in a thinking process which involves using prior knowledge, making inferences, developing meaning, and drawing conclusions.

Skilled readers are those who are able to think metacognitively during reading. They know how to monitor and adjust their comprehension by using several reading strategies. In other words, good learners need to prepare for reading, build meaning as they read, and reflect on their reading when they finish. In this sense, many studies have argued that students can develop their thinking strategies through direct instruction. Certainly, they should be taught how to be self-reliant in reading and understanding.

1.2.4 Reading as a Purposeful Process

Reading serves to extend our general knowledge of the world and, therefore, much of it is done for learning purposes. A good deal of reading to support learning takes place in academic contexts.

Reading has several purposes and accordingly readers select what they read. When it occurs in response to our environment, it could be called *"reading for survival"*. For example, a "stop" sign for a car driver is considered as a matter of life and death, moreover; reading could take place for pleasure and amusement. Some researchers have argued that if students do not read for pleasure in their mother tongue, they are unlikely to do so in a foreign language (Wallace, 1992).

Some reading purposes can be real-life ones for many English language students because they have needs to study and use English in their professional life. Accordingly, there can be several motives for giving learners a range of

purposes for reading and providing them with a variety of texts including articles, brochures, poems, stories, maps, and diagrams (Hedge, 2000).

Lunzer and Gardner (1979)   identified different kinds of reading and their terminology for these has been taken to ELT methodology:

- ➢ Receptive reading occurs, for example, when a reader wants to enjoy a short story, follow a line of advices or arguments in newspaper editorial, or understand the key points in a textbook description.
- ➢ Scanning includes probing rapidly through a text to find a specific point of information such as the relevant times on a timetable, or items in an index.
- ➢ Skimming is useful when a reader wants to get a general idea or a global   impression about the content of a text.
- ➢ Intensive reading involves looking carefully at a text. For example, the reader could look at a poem to appreciate the choice of words.
- ➢ Reflective reading involves episodes of reading and then pausing to reflect on the information in the text.

Certainly, different goals for reading determine different methods in approaching texts. Therefore, it is now a necessary practice in ELT to set and consider real purposes for reading either in or outside the classroom. In this regard, Rivers and Temperley (1978: 178) view: " ***Reading activities , from the beginning should have some purpose and we should concentrate on the normal purposes of reading***". In the same sense, they cite the following purposes: to get information, to respond to curiosity about a topic, to follow instructions to perform an activity, to read for pleasure and enjoyment, to keep contact with friends, and to know what is happening in the world.

Still, it is now accepted that one text can be read with different styles and that readers can have several purposes and apply different strategies at each stage of the reading process. For example, when a student of economics reads an article entitled *"Cuba: an Economic Profile"*, could skim initially to get the general schematic gist and see whether it is interesting or not. Thus, he or she reads, reflects, and makes pausings in order to consider the opinions and the political views expressed in the text. The same text can be treated in different ways and current reading pedagogy takes this into consideration (Hedge, 2000).

1.2.5 Reading as a Critical Process

Researchers viewed critical reading as a social process (Kress, 1985). Texts are written in a certain way in order to inspire certain ideologies. In fact, the terms, arguments, facts, and details included in texts aim to shape readers' perceptions and convictions and lead them to accept certain thoughts, politics, and beliefs. Actually, Foreign language reading could lead readers to adopt the foreign culture and defend the author's moral visions (Hedge, 2000).

In this respect, a number of studies have been conducted over recent years for the techniques that help learners to develop critical views on texts. For example, Clark and Silberstein (1979: 56) suggest the following critical questions that can be asked about a reading material:

> ➢ *For what purpose and for what audience is this intended?*
> ➢ *What Knowledge and attitudes does the author presume of the audience?*
> ➢ *Are you convinced by the evidence presented by the author to support the claims made?*
> ➢ *Does your own experience support the conclusions reached by the author?*
> ➢ *Do you share the author's point of view?*

As far as ELT is concerned, one reason to teach critical reading is to extend learners' horizons and to introduce them to different cultural values. It is important for students to affirm their own beliefs to resist the morality of the text. Clark (1993) says that students need to be able to recognize the ideology of the author and decide whether they agree or disagree with him or her. That is to say that careful reflection and analyses of the the text's style and ideas are needed in order to understand the writer's attitudes.

1.2.6 Reading as a Teaching-Learning Process

One of the objectives of the reading instruction is to make meaning from text, to improve comprehension, and to develop reading proficiency. However, it is important to move to greater objectives in order to make a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Schleppegrell and Bowman (1986) state the following objectives of teaching reading:

1. Learners should be able to prove their understanding of authentic texts including recognising the main ideas of the text and detecting the writer's opinion.

2. Learners should be able to scan a text rapidly to catch specific information.

3. Learners should be able to understand and use a large amount of vocabulary in the subject area.

According to Stanovich and Siegel (1994), learners who read continuously and successfully are better able to develop their literacy, gather learning experiences, and prosper in their academic career. Definitely, reading can have several benefits in improving students' language learning as it affords access to a variety of authentic materials in the foreign language. It engages students in higher cognitive thinking levels, has a communicative value, involves cultural

trends, and builds students' world knowledge. Nuttal (2005) states the general aim of a reading programme:

> *To enable students to enjoy (or at least feel comfortable with) reading in the foreign language, and to read without help unfamiliar authentic texts, at appropriate speed, silently and with adequate understanding.*
>
> <div align="right">(Nutall, 2005: 31)</div>

Definitely, teachers can enhance their learners' abilities to read and understand different types of texts through offering adequate reading instruction. Indeed, they should provide them with the techniques that help them improve autonomous reading.

1.2.7 Types of Reading

Reading can be divided into two major types that may differ in terms of purpose, level, and length. These types are described in accordance to ELT.

1.2.7.1 Extensive Reading

There are many definitions of the term *« extensive reading »*. Some use this term to refer to the skimming and scanning activities, while some others relate it to the quantity of the reading material. Certainly, extensive reading has an essential role in language education. It is viewed as a practical option for reading pedagogy in foreign language teaching. According to (Carrel et al., 1997), extensive reading involves rapid and long reading of large amounts of material including books and novels .

This type of reading plays a significant role in improving language proficiency and helps learners develop comprehensive awareness of grammatical structures (Davis, 1995). In this respect, Hafiz and Tudor view :

> *The pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities*

of meaningful and interesting L2 materials, will in the long run, produce a beneficial affect on the learners' command of L2 .

(Hafiz and Tudor, 1989 : 5)

That is to say that the extensive reading can be seen as an important strategy in language learning. Indeed, it improves the writing skills, broadens the vocabulary knowledge, and consolidates grammar mastery. Certainly, this can happen through the exposure to a range of lexical, syntactic, semantic, and textual features in the reading material.

Extensive reading varies according to students' motivation and attitudes. Indeed, it helps learners develop their reading comprehension abilities and achieve autonomy in reading. Moreover, they become able to practice specific strategies such as skimming and scanning. In general, extensive reading gives learners the opportunity to improve their language proficiency in comfortable environment and non-classroom contexts.

In other words, learners are encouraged to increase their learning capabilities without the pressure of text analyses and reading activities which usually occur in the classroom academic studies. In this respect, Carrel and Eisterhold (1983 : 567) viewed : *« Students select their own reading texts with respect to content, level of difficulty, and length».* Actually, students feel the autonomy in choosing their favourite texts according to their wills and wants.

In addition, extensive reading is a type of reading that helps learners to choose from a variety of non- academic texts such as fiction series, detective stories, and biographies. Certainly, students are given the opportunity to read texts at lower and higher levels. Through this process, they can develop a comprehensive database and increase their background knowledge as they are exposed to a variety of subjects (Nuttal, 2005).

Still, extensive reading allows learners to read at their own pace and make them ameliorate their individualized learning without the dependency on their teachers. Indeed, this independent language skill is an important path to successful L2 learning (Hedge, 1985). Students who are engaged in extensive reading experiences are better able to decide about which words are essential and central to comprehension. They become able to focus on text understanding instead of stressing the meaning of individual words. Truly, this kind of reading leads learners to enjoy reading and makes them feel comfortable during reading (Constantino, 1995).

Research has revealed that extensive reading impacts oral production and improves students' communicative skills when it entails dialogues, plays, idioms, and collocations. This helps learners make connections between spoken and written language. Moreover, this kind of reading enables students to develop their writing skills as they become more able to command the grammatical structures and the the textual features of of the written language (Miriam et al., 2003) .

Obviously, it is difficult to engage learners in extensive reading in normal classes because of the time limitations and the curriculum requirements. However, teachers can guide their students through helping them to select some useful books and interesting articles.

In brief, no one can deny the fact that extensive reading enables learners to improve their language competence, progress in their reading ability, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning .

1.2.7.2 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading includes the deep understanding of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Its concern is for detailed comprehension of the text. The goal in

the intensive reading is to achieve full understanding of the arguments, the rhetorical arrangements, and the structural patterns of the text. Besides, it includes the understanding of the symbolic and emotional tones, the purposes and the attitudes of the writer, and the linguistic tools which are deployed in the text.

Intensive reading is also called a creative process in which learners try to grasp every meaning including the arguments and details. It involves the learning of complex grammatical structures and discourse analyses techniques which are considered as necessary elements for the whole reading process. As for the difference between the intensive and the extensive reading, Hafiz and Tudor say :

> *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 L2, or to provide the bases 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.*

(Hafiz and Tudor ,1989 :5)

In other words, intensive reading is used to refer to short texts that students can be asked to read, to find out the main ideas, and to build their understanding of the text. The main aim of this kind of reading is to focus on the meaning of the text and how this meaning is produced. According to (Nuttal, 2005), learners need to try to comprehend the text as good as necessary in an intensive reading activity. Still, Students are required to focus on a small amount of material under the   guidance of their teachers who can introduce short texts and stories so as to develop intensive reading skills and strategies.

An intensive reading approach is crucial and important in the teaching of reading as an essential language skill. In fact, it includes an explicit instruction and deals with more detailed comprehension strategies. Its practice focuses on vocabulary knowledge, patterns of text organization, and texts genres and types.

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Instruction of intensive reading is necessary as it helps learners comprehend written texts, use and monitor reading strategies, and develop general literacy skills (Paran, 2003).

Furthermore, intensive reading serves to deepen the cognitive process through practicing particular reading skills in effective and useful ways. Indeed, it provides the bases for explaining text structures and developing knowledge of vocabulary and idioms. It occurs generally through extracting short texts and articles and focusing on vocabulary, sentence structure, and cultural insights.

1.2.8 The Reading Strategies
Reading involves some techniques which are implemented according to particular purposes. For example, learners do not need to read the whole text in order to check specific information. However, they need to understand and reflect on the text meaning when they are asked to learn something from their reading. In this concern, researchers have revealed two main reading strategies:

1.2.8.1 Skimming
Skimming is a technique of reading a particular passage, chapter, or other large collection of sentences in order to determine the main idea of a particular piece of written material. It is not an effective way of studying material if the individual is not already familiar with that material, because the main task is searching for the main idea of each paragraph.

Still, skimming is a way of reading in which students are recommended to quickly pass their eyes across the whole text for a gist. It is an effective technique of reading which is useful for getting an overview of the main ideas (Brown, 2001). It is a style of reading used to determine the main idea of a particular written material. Besides, it can be defined as a type of rapid reading

which is used when a reader wants to get the main idea from a passage (Richard et al., 1992).

In other words, skimming is described as a high speed reading technique useful for saving time. It requires that readers run their eyes over the entire text rapidly without reading in detail. This strategy involves glancing through the text to get a general view of the content. Moreover, skimming involves getting rapidly through a book by looking at the index, chapter headings, introductions, and conclusions. In this way, skimming gives some ideas about the way the book is organized and styled. Precisely, it is useful to decide whether the book is worthy of reading or not.

In order to practice the skill of skimming, teachers should train learners to recognize the key sentence of a passage, and the key paragraph of a text. In fact, the skimming strategy shows students that one sentence sums up the gist of each paragraph, and this key sentence often appears at the beginning of each paragraph.

In brief, the purpose of teaching this skill of reading is to help learners to have an idea of the main points of the text. It entails their ability to pick out the main points rapidly and to disregard what is not essential to their understanding of the text.

1.2.8.2 Scanning

Scanning is a reading technique used to extract specific information from a particular text. It trains learners to run their eyes quickly over a text in order to locate specific information (Grellet, 1981). Still, it can be seen as a type of a speed reading technique which is used when the readers want to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or a passage.

Scanning can be viewed as a method of reading a particular list, sentence, paragraph, passage, or chapter in which the reader seeks facts related to a particular subject. Scanning is only useful if the reader knows exactly what he or she is looking for in a text. It is not an effective way of studying all of the information covered in a particular passage as it is only a method of finding specific information. So, a reader who scans without knowing specifically what he or she is looking for will usually miss key information.

Certainly, scanning is useful when students read something for a particular interest without reading the whole text.They use this type of reading to find the fact they need, and when they find it, they read it with more attention without caring about the other parts of the text. In other words, this strategy is more useful when the readers know precisely what they are looking for in a passage, a text, or a book. It is an effective technique used to seek specific data related to a particular issue.

1.2.9 Reading Models

Some researchers have described the reading process by generating three reading models:

1.2.9.1 Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up model focuses on how learners derive information from texts. In this approach, reading is seen as a process of gathering and synthesizing information through different systems that identify letters, sentences, and clauses. Thus, the learner needs to construct meaning, first, by focusing on the smallest units of language such as letters and sounds, and moves later to broader units such as words and sentences (Burt et al., 2003).

According to (Hudson, 1998), The bottom- up process is independent from context and poor readers depend heavily on context strategy in order to make text interpretations. In fact, this model recommends that the text should be

analysed and discussed in detail and the learner will cognitively process the text by decoding words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Obviously, this approach requires readers to process the text at grammatical and structural levels and leads them to build comprehensive semantic analyses of the text in order to build up meaning.

1.2.9.2 Top-down Model

The top-down approach is a process during which the reader approaches the text as a whole by using the background knowledge, making predictions, and interpreting meaning. It is an approach in which students make expectations and inferences about text data and use their prior knowledge to construct a descent text understanding. It is described by (Nuttal, 2005 :17) as : « *an analysis with an eagle's eye view of text ».*

Some researchers have argued that the top-down model does not significantly consider the observed reading phenomena. In fact, students do not need to rely on information from text in order to build up meaning, but rather, are actively engaged in predicting and inferring meaning by relating the cues from the text to their background knowledge (Burt et al., 2003).

1.2.9.3 Interactive Model

This model is a combination between the bottom-up and the top-down models. In fact, research about reading has revealed that a combination between these two models is a successful strategy in improving reading comprehension (Brown, 2001). For example, the bottom-up ability to recognize words, by turning letters into sounds, is informed and supported by the top-down skills of using the background knowledge to predict and infer meaning.

Through this interactive model, many processes take place as the reader decode and understand a text. These processes may include students' ability to recognize words from letters and sounds, using grammatical knowledge and syntactic cues to get meaning from context, and relating information to the background knowledge in order to build a final meaning of the text (Burt et al., 2003). Actually, reading involves cognitive tasks where both bottom-up and top-down approaches occur simultaneously. In this respect, Carrell and Eisterhold argue:

> *Bottom-up processing ensures listeners/readers will be sensitive to information that is novel or does not fit their on-going hypotheses about the content or structure of text ; top - down processing helps the listeners / readers to resolve ambiguities or to select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data.*
>
> (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983 : 557)

That is to say that there are several ways through which these two approaches interact during the reading process. In brief, learners need to enhance their vocabularies and make greater control over the syntactic structures in order to be able to make predictions and inferences which help building appropriate comprehension of the text content.

1.2.10 Essentials of Reading

Reading entails several ingredients and combines various identification and interpretation skills. It involves a number of cognitive processes that help students make sense of their reading. Indeed, for reaching an adequate understanding of a particular text, they need to decode words, relate sentences, use the background knowledge and connect it to the new information.

1.2.10.1 Phonological awareness

The phonological awareness is highly predictive of reading development. It mainly refers to the ability to read loudly, detect phonemes, and

manipulate the sound segments of words (Pufpaff, 2009). Indeed, phonemes are known to be the smallest units which make up the spoken language. These phonemes are combined together to form syllables and words. For example, the word *« stop »* has four phonemes, while the word *« shop »* has three phonemes.

Phonemic awareness is seen as a pre-reading skill and is generally taught to emergent readers. It is the ability to differentiate between sounds. It is an essential prerequisite to phonics because learners cannot use letter sounds to figure out unknown words if they are not able to tell one sound from another. It is absolutely an auditory skill as learners hear and utter sounds. Thus, students use only their ears, not their eyes (Duffy, 2009).

Besides, the phonological awareness means the ability to identify and understand the phonemes or the sounds that make words. It can also be defined as the ability to read aloud, hear, and manipulate the individual sounds within words. For example, the word *« cat »* has three phonemes, and the word *« bike »* has also three phonemes. Thus, the phonemic awareness is about sounds, not letters (Timothy, 2006).

Proficient readers combine skills and strategies when they read. One common example is the way good readers use context in combination with initial consonant sounds to figure out unknown words in text. When encountering an unknown word, they think about both the sound at the beginning of the unknown word and what would make sense in that context. It is very beneficial because it can be used quickly, and it frequently results in accurate word identification (Duffy, 2009). At the early stages, instruction of phonological awareness is a key component of reading instruction. In fact, this instruction has significant effects on the development of word identification skills, the spelling skills, and of the reading outcomes.

In short, the phonological awareness is an important skill as it requires learners to notice, think, and work with individual sounds. It can be developed through practicing reading aloud activities which include songs, poems, and rhymes.

1.2.10.2 Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary is an essential element to reading as it is considered as the primary determinant of reading comprehension. Actually, there is a link between vocabulary size and reading ability (Snow et al., 1998). Limited vocabulary bulk could impede learners to achieve a higher level of understanding. The following figure illustrates the link between reading and vocabulary:
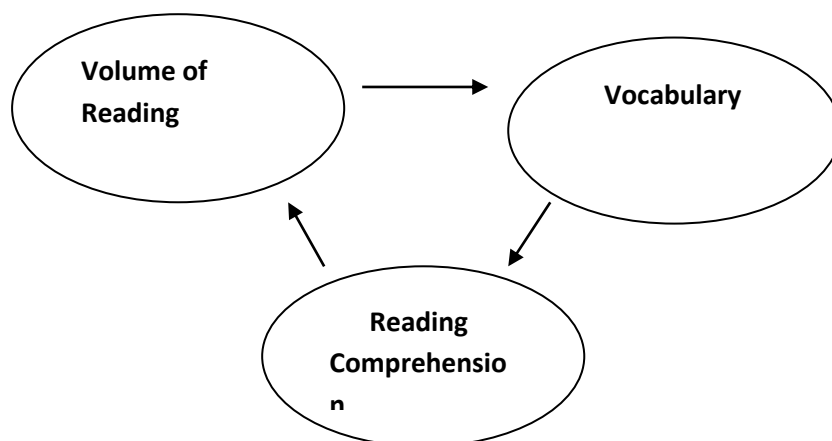
Figure 1.1 A Reciprocal Model of Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

(Elfrieda and Michael, 2005: 34)

Indeed, vocabulary has significant importance in reading development. In fact, when students are able to determine the meaning of the individual words, they are better able to understand the meaning of the whole text. Besides, vocabulary knowledge refers to the ability of students to get meanings of words necessary for their reading and communication in L2. Certainly, learners may not

be able to understand the content of a particular text unless they find out the meaning of the majority of words. Therefore, vocabulary development is one of the essential elements to reading comprehension.

Some studies have shown that training students on rapid and accurate vocabulary recognition could improve their reading comprehension (Burt et al., 2003). The skill of word reading entails processing written words, their meanings, and their pronunciation and a skilful reading is a result of interactive processing of these three elements (Adams, 1990).

Many studies have shown that lexical knowledge and comprehension are interrelated for skilled readers' knowledge of spelling, decoding, and phonology helps them reasonably infer meaning from the text (Prefetti, 1985). In sum, vocabulary knowledge involves the lexical knowledge which includes specified representations of forms and meanings. It refers to the extent to which the reader's knowledge of a given word represents the word's form and meaning.

1.2.10.3 Background Knowledge

Researchers agree that sufficient background knowledge is an essential factor for reading (Adams & Collins, 1979). Surely, reading becomes more effective when students become able to link the reading passage to their own experiences. Research has shown that background knowledge plays significant roles in understanding the reading material. Indeed, the bulk of this knowledge and the way it is applied to content area topics affect deeply students' comprehension (Texas Education Agency Handbook, 2002).

Therefore, learners need to be trained to use their prior knowledge to understand texts. This prior knowledge may include many aspects such as world knowledge, cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and subject matter knowledge. Teachers need to find out what learners know about the topic and should stimulate them to connect their knowledge to the new information in

order to help them better understand the text. In fact, linking the prior knowledge with the new information helps learners detect the direction of the text and the intent of the author.

Besides, using the background knowledge involves schema activating. In fact, comprehension requires students to detect and reveal what is not mentioned in the text and finding out ideas and opinions through reading between the lines (Burt et al., 2003). Actually, comprehension can be reached only when learners integrate text information with their background knowledge.

Obviously, previous experiences with language concepts, ideas, world knowledge, and vocabulary items are necessary to assume that comprehension occurs at adequate levels. Therefore, students need to think deeply, before reading, about the topic and link their existing knowledge to the new information in order to build correct understanding.

1.2.10.4 Syntactic knowledge

The syntactic process refers to students' ability to recognize the grammatical relationships between words and sentences. It involves using word order such as " *Subject followed by a verb"* and morphological indications such as *" tenses and conjugations"* in order to understand the meaning of both words and sentences (Burt et al., 2003).

The syntactic instruction in the reading task review students' awareness about the syntactic forms that are included in the text. For example, teachers can use texts that include specific words and forms in order to emphasize parts of speech in context. Then, they identify and discuss these forms so as to demonstrate their grammatical roles in the text (Burt et al., 2003).

1.2.10.5 Fluency

Fluency in reading is the ability to read words accurately, automatically, smoothly, expressively, and quickly with little conscious attention to mechanics of reading. In fact, fluent readers are those who are able to read, recognize, and comprehend words and sentences simultaneously. Marice (2008 :4) stated: ***"A key reason that fluency is a critical component of reading programs is that fluency is associated with reading outcomes, including comprehension."*** Actually, fluency is considered as an essential ingredient of reading.

Fluency, whether in oral or silent reading, is "reading like you talk". The single best way to develop fluency is by having students do repeated readings of easy text. In doing so, they learn to say the words quickly and in ways that reflect the meaning. While comprehension is a major factor, fluency also requires quick, accurate recognition of words, sentences, and paragraphs in a text (Duffy, 2009).

Moreover, the reading fluency can be described as the ability to read passages accurately, rapidly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression (Rasinski, 2003). In fact, fluent readers are supposed to read accurately with speed and incorporate features of spoken and written language such as grammar and punctuation. In this respect, some researchers believe that fluency can be improved by practicing reading and offering assessment-based instruction.

In addition, fluency is not merely speed -reading. In speed- reading, words are missed and the student skims and scans the text as quickly as possible. Actually, there is no concern with how it sounds or what it means. In contrast, fluent reading, whether oral or silent, is reading of a text with the appropriate phrasing and intonation. That is to say, the text is read smoothly and with meaning. When students read with intonation and phrasing, they can understand what the author intends to say and what messages the text conveys. In this regard, fluency is not only a matter of knowing the words at sight; it is also a matter of comprehending the material accurately (Duffy, 2009).

According to Marice (2008 : 2), fluency consists of the following skills :

A) *Accuracy*: It refers to the ability to successfully generate phonological recognition of each word by using decoding strategies. This accuracy requires decoding skills such as; the alphabetical awareness, the ability to combine sounds, and the ability to use signs and indicators to identify the meaning of words in different contexts.

B) *Automaticity*: It refers to the ability to quickly recognize words with little cognitive efforts. This automaticity can be reached when word decoding becomes fast and effortless with full text comprehension. It can be developed through exposing learners to a variety of complex tasks in reading.

C) *Prosody:* It refers to the ability to read with appropriate phrasing and expression. It is considered as an indicator of readers' ability to construct the meaning of the text.

Furthermore, reading fluency can be defined as students' ability to read words, sentences, and paragraphs with accuracy and appropriate rate (Texas Education Agency Handbook, 2002: 9). In fact, the ability to read with fluency refers to learners' comprehension of the text. Fluent readers acquire automatic word identification skills, and are aware of grammatical patterns of sentence construction. In short, fluency with comprehension is a primary goal of reading.

In brief, fluency bridges comprehension and word recognition. It requires both recognizing most of the words in the text at sight   and proper phrasing and intonation that reflect the author's meaning. The most important technique to

improve fluency is to guarantee that learners do lots of easy reading so that they can develop a feeling of being fluent readers.

1.2.10.6 Comprehension

Comprehension is a complex cognitive process which involves several interactions between the reader and the text to create meaning (National Reading Panel, 2000). It includes making logical connections between the sentences, the ideas, and the paragraphs of the text so as to extract the appropriate meaning of this text. Moreover, comprehension involves metacognition, or self-regulated thinking, which is considered as an internal interaction between the reader and the text which focuses on what the reader is thinking and what the reader knows during the reading (David et al., 2008) .

Comprehension occurs when learners construct mental representation of a particular text. The processes of comprehension that concern this representation occur at several levels across language units. These levels are: word level, sentence level, and text level. Through these levels, the processes of word identification, referential mapping, and a variety of inference processes interact with the reader's knowledge to build a final meaning of the text (Charles et al., 2004). According to Duffy (2009: 18-19) , comprehension is:

> ➢ *Proactive, because a reader must be actively thinking and constantly monitoring the meaning.*
> ➢ *Tentative, because predictions made in one moment may change in the next moment.*
> ➢ *Personal, in that meaning exists in the reader's interpretation, which is controlled by his or her prior knowledge.*
> ➢ *Transactive, because the reader's background knowledge interacts with the writer's intent.*
> ➢ *Thoughtful, because readers must always analyse the clues the included in the text.*

> *Imagistic, because, in narrative text, readers use the writer's descriptive language to generate pictures in their minds of what is happening.*

> *Inferential, because the reader can only guess the writer's meaning since the writer proceeds from one set of experiences and the reader from another.*

> *Reflective, in that good readers assess what they have read and determine its meaning and how it can be used after finishing reading.*

Obviously, comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading as it is considered as the act of extracting meaning from the text. It requires some interactions between the text information and the reader's background knowledge. This knowledge includes students' experiences in understanding words meanings, print concepts, graphic organizers, and text structures.

1.2.11 Reading Comprehension Skills

Reading Comprehension skills are considered as devices used by readers to make decisions about meaning before, during, and after reading. Research has identified some of these strategies such as; using background knowledge, Self questioning, making inferences, predicting, visualizing, and summarizing (Texas Education Agency Handbook, 2002).Through the following strategies, students can identify their reading purposes, define the important ideas in the text, control their reading, repair their understanding, and improve their comprehension rates:

1.2.11.1 Predicting

Prediction helps readers activate their prior knowledge about a topic and combine what they know with the new material in the text. Prediction is based on clues in the text such as pictures, illustrations, subtitles and plot. Predictions will also come from readers' prior knowledge about the author, text form, or content.

Students can be stimulated to make personal predictions *before* and *during* reading. *During* reading, effective readers adjust and refine their earlier predictions as new information is gathered and new connections are made. They tend to review what they have learned and move on with some expectations of what comes next.

Predicting is fundamental to comprehension because students anticipate meaning by predicting what is going to happen in the topic and by revising their predictions as they read. Readers of all ages make predictions. As with all comprehension strategies, predicting is based on the thoughtful use of prior knowledge. Students make predictions based on purpose for reading, topic clues, and the type of text being read. According to Duffy (2009), when teaching the predicting strategy, teachers should understand the following points:

➢ *That getting meaning is the purpose of reading.*
➢ *That one must actively create meaning.*
➢ *That predicting is an example of how readers actively construct meaning.*
➢ *That predicting is not a wild guess but a thoughtful hypothesis based on clues.*
➢ *That like all comprehension strategies, predicting is a matter of "reading between the lines.*

(Duffy, 2009: 102).

There are two varieties of prediction: while reading and post reading. The questions that are related to while reading prediction are different from the post reading prediction questions. For example, learners may read the first paragraph of a text and then asked about what might happen after .On the other hand, post reading prediction questions require learners to find the answers according to their understanding of the text (Nuttall, 2005).

The explicit activities that are designed to engage learners in predicting behaviour have proved successful in increasing interest and promoting the overall understanding of the text. Generally, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come. Therefore, learners need to be taught the prediction strategies that help them make hypotheses about what a text may involve and make them set goals of their reading and focus their thinking.

1.2.11.2 Inferring

Inferring is the ability to read between the lines or to catch the meaning that a writer implies but does not state explicitly. Virtually all comprehension strategies include inferring in the sense that comprehension requires readers to note text clues, to access prior knowledge associated with those clues, and then, infer what the meaning is. Therefore, in this sense, inferring is something readers make as part of all comprehension strategies (Duffy, 2009). In other words, inferring allows the reader to move beyond the literal text and make assumptions about what is not explicitly stated in the text. It can involve predictions, conclusions, and interpretations that are neither confirmed nor rejected.

Certainly, the text may not include a completely explicit language. Thus, deeper understanding requires that students make the necessary inferences that connect elements in the text and support the coherence necessary for an appropriate comprehension. For example, skilled students need to draw causal inferences that give sense to some unabridged ideas in text or a story (Charles et al., 2004).

It is useful to teach inferring as a separate strategy, especially in narrative texts where students often are expected to infer the personalities of characters or to infer attitudes. Character traits are rarely identified explicitly but instead are implied by telling what a person does or says. Similarly, mood is rarely illustrated directly but instead is implied by describing the physical

environment or the behaviour of characters, thus; it is up to the student to deduce the mood. When teaching inferring, teachers and students should understand:

> *That authors compose text based on their experience background and we build meanings based on what the writer's words make us think about.*
> *That writers often leave information unspecified or implied, expecting readers to infer it.*
> *That comprehension is an active process of creating and inferring meaning*
> *That inferring is almost the same process as predicting.*

(Duffy, 2009: 123).

Definitely, the retrieval of relevant knowledge, the retention of text information, and the making of the inference itself, all correlate with each other and with other processes in order to make meaning. In this respect, learners should learn from the very beginning that reading is a matter of actively inferring meaning, based on prior knowledge about text information.

1.2.11.3 Monitoring

Research has shown that low comprehension achievements are related to low monitoring skills. Difficulties in applying monitoring strategies lead to a failure to retrieve information either in the text or in the memory. Therefore, students need to develop some reading skills to monitor their text comprehension. Indeed, monitoring helps them to verify their understanding and to make the necessary repairs during the reading process. In fact, they should become able to detect their comprehension breakdowns and discover any inconsistencies in their understanding (Charles et al., 2004).

Monitoring can be seen as a process of talking to oneself about whether the meaning being found is the meaning anticipated or not. That is, whether the

original prediction is coming true or not. Monitoring and questioning are nearly the same because *questioning* is also a process of talking to oneself about whether the meaning makes sense.

That is to say, the reader should continuously ask the following questions: "Does this make sense? Is this what I had predicted? What was going to happen?", then; the reader begins self-talk about what new prediction needs to be made. Then, he tries to adjust his understanding according to the new information encountered in the   text.

1.2.11.4 Imaging

Like all comprehension strategies, imaging requires students to use prior knowledge and to predict information. In this case, the prior knowledge the student uses is dependent on the experience with words and descriptive language. Readers use what that descriptive language makes them think to create images. That is to say, they predict what image the author intends to convey (Duffy, 2009).

Because descriptive language appears with more frequency in narrative than in expository text, imagery should be taught in conjunction with stories rather than with textbooks or other informational texts. Imagery is particularly important to reading narrative text because it is often the image that makes stories exciting and alive. Students see what the characters see, hear what the characters hear, and feel what the characters feel. It is these emotional responses that often   motivate students and cause them to think that reading is enjoyable. Thus, if teachers can develop imaging, they raise a good opportunity to motivate students to make recreational reading a permanent part of their lives.   To understand imagery, teachers and students need to know:

> ➢ *That comprehension requires proactive efforts.*

> *That authors want readers to see, hear and feel certain things, especially in the narrative text they write.*

> *That authors use descriptive language so we can use our senses of sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, and tasting to construct an image of what the author wants us to see, hear, feel or taste.*

<div align="right">(Duffy, 2009: 116)</div>

Certainly, good students respond to descriptive and narrative text they read by creating pictures or images in their minds. Imagining can also be called "visualizing" as it can be naturally done. However, some students could face difficulties in creating images of what they read because they do not understand how to use descriptive language to generate pictures in their minds about what is happening.

1.2.11.5 Previewing

Previews are organizers that provide information about a piece of text. They serve to activate the background knowledge and to provide specific purposes for the reading (Holschuh & Aultman, 2009).

In fact, the strategy of previewing ideas and reflecting about them deepens learners' understanding and help them learn from their reading. In this respect, (Fisher et al., 2009: 27) viewed: ***" As readers, we are always activating our knowledge base and comparing it with what we are reading. In other words, we compare what we already know with what we are reading."***

In order to teach and practice skill of previewing, teachers need to model the questions that successful readers should ask themselves such as; *What type of text is this ?Why am I trying to read it ?* and *what information it contains ?*

1.2.11.6 Summarizing

Summarizing is the creation of a brief retelling of a text. While it may include the main idea or theme, the focus is on describing in brief form the text's

major points. It is the process of identifying the main ideas of the text and reorganizing them in a concise statement that actually entails the essential meaning of the text. In fact, research suggests that instruction and practice in summarizing not only improve students' ability to summarize a text, but also their overall comprehension of the text content (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Besides, summarizing is seen as the process of putting together the important ideas that contain the essential information in the text. This skill requires learners to document their understanding after their reading. In fact, students need to differentiate the important ideas from the unimportant ones. Still, students need to identify the central ideas, select the topic sentences, make generalisations, delete trivial and redundant data, and present appropriate understanding (National Reading Panel, 2000).

However, most of learners have difficulties in making summaries of texts as they are required to sift throughout the text and identify the important and the unimportant ideas in order to use the important ones to build a new concise text that stand for the original one. The best way to teach students how to summarize is to teach them to organize their summaries around text structure. Well-written texts are always well organized and have an internal structure. If students are taught to identify the structure of a text, they can use it when summarizing.

1.3 Part Two: Language Proficiency

The nature of language proficiency has been investigated and discussed for decades. Lado's description (1961) was the earliest theoretical framework to identify the construct of language ability. In fact, he viewed:

> *language is a complex system of communication with various levels of complexity involving intricate selection and ordering of meanings, sounds, and longer units.*

> (Lado, 1961: 2).

That is to say, language consists of components called phonemes, morphemes, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In contrast, Oller (1976) viewed language as an integrative and unitary phenomenon as it combines skills and components.

Canale and Swain (1980) took the concept of communicative competence as an essential element to language proficiency. In fact, they focused on sociolinguistics and its relationships with language components such as: grammar, phonology, and semantics. In addition, Farhady (2005) viewed that the communicative competence is a larger domain that even skilled and native speakers cannot achieve and claimed that the language use at different conditions and contexts could display various standards of communicative competence.

Bachman and Palmer (2010) provided a more comprehensive model of language proficiency. They focused on the central role of the strategic competence, the metacognitive strategies, and the higher processes that interact language knowledge and language use.

1.3.1 Language proficiency Defined

Language proficiency is often referred to as the ability to use language skills successfully and accurately and to master its arts and functions. It is described in terms of the functions of language that are needed in specific contexts (Hawkins, 2004). Gaining proficiency in language includes developing a huge linguistic repertoire by which students can negotiate different cultural and contextual situations. In fact, learners need to vary their language use according to purpose and context using various strategies and genres.

Sterns (1983: 341) defines proficiency as: **"the *actual performance of given individual learners or groups of learners"*.** Moreover, he argues that language proficiency includes:

- The intuitive mastery of language forms
- The intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meanings expressed by language forms.
- The capacity to use the language with maximum attention to communication and minimum attention to forms.
- The creativity of language use.

Proficiency has traditionally been seen as a criterion of measuring the foreign language teaching and learning. According to Stern (1983), proficiency can be viewed from two perspectives; one relates to the different levels of proficiency, while the second perspective focuses on the identification of the constituents of language proficiency. As for the first perspective, it is concerned with the degrees of the actual or the required mastery of the foreign language, while the second is theoretically a complex and controversial perspective since it views proficiency as several separate components. The following table illustrates the levels of Language proficiency:

Level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	Understands social and work demands and concrete topics related to interests	Satisfies work requirements with usually acceptable and effective language	Reads factual, non-technical language, grasping main and subsidiary ideas	Writes with some precision and in some detail about most common topics
2	Understands all the essentials of standard speech, including technical aspects of professional field	Speaks with enough precision to participate in practical, social, and professional conversations	Reads a variety of authentic prose on unfamiliar subjects with near-complete comprehension	Prepares effective formal and informal written exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics
3	Comprehends forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs	Accomplishes a wide range of sophisticated and demanding professional tasks	Comprehends a variety of styles and forms pertinent to professional needs	Writes in a few prose styles pertinent to professional and education needs
4	Understands all forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs	Speaks fluently and accurately on all levels pertinent to professional needs	Reads fluently and accurately all forms of language pertinent to professional needs	Writes professionally and accurately in a variety of prose styles

Table 1.2 Language proficiency Levels.   (Betty & Boris, 2004: 12)

This table shows the different levels of language proficiency including speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Indeed, developing   proficiency in these skills requires students to get access to fluent language models and

opportunities, to recognize texts of specific genres, to practice intricate communicative situations, and to practice writing about different topics. For EFL teachers, it is important for them to adopt the useful strategies that help their learners to be proficient in all language areas. Canale (1983), revealed three dimensions of language proficiency:

- ➢ *Basic language proficiency*: mainly supported by the biological elements of language.
- ➢ *Communicative language proficiency*: based on social interpersonal uses of language through spoken or written channels.
- ➢ *Autonomous language proficiency*: involved in interpersonal uses of language such as monitoring one's thoughts and creative thinking.

1.3.2 Proficiency and Competence

As far as the identification of proficiency and competence is concerned, Taylor (1988) viewed that competence can be firmly associated with proficiency, especially in the field of applied linguistics which is concerned with language teaching and learning.

Stern (1983) used the concept of "competence" as an alternative term for *"proficiency"*. For example, in the following extract, he uses both terms without distinction: ***"The   native   speaker's   "competence",   "proficiency",   or "knowledge of language" is a necessary point of reference for the second language proficiency concept….."*** (341). In other words, Stern   does not equate proficiency to one single concept, and obviously seems to include various conceptions and notions in his attempt to characterize proficiency and competence.

However, the distinction between proficiency and competence is based on the measurement of particular skills or abilities in a particular language. In this regard, competence can be seen as the knowledge that the individuals have about

language while proficiency refers to the skills that are needed to put that language into practice (Taylor, 1988).

Some researchers have agreed on the usefulness of the notion "ability" as an appropriate term to refer to "proficiency" because this term can be seen as a middle ground between "competence" and "performance". In addition, the structuralist perspective relates language "proficiency" to the structural aspects of language. This theory could help both teachers and learners to establish their own stage of development in the teaching –learning process (Enric, 2000).

1.3.3 Language Proficiency Domains

According to Lee and Schallert (1997), language proficiency relates to learners' ability to read, speak, write, and listen accurately in different contexts and situations. Further, language proficiency refers to an individual's general knowledge of a given language including vocabulary, grammar, and discourse conventions which may be called upon during any instance of oral or written language use (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). As far as ELT is concerned, researchers have revealed that language proficiency involves all language areas:

1.3.3.1 The Communicative Proficiency

The communicative competence is one of the most important domains in language proficiency. Indeed, it involves the ability to communicate appropriately with native speakers in real life situations. The following diagram illustrates the components of communicative competence:

```
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  Linguistic  │
                    │  Competence  │
                    └──────┬───────┘
                           │
                           ▼
┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│  Strategic   │───▶│  Discourse   │◀───│  Pragmatic   │
│  Competence  │    │  Competence  │    │  Competence  │
└──────────────┘    └──────▲───────┘    └──────────────┘
                           │
                    ┌──────┴───────┐
                    │ Intercultural│
                    │  Competence  │
                    └──────────────┘
```
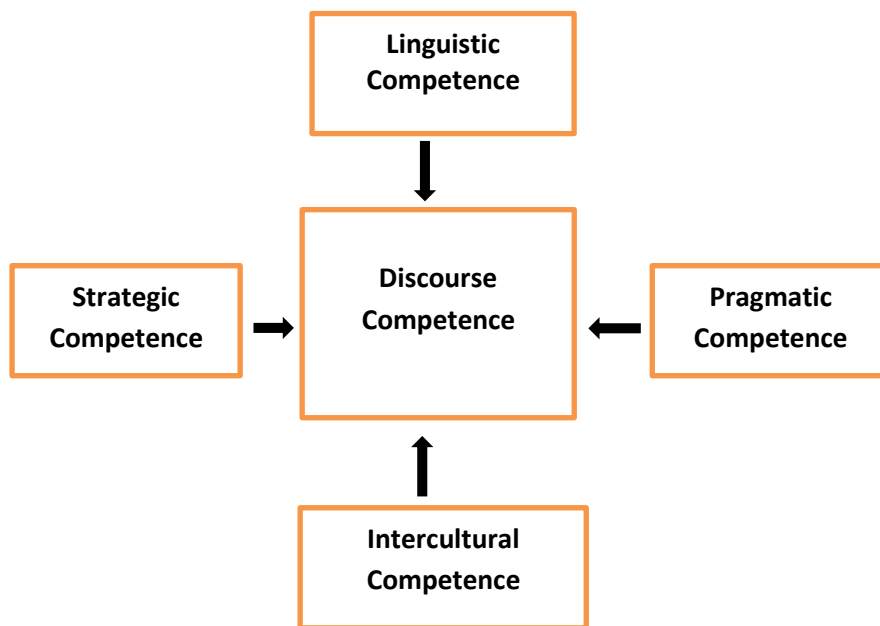
Figure 1.2 Components of Communicative Competence

<div align="right">(Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006: 16).</div>

That is to say that communicative competence is composed of linguistic, strategic, pragmatic, intercultural, and discourse competence. In other words, communicative proficiency involves various factors such as; the vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, the ability to understand the meaning of the utterance as it is intended by the speaker, and the knowledge of how speech is produced and interpreted according to the sociocultural context.

Furthermore, proficiency in communication refers to students' ability to communicate without conscious focus on language. In contrast, weak communicators speak with pauses and difficulties, searching for the appropriate words, and thinking about grammar rules (Betty & Boris, 2004). As the students gain proficiency in communication, the balance of attention shifts from mechanics to ideas.

In the same respect, communication is seen by Betty and Boris (2004:21) as: ***"a process of stringing together linguistic units in a fashion that meets certain prescriptions or applies a set of lexicalizations to a known situation"***. In

fact, proficient students know very well how to say what they want to communicate. At this level, the "what" is more emphasized than the "how" and the ideational focus is more important than the mechanical focus.

At higher levels, the communicative proficiency could refer to learners' ability to possess various correct language structures to express the same or different ideas in different situations. For example, they can use the phraseology and discourse type that best meet their communicative wants at the cultural, linguistic, and emotional levels. Certainly, proficient learners are those who are able to express their intents, convey information, and achieve their communicative goals.

According to (Canale & Swain, 1983), communicative proficiency entails four components :

> *Grammatical Competence*: the ability to understand and use the lexical and the grammatical structures of the language.
> *Discourse Competence*: the ability to comprehend and implement culturally the appropriate text structure in terms of coherence and cohesion
> *Sociolinguistic Competence*: the ability to understand and apply the social rules in the communicative interactions for a given society.
> *Strategic Competence* : the ability to apply the appropriate learning strategies for acquiring and mastering new languages.

In addition, the communicative proficiency involves learners' progressing from normal to distinguished levels of proficiency. In fact, proficient communicators are able to express their personalities in the foreign language so as to reveal and demonstrate their true essence and not the adopted essence that comes from cultural mimicry (Betty & Boris, 2004).

Furthermore, gaining communicative proficiency includes students' abilities to use the foreign language instead of learning about the language. Therefore, some researchers view that the communicative programmes need to entail a number of characteristics such as; authenticity in task and content, attention to students' differences, use of higher-order thinking skills, and the application of adult learning theories (Betty & Boris, 2004).

Moreover, proficiency in communication requires learners to have a discourse competence which refers to the ability to understand and construct a full speech. Certainly, they should be able to handle formal and informal language and to switch forth and back with ease. Likewise, some researchers viewed that communicative proficiency involves the social competence which goes beyond students' willingness to engage in a linguistic and social contact with other speakers of L2. This social competence could include the ability to enter in unexpected contact-situations

In order to be communicatively competent, students should be able to carry out several functions in English such as making requests, offering apologies, voicing likes and dislikes, introducing themself, and discussing ideas etc. Jack (2006: 11) defines communicative competence as *"mastery of functions needed for communication across a wide range of situations"*. According to Jack (2006: 3), Communicative Competence entails the following aspects of language knowledge:

> ➢ *Knowing how to use language for a range of different purpose and functions.*
> ➢ *Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication).*

> *Knowing how to produce and understand different types of text (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations).*

> *Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communicative strategies.*

In brief, the communicative proficiency includes the oral proficiency which is considered as a complex process that entails both receptive and expressive skills such as listening, speaking, phonology, morphology, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse skills.

1.3.3.2 Listening Proficiency

Listening is a highly complex ability to understand the spoken language. The listener need to go through different stages such as; processing language, paying attention to concepts, and relating what is heard to what is known in real time. Certainly, students rarely have the opportunity to listen to the exact same language or text for a second time, unless they listen to a recorded tape. Thus, the process of listening requires greater efforts than writing or reading (Alderson, 2005).

In listening, students need to acquire the skills that help them deal with sound signals which differ from one speaker to another. For example, in reading, the orthographic norms are united, whereas the differences in the pronunciation of sounds that compose the speaker's language are many and complex. Therefore, proficiency in listening requires learners to cope with varied sounds, signals, and accents. Besides, they need to identify the constituents of sound stream such as phonemes, words, and utterances. Proficient listeners have to cope with listening in complex and difficult circumstances such as; background noise, other speakers' interventions, and listening without being able to see the speaker (Alderson, 2005).

In the interactive listening, both the speaker and the listener are present even if they interact by distance on the phone or on the net. In this situation, the listener, at least, can ask the speaker to repeat his words so as to overcome some of his comprehension problems. This compensatory technique is available to the listener and not to the reader.

Furthermore, proficiency in listening involves crucial variables that affect the spoken language. Buck (2001) gives some details and addresses some matters that constitute and impact the listening process such as; the linguistic features of the spoken text, the importance of redundancy in acoustic impact, the nature of unplanned speech , speech rate, phonology, intonation, discourse structure, and verbal and non-verbal clues. According to Jack (2006: 11), the skill of listening may involve the following microskills:

> *Recognizing key words in conversations.*
> *Recognizing the topic of a conversation.*
> *Recognizing speakers' attitude toward a topic.*
> *Recognizing time reference of an utterance.*
> *Following speech at different rates of speed.*
> *Identifying key information in a passage.*

A listener can be seen as an audience member, an addressee, a participant, a judge, an interviewee, a testee, or a communicator. Therefore, listeners need to gain proficiency in seeking factual information, finding out attitudes, recognizing persuasion and arguments, recognizing markers of discourse structure, identifying discourse purposes, and detecting the implicit information in the spoken words (Alderson, 2005).

As far as listening proficiency is concerned, students need to be skilful in identifying and understanding the main ideas, listening intensively for specific details, making inferences on the bases of what has been heard, and using context

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to understand the unfamiliar words. Besides, learners need to be competent in understanding stress and intonation, coping with different language accents, and understanding the language of native and non-native speakers.

1.3.3.3 Writing Proficiency

Gaining proficiency in writing is one of the most important purposes of foreign language teaching. Therefore, considerable amount of research has been devoted to understand and develop what is included in writing, especially in academic contexts.

Writing proficiency includes students' ability of using vocabulary and syntax accurately, organizing sentences and paragraphs intelligibly, punctuating and spelling correctly, and considering cohesion and coherence. Besides, the writing competence involves the ability to give and exchange information, develop and argue a point of view, and use writing for different purposes (Alderson, 2005).

Still, writing proficiency is dependent on other aspects such as cognitive processing, the writing objectives, and the audience of writing. According to the Council of Europe Framework (2001), writing competence includes students' ability to:

> ➢ Express attitudes and opinions.
> ➢ Persuade and convince the readers.
> ➢ Give factual information.
> ➢ Write and register invitations, replies, observations, and reports.

Needless to say that proficient writers always give account for language mechanics such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, abbreviations, and language markers and consider in their writing the textual organization, the content, and the writing style.

1.3.3.4 Reading Proficiency

Researchers view that reading is a complex activity that includes various skills and abilities. Some approaches explain reading as a process of proceeding from letter to word recognition to text understanding. Other approaches refer to reading as a process in which students cope with texts through a series of procedures based on the text information the language knowledge, the schematic knowledge, and background knowledge (Hedge, 2000) .

Furthermore, fluent readers are required to use their literacy, experiences and expectations in order to hypothesise and predict meanings. At this level, students do need to focus on the constituent letters, symbols or words in the text but on meaning.   David and Linda describe fluent readers as follows:

> *Basically, a reader has to use prior knowledge of the topic of the written text and/or knowledge of sentence structure to infer the appropriate prosodic patterns for sentences in a written text. And when a reader is able to make these appropriate inferences, we say that he or she reads with fluency or has good expression when reading orally.*
>
> (David and Linda, 1983: 12-13).

In other words, reaching proficiency in reading requires students to acquire the skills that help them analyse texts, extract meaning, find out the author's arguments, trigger background knowledge, recognize the grammatical uses in the written language, extract precise information and evaluate the author's use of rhetorical language.

In addition, gaining proficiency in reading put many challenges on both teachers and learners. For instance, students can understand the literal meaning of the text but fail to understand its implications. One can comprehend the gist of the text but not the author's intentions. One can identify the explicit facts but is unable to decide about the important information.

Clearly, many factors could affect the reading proficiency. These factors relate to the reading material and the text language and content. Similarly, these factors may relate to readers such as readers' purposes, the degree of motivation they have, their mastery of language, their cognitive development and their background knowledge. According to Alderson (2005), the reading proficiency includes students' ability:

> ➢ To understand and identify the main ideas and the main purpose of the text.
> ➢ To find out specific information or details.
> ➢ To make inferences and predictions
> ➢ To understand the writer's point of view, attitudes, opinion or mood.
> ➢ To recognize texts forms and types as being descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative or instructive.

In short, proficiency in reading involves learners' ability to recall and relate what they have read to their information, generate new background knowledge, analyse text content, and provide critical judgements about the text's author.

1.3.3.5 Grammatical Proficiency

Grammatical knowledge is very important for language literacy. Certainly, poor control of grammar can be the main reason for writing, reading, or speaking deficits. Therefore, learners should acquire theoretical knowledge of all grammatical components such as parts of speech and tenses forms and uses.

Developing grammatical knowledge has always been seen as central to the development of language proficiency. Traditionally, the ability to use the

foreign language syntax and morphology accurately was considered as a signal grammatical knowledge. Besides, the grammatical competence refers to the ability to apply the grammar rules adequately in order to construct correct forms and sentences. In fact, grammar mastery requires learners to use tenses correctly, decline the nouns, transform phrases and clauses in different contexts, and use articles, adjectives, and adverbs accurately. Moreover, the grammatical proficiency includes the ability to use and manipulate the grammatical forms in relation to meaning (Purpura, 2004).

However, some language testers and assessors view that there is no need to emphasize explicitly grammar in language assessment since it is at the heart of language use. Thus, assessing learners'' ability to speak, write, listen or read in a foreign language includes necessarily grammar assessment. In other words, grammar is a central element to all language skills and is the basis of language proficiency (Alderson, 2005).

On the morphological level, compounding and derivation are sub-skills that lie between grammar and vocabulary while inflection is considered as a purely grammar skill. According to Alderson (2005), assessment of grammatical proficiency may include the following criteria:

- ➢ Students' ability to understand and use syntax.
- ➢ Students' ability to understand and use morphology.
- ➢ Students' ability to understand and use common and complex grammar structures.
- ➢ Students' ability to produce simple and complex sentences.

1.3.3.6 Lexical Proficiency

Vocabulary is a central element to foreign language learning. Gaining proficiency in vocabulary use requires learners to acquire, combine, and use

words accurately in different contexts. Proficiency in this field refers to students' productive as well as receptive vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, proficiency in lexis could refer to learners' lexical competence and their ability to derive meaning of the unfamiliar words in context-dependent and context-independent situations. Besides, it may refer to students' knowledge of the different aspects, forms, and meanings of words units and combinations.

For example, proficient students are able to detect and use the denotative meaning of words, their semantic aspects, and their formations. According to Alderson (2005), students who have good command of lexis are able to:

- ➢ Recognize and produce words meanings including connotations, denotation, and accuracy.
- ➢ Recognize and produce semantic relationships between words including synonyms, antonyms, and hyponyms.
- ➢ Recognize and use words by compounding and affixation.
- ➢ Recognize and produce words combinations including collocations and idiomatic expressions.

Actually, vocabulary knowledge is seen as an essential element to foreign language learning. Therefore, an excellent command of vocabulary leads automatically to good performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Indeed, vocabulary competence leads learners to frequently use idioms, communicate in different situations, produce and express new meanings, use and understand colloquial language, choose words for different contexts, use figurative language, and vary expressions for a single meaning through the mastery of synonyms and antonyms.

In short, lexis plays a substantial role in language proficiency. In fact, vocabulary size, depth, and nature affect significantly performance in language. For example, a good mastery of lexis in different areas, a deeper knowledge of connotations and multiple meanings, a rich repertoire of vocabulary items are factors that contribute in the building of language proficiency.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to focus on the key concepts relating to reading and language proficiency. In the first part, it tried to give some information about the nature of reading and tended to explain the different concepts that are included in its identification. Indeed, reading is a highly complex cognitive process which involves intentional interactions between the reader and the text to create meaning. In fact, readers should purposefully work to create meaning from what they read and construct mental representations of a text message in order to achieve accurate comprehension.

The second part of this chapter was devoted to highlight the essentials of language proficiency. In fact, it provided different definitions of language proficiency and demonstrated its areas with reference to EFL learning. In other words, language proficiency was presented as students' ability to master the language skills including; listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In sum, this chapter demonstrated the components of reading and language proficiency and tried to illustrate their types and aspects. It included definitions and descriptions of the many ingredients that form these concepts in relation to ELT.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two:Teaching English and Reading at the Algerian ELT Departments

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to shed light on the English language teaching situation in the Algerian ELT departments. It tries to bring an overall view of Higher Education in Algeria including the reforms, the gains, and the systems. Besides, it states challenges and the needs that put new demands on the Algerian state.

More importantly, this chapter emphasises the reading instruction in the ELT classrooms and describes the status of reading within the curriculum. At university level, the reading skill is important for language learning as it contributes to the consolidation of the other language skills. It is necessary because it helps EFL learners get access to the other modules such as literature and civilisation. Certainly, students who master the reading skills are better able to make achievements in the other modules.

However, the reading which is taught in the Algerian ELT department is submitted to the teachers' preferences and choices. We can hardly see cooperation between the teachers of reading and those of literature, linguistics, or civilization. Each module is taught separately and the students are not aware of the usefulness and the complementarity of all modules. Still, the reading skill is not given a significant consideration by teachers and learners in the ELT departments. In fact, it is taken for granted that it is the simplest skill to be taught.

2.2 Linguistic Situation in Algeria

Algeria has two official languages: Arabic and Tamazight. The former is the principal language of government which is used in the educational, political, and administrative institutions. Arabic is the first national and official language in Algeria. It is spoken by 98% of the population (Euromonitor International, 2012).The latter is a language spoken by the Berber community in Tizi ouzou, Bouira, and Bejaia. It is still trying to gain ground in the Algerian schools and

institutions. Another type of the Berber dialects is spoken by people living in Batna, Guelma, and Khenchla and they are called the "Chaouia".

The French colonialism had severely influenced the linguistic situation in Algeria. Indeed, the French language is still playing major roles in many domains and makes part of the Algerian daily speech. As a result, the Algerian dialect is now a mixture of Arabic and French. French is the first foreign language to be taught in schools. Although it is neither an official nor a national language, it is the second language used in the country. Due to historical reasons, French has deeply rooted in the Algerian society and is used as the principal language in business, medicine, engineering, and industry. However, it should be mentioned that not all Algerians are bilingual but bilingualism is highly marked in north Algeria with people who live in big cities like Algiers and Oran.

During the Boumedienian Era (1970s), the Algerian government started the process of Arabization by generalizing and enforcing the Arabic language in educational, political, and administrational domains. For this purpose, many Syrian and Egyptian teachers were recruited in the Algerian school to make Arabic an instrument of work and thought. This is due to the consideration of Arabic as the language of Quran, religion, and nationalism. As a result, the role of French started to lose ground and most of the 1970s generation has little knowledge of the French language.

The Algerians use a simplified version of Arabic mixed with French words in their ordinary communication at home, in streets, or in markets. However, at the official level, a standard Arabic is used. One can notice this in media, schools, courts, parliament, and in many official articles. In many cases, French accompanies standard Arabic in many official issues. Sometimes, French is the only language of instruction in scientific fields such as Medicine, Chemistry, and Agronomy.

2.3 English VS French

Due to historical reasons, Algeria had long relied on French as the language of teaching science and technology and is still using it as a second language in drafting the official papers. This language had been given the priority in the educational system as the first foreign language. Moreover, it was the sole foreign language used with foreign politicians, businessmen, journalists, and scholars. Indeed, French had long influenced the Algerian foreign policy and is still playing significant roles in the Algerian institutions and administration. No one can deny that French makes part of the Algerian spoken dialects. It still stands as the first second language in spite of the many attempts to replace it with English.

On the other hand, the English language is considered as the second foreign language in Algeria. The teaching of this language is highly supported by the state because of its importance. It is seen as the future alternative of French and a solution to face the scientific challenges. In this respect, Milliani views:

> *In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the sociocultural and educational environments of the country, the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills-including economic, technological and educational ones.*

(Miliani, 2000: 13)

In other words, English is gaining much more importance in Algeria. It is taught in all universities in order to upgrade the economic, scientific, and technological fields. This support given to the English language is depriving French of its historical role and is seen as an attempt to make a new policy in the field of foreign language teaching in Algeria.

In brief, English has become more accepted and preferred by the Algerians because it is used broadly in the world as the language of science, technology, medicine, politics, tourism, and business.

2.4 English in the World

In the light of globalization, English has become the most attractive and useful language in the world. It is the language of communication, medicine, technology, research, science, business, and many other domains (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). In this respect, Burshfield (quoted in Louznadji, 2003 :78) views: *"Any literate, educated person on the face of the globe is deprived, if he does not know English"*. That is to say, English has become a substantial language that affects all aspects of life. Certainly, it is the gate to the world's knowledge and modern literacy.

The English language has gained special place in the world and is playing central roles in Africa, India, China, and the Middle East. It has been given educational priority as the language of world knowledge and skill transfer. In many countries, English is considered as an official language and used as a medium of communication in courts, in media, and in academic meetings (Crystal 1997). It is important to say that English is the world's language not because it is widely spoken as a native language, but because it is largely spoken and taught outside the native countries either as a second or a foreign language. According to Kitao :

> *English is the major language of news and information in the world. It is the language of business and government even in some countries where it is a minority language. It is the language of maritime communication and international air traffic control, and it is used even for internal air traffic control in countries where it is not a native language.*

(Kitao, 1996: 1)

In other words, English is now used as an international language since it is used as a means of communication in the international conferences, in the

commercial deals, and in media influence. Actually, the dominance of English over the other languages is due to the power and success of its speakers in all domains.

2.5 The Status of English in Algeria

Despite the fact that many Algerians believe that Arabic and French are the key languages to succeed in school as well as in business, they are all certain that English can be an alternative for French in dealing with the international communities. They agree that the English Language is highly advantageous for individuals and for the nation. This belief has been nurtured by the continuing growth of English in size and importance.

The majority of the Algerian students either at secondary or university level are aware of the fundamental roles that the English language plays in all domains including the academic, professional, and social ones. Most of these students believe that learning this language opens new doors and gives them abundant opportunities in their professional life. For example, the foreign companies which are investing in Algeria require the mastery of English as a vital criterion for recruitment.

Although there are not yet clear plans to replace French with English countrywide, both the Algerian government and individuals believe that there is an increasing demand for English in the country. This need is justified by the fact that the academic, scientific, economic, political, and media transactions are conducted in English. Therefore, the Algerian State has recognised that improving the scientific research, enticing direct foreign investments, and building solid economy can be achieved through the reinforcement of English in schools and universities. This led the government to set modern curricula and to give significant importance to English in order to achieve greater deals of success in the field ELT and to provide individuals who are able to speak, read, write, and make research in English.

Further, the importance of English is highly imposed by oil and gas industry where it is extremely required. Indeed, English is considered as a compulsory language for the Algerian engineers to be employed in the international oil and gas companies in southern Algeria which offer higher salaries and better work conditions. Actually, there is an increasing concern among these companies about recruiting skilled local workers who have higher levels of English proficiency.

In addition, English can give the opportunity for the country to connect with the international scientific advance and to take part in the world trade. Certainly, this language is rising among the Algerian population, especially, among the young who are stirred by a perception that it is a global language which improves their career prospects and opens the door for future success. It has become the medium language of the social media such as Facebook and Twitter which are vastly used by the Algerian youth (Euromonitor International, 2012). Moreover, increasing numbers of Algerian students desire to pursuit higher education abroad and are taking English courses in the foreign languages' centres and schools.

2.6 ELT in Algeria

Since independence (1962), Algeria has been trying to set an effective educational system which would responds to the national needs in all domains. Because of the scientific and economic challenges of a globalized world, Algeria has tended to respond to the new demands by attributing additional roles to the English language in different fields. Indeed, the government has introduced basic reforms whose goals revolve around the improvement of the teaching corps, the reformulation of the pedagogic approach, and the implementation of specific measures to support the scientific research.

The Algerian educationalists have tried several teaching methods and approaches as far as the English language teaching is concerned. The Structuralist Approach, the Communicative Approach, and the Competency-based Approach are the main approaches which have been used in ELT.

In the 1990s, the Algerian government set new policy in the field of foreign language teaching and more importance has been given to English at all levels. Until 2004, EFL learners had been learning English from the eighth level in the middle school to the third level in the secondary school. However, during this period, the English language teaching and learning did not give the expected results due to pedagogical, economic, political, and social factors. Moreover, the Algerian learners did not show interest in learning English and focused only on the scientific subjects. EFL textbooks were not motivating as they included long and boring subjects or topics. Still, the teachers of English did not respect the syllabus given to them by the Ministry of Education and taught in their own ways. All these reasons led to mediocre outcomes.

With the beginning of the year 2000, the Algerian state began radical educational reforms and a significant expenditure was devoted to education. ELT has been given much more interest as many procedures have been taken to present English as an alternative to the French language. This new educational situation was imposed by the new national policies and by the global status of English. From 2004 until now, with the educational reforms, students start their early English courses from the 1ˢᵗ grade in the middle school and end up with a seven-year study of English when they come to pass their baccalaureate exam.

2.7 Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria

The Algerian Constitution reads that the state organises the educational system at all levels and recommends that all Algerians have the right for free schooling. The higher educational system is set, organised, and governed, and financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In this

respect, many executive decrees and regulatory laws have been enacted to regulate the organisation and functioning of the Algerian universities.

The system of higher education in Algeria is still in a progressive change. According to the European Commission (2012), the process of reform in the field of higher education in Algeria includes the following main elements:

- ➢ Setting a new university system which is based on three cycle degrees; Licence, Master, and Doctorate.
- ➢ Updating and adapting the teaching programs. This involves the generalisation of information technology, scientific laboratories, modern languages, especially English, and research methodology.
- ➢ Introducing optional and interdisciplinary modules.
- ➢ Implementing a semester system.
- ➢ Engaging students in practical projects and encouraging trainings.

There are several types of institutions in the field of higher education. They are either academic or vocational institutions under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. They involve universities, university campuses, institutions, national tertiary schools, university annexes, research centres, university centres, preparatory schools, teacher training colleagues, and continuing education universities (European Commission, 2012).

The role of Higher Schools and institutions is to train engineers, professionals, experts, and teachers in different disciplines. Among these institutions, one can cite the National Institution of Veterinary Studies which belongs to the University of Tiaret and the Higher School of Secondary Teachers in Algiers.

2.7.1 The Organisational System

The Higher Education System depends exclusively on the state. However, it is based on autonomous framework as universities have administrative and academic autonomy. Administratively, the Algerian universities are ruled by an academic council and an administrative council which are directed by the rector. These universities are divided into faculties which are headed by the deans. These faculties entail departments which are led by heads of departments. The Higher National Schools are run by a director, deputy directors, a general secretariat, and head of departments.

Academically, these universities have the right to set and plan the teaching programmes and modules according to agreed canvas. With regard to the financial system, the universities are all public establishments and are totally funded by the state. The ministry gives each university a budget but does not interfere in how this budget is dispensed.

The improvement of the higher education quality is the major concern of the recent reforms which has been launched by the Algerian government to join the international channel for qualifications acknowledgment and diplomas recognition. For this reason, a national committee was created in 2010 by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in order to enhance the teaching-learning outcomes by enforcing righteous practices and implementing new procedures and mechanisms in assessing and developing the higher education quality.

 Furthermore, national committees were erected for evaluating the achievements of the universities and the institutions. Their roles are restricted to the supervision and the assessment of the activities, training, and the scientific research.

2.7.2 Students' Profile

All students who hold the Baccalaureate certificate have the right to carry out free higher studies in the Algerian universities. Students with excellent marks can choose their field of study according to their wish. Others submit to the pedagogical places available in each department. Usually, medicinal and pharmaceutical studies require higher grades. Some higher schools impose tests on those who want to be secondary or middle school teachers. The number of university teachers is about 55000 while the number of students reached 1210000 in 2012. The following table illustrates the number of students in the Algerian Universities:

Number of students	
1210000	
Male	**Female**
40%	60%

Table 2.1 Number of Students in the Algerian Universities.

(European Commission Report, 2012: 5)

These statistics is a proof of the increasing number of the Algerian students who carry out higher studies in different Algerian universities. This is due to social, economic, and political stability and due to the continuing efforts of the state to establish a strong and comprehensive university network. In fact, students are allowed to conduct their higher studies freely. They receive the state support in the form of food, accommodation, medical services, transportation, and other facilities. Besides, 85% students with lower or average incomes are given a scholarship. The excellent students receive a state scholarship to carry on their studies abroad.

With a semester-based system, all learners move from the first semester to the second semester automatically. Credits are accumulated and transferred according to some rules and conditions. Students progress from the first year to the second year by counting credits of two semesters. They are obliged to accumulate the necessary credits in order to step up to the next grade. Definitely, students who get a Bachelor degree with 180 credits are admitted to the first Master year (M1). They can access to the second Master year (M2) when they complete successfully the M1 two semesters.

Students are evaluated by final exams and continuous assessment instruments in the form of tests, homework, and research works. Those who fail have another opportunity to sit for the make-up exams. Some of them can move to the higher grade with debts.

2.7.3 The Scientific Research

One of the goals of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is to encourage researchers by giving them all the necessary means and facilities. The ministry has tended to enforce the role of the Algerian universities in improving the outputs of the educational, economic, and industrial institutions. Therefore, a national system was established to weave the links between the universities and these institutions. To put this system into effect, the scientific research and the technological development has been given the utmost priority with significant expenditure.

Concerning the research facilities, the Algerian State has set about 789 research laboratories, 10 research centres, 3 thematic research agencies, and 5 research units in order to develop the national human resources and to generate know-how groups. In addition, the government has pumped considerable funds in building new universities, consolidating research infrastructure, and raising the number of researchers (European Commission Report, 2012).

In the time of globalisation, the Ministry of Higher Education has tried to build up and strengthen scientific and technological ties with many international universities and research bodies. In this respect, several conventions have been signed between the Algerian universities and their international counterparts. As a result, joint research teams have been created and many university professors and students have been trained in Europe, USA, and Canada. With this regard, the government set the following priorities:

> ➢ Defining the objectives and the impacts of the cooperation projects.
> ➢ Providing scientific and technological facilities for foreign researchers.
> ➢ Elaborating joint research programmes.
> ➢ Setting scientific sectors at the Algerian embassies.
> ➢ Signing cooperation treaties with famous universities.
> ➢ Engaging in multilateral cooperation programmes.

Indeed, Algeria has participated in different European programmes such as the Tempus and the Erasmus programmes. These programmes have involved many Algerian universities as partners or coordinators. In fact, many Algerian students and scholars have received scholarships to carry out their doctoral studies or to conduct research abroad in different disciplines.

In brief, the government has made great efforts to train academic staff for senior posts for the reason of improving education, agriculture, health, industry, energy, and many other domains. However, in spite of all these means and facilities, Algeria is still importing goods, technology, scientific services, and expertise. Therefore, there is a crucial need to reassess the policy of the scientific research and to reconsider the functioning and the effectiveness of this strategy.

2.7.4 Challenges and Needs

The Algerian universities are facing new challenges imposed by the advance of science and technology, the economic and social growth, and knowledge upsurge. Therefore, the government should afford the human resources and the means to improve the quality of the higher education. Besides, the main challenge is to train the academic staff in large numbers in order satisfy the needs of the Algerian universities. Still, the state should provide the necessary pedagogical, scientific and recreational facilities for students in order to help them carry out their studies at higher standards.

Moreover, there should be a radical innovation in order to eliminate the bureaucratic practices at the level of the different services in the Algerian universities. A new administrative system should involve both teachers and students' participation in the management of the universities. Another important challenge is the creation of a decentralised system to enforce autonomy and help skilful teachers, students, and researchers.

It is worthy to note that the Algerian state has extended the university network in all over the country. Thousands of university teachers, researchers, and administrators have been trained to achieve the assigned objectives. However, the ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is still required to continue the efforts and to introduce new reforms so as to increase research and training opportunities and to improve the status of teachers and researchers.

2.8 The LMD System in Algeria

Since the independence, Algeria has witnessed a huge development in the field of higher education. In fact, the state has mobilised massive human and material means in order to improve the teaching -learning standards. Indeed,

many universities have been built and various departments involving new specialities have been introduced. However, in the last few years, the Algerian university became unable to cope with the new social, economic, and professional circumstances and was obliged to introduce fundamental   reforms to the whole system. In other words, the Algerian experts tended to alter the classical system with a new one called the LMD system.

The classical system was based on a gradual scheme including a four-year study for the Bachelor degree, two years for the Magister, and four years for the Doctorate. This system became inconsistent with the challenges put by the new world system and by the national, economic, and social demands. This situation compelled the Algerian state to think about the LMD system which is implemented in the European and the American universities. It is, in fact, aimed to match the national and the international requirements. The LMD is founded on an alleviated outline entailing three years for Licence, two years for the Master, and three years for the Doctorate (Réformes D'Enseignements Supérieurs, 2007). The transfer from the classical system to the LMD system required statutory laws and regulatory decrees to install and endorse a new system.

This system was implemented in the Algerian universities in 2003 and was aimed to   to correspond to the national and the international expectations. In this system, a Bachelor or Master course could be either academic or technical. Of course, the scientific and technological advance led to a huge outburst in all domains. This imposed greater challenges and the need for change has become crucial. In this new context, the roles of higher education are no longer limited to giving knowledge to the students but go further to quench the needs of the national economy and to provide skilful professionals in all fields. Therefore, one of the major goals of this system is the employability of the graduates.

The introduction of this system was supported by exciting ideas and regulatory laws in order to pose a radical change in the teaching practices and to realize a shift to better university attainments. For instance, in the point of assessment, students should be evaluated by continuous and regular assessment techniques and by a final exam at the end of each semester. Teachers are given more freedom in evaluating their students as they can assess their competence, skills, classroom practice, learning interest, and their levels during the whole term. In fact, evaluation is no longer limited to one final exam that cannot actually reflect students' competencies.

Furthermore, the LMD system put new responsibilities on both teachers and learners who should play new roles in the teaching-learning process. Certainly, students are obliged to be more active and autonomous in their learning, as they need to make positive contributions in order to build up their skills and literacy. Similarly, the teachers are no longer the supreme source of knowledge and are advised to cope with students' needs and interests. Indeed, they should give more freedom to their learners and help them to overpass their learning difficulties. They are recommended to set clear learning goals for their students and help them build and enhance their competencies. Therefore, teachers themselves need to acquire the skills, the knowledge, and the techniques that are necessary for attaining higher achievements.

However, it is important to say that the transition from the classical system to the new LMD system cannot be costless. Many problems have appeared at the pedagogical and the organisational levels. For example, teachers at the beginning had been obliged to adapt with two different regimes until the old system completely extinguished. Besides, the rules and the criteria that govern the shift from the third year of License to the first year of Master are still ambiguous and are being cruelly criticised. This situation has created complexities for both teachers and learners in terms of assessment and evaluation.

Furthermore, although the LMD system aims at improving students skills and to provide competent professionals for both academic and economic markets, it did not count for the employment of the graduate students. In fact, many LMD graduates are still in intricate situations where they can neither carry on their studies nor find suitable jobs which actually meet their field of study. These factors led to dire consequences and put much criticism on this system.

Despite the fact that the LMD has been used for more than a decade , the Algerian teachers, students, and faculty chiefs are still discussing matters such as the teaching units, number of students, availability of the teaching materials, assessment methods, grading criteria, and tutoring systems. The old traditions and practices in the university illustrate that the LMD system is far from being implemented appropriately since it failed to inflict a new vision and to eradicate teachers and students' old mentalities.

2.9 The LMD System and ELT

The LMD system is a result of an international system imposed by globalization. Therefore, Algeria was obliged to cope with this new system by introducing innovations in all fields including its educational and university policies. The goal of this system is to provide skilful practitioners including teachers, experts, researchers, and field workers. Most Algerian scientists, researchers, and the avid backers of the LMD system have been stimulated by the global change in this world. They have often praised this system for the reason of introducing new teaching strategies, applying modern methods, creating new professional degrees, and inculcating new spirits in the Algerian university.

As far as ELT departments are concerned, ESP is seen as the key element to complete the LMD exigencies. Indeed, professions in tourism, media, business, shipping, aviation and many others put new demands and gave new responsibilities to ELT departments. In fact, they are now required to prepare the students for a successful life and to form and train skilful tutors to teach in different departments.

Therefore, a number of EFL teachers have been recruited in most departments such as physics, sociology, and biology. In this regard, ESP courses have been introduced to meet these growing needs and many post-graduate research opportunities have been raised. As a result, many ESP teachers have been specialized in teaching English for other specialities such as medical sciences, mathematics, and economics.   However, EFL teachers still have problems and challenges such as :

> ➢ Lack of knowledge in the subject area.
> ➢ Lack of the teaching material written in English.
> ➢ Lack of students' knowledge of the English language in other departments.
> ➢ Absence of consented programmes.
> ➢ No cooperation among ESP teachers.

Still, challenges such as the availability of classroom facilities, professional teachers, financing, supervising, training programmes, timing, and large classes seem to have not been carefully taken into account. For example, in some Algerian universities, classrooms are generally composed of 30 to 40 students. In such a situation, foreign language teaching can be very difficult and the learning achievements will be at lower rates. Besides, this could cause students' demotivation because they cannot get enough time to practice English in the classroom. Further, teachers cannot use the group work strategy in classes with large numbers. Certainly,   the physical conditions have an impact on learning and can affect learner's motivation either positively or negatively. Indeed, the crowded classes have been a great problem in the Algerian universities and has caused many pedagogical problems.

In addition, most of EFL teachers have not been well trained to teach in different areas and eventually failed to offer convenient instruction to their learners. Therefore, experts need to reassess the application of this system in

order to improve the teaching-learning process and to reach better professionalization.

As for students, most of them focus on marks and grades in their learning without giving importance to the amount of knowledge they should gain. Indeed, this decreases their intrinsic motivation and leads to lower achievements. Focusing on marks and grades makes our graduate students read few books and do not push a lifelong learning (Travis & Wade, 1997).

2.10 ELT at University Level

English has been given a great importance by the Algerian authorities. Since 1990, the government has been trying to give a permanent place to English in the Algerian institutions, particularly at the tertiary level. Indeed, the authorities realised the importance of English as a global language and became aware of its role in developing the national know-how and in attaining the modern science in all fields.

At university level, English is taught as a foreign language in almost in all faculties as many English departments have been opened in many universities. Research surveys show that university students prefer English to any other foreign language because they believe that this language is their gate to the world of globalization.

In ELT departments, students are submitted to a comprehensive programme which involves different modules such as; Morphosyntax , reading comprehension, aural comprehension, written expression, oral expression, phonetics, TEFL, American literature, British literature, American civilisation, British civilisation, general linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and research methodology. In the third year, the students are required either to make a short research which should be presented in the form

of an extended dissertation or to go through training sessions in schools and write their training reports.

After finishing this programme successfully, students obtain a diploma of the English language. The majority prefer to carry on their studies to get the Master's degree. Many of these become teachers of English in schools, some work as translators, and a few of them make doctoral studies.

2.11 Teaching Reading

Reading is unquestionably an elemental key to successful foreign language learning. Certainly, it provides learners with language vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and style. According to Nuttal (2005), reading comprises the following elements:

➢ The concept of meaning.
➢ The transfer of meaning from the author to the reader.
➢ How is meaning built by reading.
➢ How the reader, the author, and the content make the reading process.

Reading can be seen as an intentional thinking during which meaning can be constructed through interactions between the text and the reader (Durkin, 1993). Some researchers viewed that reading is a framework in which teachers give their students time to engage in reading and push them to share their literature and textual information. According to Hedge (2000), any reading course design should include the following goals:

➢ The ability to read a wide range of texts.
➢ The ability to set the reading style and purpose.
➢ Building adequate knowledge of language which increases the reading ability.
➢ Building schematic knowledge.

➢ Developing an awareness of text structures.

➢ Building a critical view about the text content

Since teachers assume a great responsibility in motivating learners to be good readers, they need to select the appropriate reading materials, seek interesting texts, and consider a variety of topics. A successful reading instruction requires a full understanding of the nature and the components of reading including the reading material and the reader.

The reading instruction is actually delivered throughout an entire framework. In fact, teachers can work alongside with their students and help them to use different strategies to make sense of the text. Besides, they can allocate specific time to explain to them the criteria that successful readers use to choose the appropriate reading material for independent reading (Smith, 2004).

Still, the successful reading instruction serves to help learners understand the direction to which the reading course is leading and gives them the opportunity to develop their reading ability. Explicit reading instruction is often seen as the opposite of implicit or embedded instruction. The former refers to a more clear, effective, sequential, and rigorous type of instruction while the latter focuses on strategy, practice, and particular aspects of the reading process (Smith, 2004).

2.12 The Status of Reading in the Algerian ELT Departments

The Algerian students are all native speakers of Arabic and have learnt English as a foreign language for at least seven years in the middle and secondary schools. However, most of them have never made lot of readings in English. They come into the university with fewer skills and lesser abilities in English because they are generally loaded with many other subjects in their basic and secondary learning. As for reading, it is often seen by those students as short texts given by the teacher in the classroom or as an examination task done at the end of each learning term.

The reading module includes short and authentic texts followed by some activities that target students' comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Generally, teachers used to offer little instruction about the nature of reading and focus on explaining the text's content without giving clear strategies about how to read, interpret, and comprehend. They focus on comprehension, memorisation, and text analyses. In addition, most of teachers believe that the most important task in the reading course is to highlight the unfamiliar words in the reading passage and to emphasise text's comprehension. As a result, despite years of receiving reading lectures, the Algerian students still think of reading as learning a large number of words and are still at the lower skill level including word and sentence decoding. In fact, they are not trained to read appropriately to gain information, to improve their literacy, or to read for pleasure.

Further, the reading skill is seen to be easy to teach for many EFL teachers because, unfortunately, they think that reading is simply selecting a variety of texts for students and asking them to read and answer comprehension questions. The restricted time devoted to reading does not permit teachers to offer an effective reading instruction based on scientific criteria. Still, it is taught only as intensive reading in the classroom and there is no similar extensive reading programme to encourage EFL students to make further reading at home.

In most Algerian ELT departments, reading comprehension is seen as a language skill that is taught for first and second year students twice a week. During classroom sessions, learners are exposed to literary texts including short stories, idioms, newspaper articles, expository texts, and even scientific texts. The rationale behind teaching this skill is to make learners read in English and acquire the knowledge of this language through reading. In some ELT departments, like the Department of English in the University of Tlemcen, first year EFL students receive a comprehensive reading comprehension programme

including lectures about the reading skills and strategies, the use of reading strategies, and the practice of reading activities (see appendices 3&4).

Because of the lack of reading habits in the ELT departments, EFL students face several learning obstacles especially at the first year level. Although they spent eight years in learning English in the middle and secondary schools, first year students still complain about problems such as; the lack of vocabulary bulk and insufficient grammar knowledge. Therefore, a comprehensive approach based on reading is highly recommended to improve language skills (Baiche, 2015).

As a proposal, Baiche (2015) suggests a reading module which should comprise a selected programme that includes varied and graded readings in relation to the English language curriculum. The rationale behind the creation of this module is to improve first year students' English language proficiency. Besides, it aims to overcome students' weaknesses and to instil reading habits. This suggested module serves to prepare students to higher linguistic, literary, and cultural studies in the ELT department.

The objective of teaching reading in the departments of English in Algeria is intended to improve students' reading fluency by making them acquire the decoding skills, read at appropriate speed, and improve comprehension. Among the skills that students generally acquire, one can cite the following:

> ➢ Recognising text's structure and genre.
> ➢ Decoding and recognition skills.
> ➢ Vocabulary building.
> ➢ Using background knowledge.
> ➢ Comprehension strategies: Inferring, annotating, predicting, questioning, interpreting, monitoring, and evaluating.

➢ Detecting author's goals and attitudes.

➢ Making personal judgments.

Actually, a successful reading instruction requires a careful planning and constructive performance in order to provide valuable texts and to meet learners' interests. For example, teachers should select language-rich texts without neglecting the content. Besides, they should set clear goals for the reading course and help their students identify their reading purposes. Moreover, an extensive reading programme can be intended for first year students of English because it is the missing point in our EFL programs at university level. Many studies have argued that including extensive reading in ELT curricula provide continuous exposure to the foreign language. Actually, it installs reading habits, increases motivation, builds up knowledge and literacy, and improves language skills.

In sum, it is important to say that reading is an effective instrument to enhance learners' language learning. When learners read, they are engaged in a new language including new vocabulary, new idioms, new ideas, new syntactic structures, and new culture.

2.12.1 The Reading Instruction Problems

Most of first year EFL students have stern difficulties in most of the English language areas such as; writing, strategic reading, listening, and communication. Generally, teachers report students' weaknesses in all these skills (Hamzaoui , 2010).

One of the obstacles that confront the teachers of reading comprehension is the lack of skills, knowledge, and strategies for good comprehension. For first year students, teachers are required to teach these strategies and to make diagnostic assessment in order to detect and overcome students' weaknesses instead of only introducing literary texts with the focus on comprehension questions and vocabulary items.

Gabb (2000) puts a very vital inquiry why students face difficulties in moving into fluency stage although they have acquired the essential decoding skills. She categorizes a number of obstacles such as; limited vocabulary and lack of background knowledge (schematic knowledge). Orasanu (1996: 32) demonstrates : ***"the knowledge a reader brings to a text is a principal determiner of how that text will be comprehended, and what may be learned and remembered"***. That is to say that students' background knowledge is important in reading because it determines their text's comprehension.

In the last few years, students were not taught the reading strategies and the reading skills but were simply given texts to read and answer. In other words, they were not equipped with the techniques and the skills that help them skim, scan, evaluate, judge, criticise, react, or discuss the author's ideas. They were not introduced to all these reading fundamentals that train them how to select and read a text or a book.

Furthermore, the teaching of reading at the Departments of English in the Algerian universities is teacher-centred rather than learner-centred. In fact, students do not contribute in the selection of texts or topics for classroom study. Reading is never rewarded and is limited to text comprehension in the classroom. Moreover, it is conceived as a simple subject or module to pass at the end of the year.

Still, EFL students are not trained to be autonomous and active readers. In more clear words, they are not pushed by teachers of reading to make extensive reading to build up knowledge and to enhance their language. Unfortunately, this approach to improve students' language competence is utterly neglected by both teachers and students although they admit that poor reading leads to to poor language achievements.

2.12.2 The Reading Comprehension Course

In the reading comprehension course, learners often read a text to search the meaning and to be familiar with writing mechanisms. Through more intensive reading, students can gain substantial practice in operating the reading strategies. These strategies can be either text-related or learner-related: the former comprises an awareness of text organization, while the latter entails strategies like linguistic, schematic, and metacognitive strategies.

Actually, in the classroom reading instruction, teachers have the opportunities to teach skills such as; skimming, scanning, annotation, and text interpretation. Besides, activities such as; ordering paragraphs, filling the gap tasks, and multiple choice questions can be included to evaluate students' comprehension. This helps teachers gather evidence about their learners, adjust instruction, and offer effective feedback according to students' needs (Harmer, 2001).

According to Harmer (2001:213), the teacher can play the following roles in teaching in a classroom reading task:

a/Organizer: teachers should tell their students what their reading objective is, and put clear instructions about how to achieve it.

b/Observer: when teachers ask their students to read, they need to give sufficient time to do so. This means that they should not interfere or interrupt their reading even if they want to give further explanation or information. During reading, teachers can observe their students' progress and decide when to stop them or offer them constructive feedback.

c/Feedback organizer: When learners complete their activities, teachers can start a feedback session to check that they have done the task successfully. This can be done by having the students compare their awareness in pairs and asking them to justify their answers from the text. Still, this can provoke a detailed analyses of the text and informs both teachers and learners comprehension problems. Moreover, need to be supportive in organizing feedback in order to sustain learners' motivation.

d/Prompter: teachers can prompt their students to notice language points in the text. They can guide and direct them to certain features of text structure and clarify ambiguities, monitor reading, and solve comprehension problems.

Furthermore, when teaching reading comprehension in the classroom, teachers need to act as experienced readers and share their experiences with their students. This can occur by using interactive read-aloud and think-aloud procedures and talking about a wide variety of texts (Atwell, 1998). Students, in their turn, can play significant roles by interacting with teachers as well as with their peers. As for the activities used in teaching reading, teachers need to choose the tasks that really develop the reading ability and help learners understand the text and lead them to develop good reading strategies.

2.12.3 The Reading Comprehension Activities

It is now a standard practice in the design of the reading task to use a three-step procedure which involve pre, while, and post- reading activities. Most of the teachers use these three stages to ensure that reading is taught in the sense of helping learners to increase their ability to read and tackle texts. This is in contrast to the traditional methods that require students to read with or without introductory stages and are finally asked to answer comprehension questions (Hedge, 2000).

2.12.3.1 Pre- Reading Activities

The aim of this activity is to introduce for learners the linguistic, conceptual, and cultural features of the text and to activate their prior knowledge. It should aim to check and develop knowledge in relation to the text. Indeed, when students bring information about the text, the reading task become more effective.

The pre-reading phase is an important element as it motivate learners, enables them to identify the reading purpose, helps them activate the necessary knowledge, and prepares them to reading (Ringler and Weber, 1984). Besides, this step may include providing learners with an explanation of the vocabulary items, grammatical structures that are entailed in the text. Langer (1982) suggested a pre-reading plan which begins with the teacher introducing key words, concepts, and pictures in order to stimulate a classroom discussion about the topic. Students are invited to say anything that comes to their minds as they are urged to answer questions about the text information.   In respect to the pre-reading step, Hedge views:

During the pre-reading stage, students are urged to do a number of things: become oriented to the text, for example for what purpose was it originally produced?; tune in to the content of the text; establish a for reading; express an attitude about the topic; review their own experiences in relation to the topic; activate existing cultural knowledge; and become familiar with some of the language in the text.

(Hedge, 2000: 210)

In other words, learners should be prepared to the reading task by helping them to recognize and activate the knowledge they already have about the topic. In addition, through through pre-reading activities, learners will be able to understand more linguistically and contextually. These activities help teachers guide their learners into understanding the major concepts and ideas in the text.

In this way, teachers can prepare them in terms of both schematic and language knowledge and ensure purposeful reading. Various activities are suggested in this stage an teachers can choose and combine a variety of tasks. For example, they can talk about pictures accompanying the text; predicting from the

title; agreeing or disagreeing with a set of proposals about the text; answering a set of questions; listing items of information they already know about the topic; or discussing the topic (Hedge 2000). According to Texas Education Agency Handbook (2002: 11), the pre-reading instruction includes helping students:

➢ To use and activate their background knowledge according to the content-area topic. At this stage, tasks should include making learners say what they know about the topic and asking them to reveal what they want to learn from it.

➢ To practice activities such as mapping techniques which could enable them to grasp the relationships between the ideas to be studied.

➢ To participate in activities that present similar materials to help learners make links between the topic being studied and their background knowledge.

➢ To participate in activities that develop their background vocabulary knowledge about the topic.

➢ To carry out vocabulary-building activities.

➢ To preview and make predictions about the topic.

➢ To consider the physical characteristics of the text such as headings and sub-headings.

➢ To set clear reading purposes.

➢ To ask questions about the topic.

Certainly, devoting sufficient time for the pre-reading stage makes the reading activity more easier and useful as it gives students the chance to build an overall schema for the topic and put their comprehension in the right way.

2.12.3.2 While-Reading Activities

The goal of the while- reading activities is to model and apply useful reading strategies. Fluent readers unconsciously interact with the text and predict

what comes next. In other words, the interactive nature of reading is explicitly demonstrated in this stage of reading (Gibbons, 2002).

During this step, teachers need first to read the text using the necessary pausing and intonation. Besides, students are asked to use the skimming and scanning strategies so as to get an idea about the topic and seek particular information. Next, students are advised to reread the text for detail in order to gain a deeper understanding. They need to write notes, underline the unfamiliar words, use annotation, use dictionaries, and find out the important ideas in the text (Gibbons, 2002).

Generally, in this step, most of the teachers of reading comprehension in the Algerian ELT departments ask the students to read silently without intervention. They seldom interfere to adjust comprehension or to answer questions. Besides, they do not give time for while-reading instruction in order to make them practice the comprehension strategies such as predicting and inferring. Still, they rarely raise opportunities for while reading discussions in order to involve them in real reading. The while-reading activities should aim to encourage students to be active during the reading process. In this sense, Hedge suggests:

> *Students can be given activities which require them to do many of the following: Follow the order of ideas in a text; react to the opinions expressed; understand the information it contains; ask themselves questions; make notes; confirm expectations or prior knowledge; or predict the next part of the text from various clues.*

(Hedge, 2000: 210)

That is to say, learners are given the chance to show their views during reading, to ask questions, to abolish ambiguities, to avoid misconceptions, and to correct their understanding. To boost these while reading activities, teachers can present a set of tasks. For example, they can ask their learners to tick a list of

expectations, give them questions and ask them to stop and think about them; or provide them with a chart to fill in with points of information (Hedge, 2000).

The while-reading phase has positive effects on the reading task as students can develop their linguistic and schematic knowledge. According to Texas Education Agency Handbook (2002: 12), the while- reading instruction should involve the following points:

➢ Helping students to construct mental images of the text content.

➢ Helping students to monitor and reflect on their reading.

➢ Urging students to engage in self-questioning activities as they proceed in their reading. For example, a student could ask the question: " *Do I understand what I read?*

➢ Engaging learners in a thinking process in order to identify and clarify information in the text. For example, a student can ask the question: "*What is the most important idea of this paragraph?*

➢ Introducing activities that entail factual and inferential questions and providing clues about where to find answers to these questions.

➢ Keeping literature records so as to help learners reflect on their reading through predictions and interpretations.

➢ Setting story maps and using other graphic organizers to help students identify, classify, and organise information from the text.

It is important to say that few research studies have confirmed the effects of the while-reading activities as their outcomes may sound contradictory. However, many students have positively reported on the effectiveness of these activities. Therefore, teachers need to encourage activity, reflection, and response while reading.

2.12.3.3 Post-Reading Activities

The after-reading activities are based on the point that learners have carefully read the text. These activities should require students to keep returning to the text and rereading it in order to seek specific information.

In the Algerian EFL classrooms, teachers ask their learners to answer comprehension questions, fill the gapped paragraphs, or write summaries by using their own words without introducing radical changes to the text's general meaning or its central ideas. Besides, they can be asked to imagine new endings to a story where they are encouraged to invent information that is consistent with the story. According to Texas Education Agency Handbook (2002: 13), the post-reading instruction may comprise the following goals:

- ➢ Helping students to review, paraphrase, summarize, and interpret the text.
- ➢ Providing students with opportunities to participate in discussions about the important ideas of the text.
- ➢ Pushing learners to answer questions related to both literal and inferential comprehension.
- ➢ Having learners working in groups or in pairs and encouraging them to freely ask questions.
- ➢ Presenting the important information from the text in either oral or written reports.

Still, teachers can use post-reading activities which include multiple-choice questions, true-false statements, cloze tasks, and filling the gap exercises in order to check and assess students' understanding. According to Gibbons (2002), the post-reading activities should fulfil any of the following goals:

- ➢ Using the text as the basis for specific language studies such as grammar and phonetics.
- ➢ Giving student the opportunity to react creatively to what they have read.

> Focusing   more deeply on the content of the text.

Post reading activities can be varied according to the text's type and should be tied up with the reading purpose. In fact, learners can check the activities done in the while reading step, respond to the writer's views, and make use of what they have read in a meaningful way (Hedge, 2000).

Furthermore, teachers can introduce a wide range of post-reading activities emphasizing either the text's content such as; debates and role-play, or focusing on the text's language. At this phase, teachers can build their learners' language competence by focusing on some linguistic features such as vocabulary and grammar (Hedge, 2000). The following figure represents a post reading activity which relates to grammar:

After you read

Looking at language

Work in pairs

a/ Find all the uses of "*this*" and "*these*" in the text. What does each
   refer back to? For example, in this sentence "*This leaflet will help you
   to answer these questions*" on page 46, "these questions" refers to the
   four preceding questions.

b/ A writer shows the connections between ideas in a text. Certain words
   are used to do this; e.g. "*and*" adds one idea to another
      "*It is the commonest type and is called coronary heart disease*"
   Other connecting words used in this text include:
   Because, but, consequently, however, so, so….that
   Look back at the uses
   Which of these words shows that one thing is the cause of another?
   Which of these words shows that one thing is the result of another?
   Which of these words contrasts two ideas?

Figure 2.1 An example of a Post-reading Activity.

(Murphy and Cooper, 1995: 50)

This figure demonstrates one of the many types of post-reading tasks. For example, this activity is an exploration of students' knowledge of the language points. It emphasise the importance of syntactic knowledge in understanding the author's ideas. In this case, the activity is about the use the demonstrative pronouns and the connectors make them reread the text to give correct answers.

In short, this kind of activities builds different kinds of classroom interaction and ensures that students have individual practice of the reading strategies. In this process, the teacher acts as guide, organizer, and evaluator of how successfully students have tackled the text and what further instruction is needed.

2.13 Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment is an integral part of teaching. It is a systematic process of gathering information about what learners know. The primary goal of classroom assessment is not only to evaluate and classify the learners' performance but also to inform teaching and enhance the learning. In fact, teachers conduct classroom assessment not only by setting formal tests, but also by making continuous classroom observation and applying instructional activities. Actually, assessment is a multi-faceted concept which includes different issues and integrates the whole teaching-learning process. It is broader than testing. In this sense, Hedge writes:

> *…assessment is the more inclusive term: it refers to the general process of monitoring or keeping track of the learners' progress. Testing is one kind of assessment , one which is typically used at the end of stage of instruction to measure student achievement.*

(Hedge, 2000: 376)

In other words, testing is seen as one of the assessment instruments. It is used to measure what learners have got at the end of the course. Testing is a specific technique which is used by examiners to measure students skills and abilities. In language learning, effective tests make learners show how much they can perform in reading, speaking, listening, writing, or grammar. However, assessment aims at detecting students' needs, monitoring learning, modifying instruction, and giving constructive feedback.

There are different types of classroom assessment: diagnostic, formative, and summative. The diagnostic assessment aims to discover students' abilities at the early beginning of the course or programme. It helps teachers plan their instruction according to students' abilities, needs, and wants. Moreover, it illustrates learners' readiness for a specific programme and helps them take actions to close the gap between their current competency level and their desired learning goals (Black &William, 1998).

As for the formative assessment, it is a continuous process which include specific tasks to support and improve learning. It aims to measure learners' progress in a specific area of learning at any period. Obviously, it involves different strategies that are used to test, evaluate, appraise, and judge students' performance in order to promote their learning (Gipps, 1994).

The summative assessment is designed to evaluate students' achievements at the end of a course, a term, or a year. It provides evidence of what students gained at the end of a specific learning programme. Generally, it involves tests and exams which are recorded in the form of marks and scores. It is used to pinpoint the extent of success and points of failure. The following table illustrates the distinguishing features of formative and summative assessment:

Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
- Is prepared and carried out by the class teacher as a routine part of teaching and learning. - Is specifically related to what has been taught, i.e. content is in harmony with what has been taught. - The information from the assessment is used diagnostically; it is focused on the individual learner's specific strengths and weaknesses, needs, etc.	- Is not necessarily prepared and carried out by the class teacher. - does not necessarily relate immediately to what has been taught. - The judgement about a learner's performance is likely to feed into record-keeping and be used for administrative purposes, e.g. checking standards and targets. -Is frequently externally imposed, e.g. by an institution or a ministry of education.

Table 2.2 Some Distinguishing Features of Formative and Summative Assessments.   (Hedge, 2000: 377)

This table demonstrates some of the differences between the formative and the summative assessment. Indeed, the former is a classroom task which is designed to collect data and to provide feedback. It is used to know how learners respond to a specific teaching strategy. In contrast, the summative assessment is an evaluation task. It deals with tests and exams for the purpose of scoring and grading.

In brief, assessment is identified as being diagnostic, formative, and summative. These three mechanisms are used together to help both teachers and students decide what should be done to enhance the teaching- learning process.

2.14 Assessment of Reading

In the departments of English in the Algerian universities, reading comprehension is evaluated by tests and exams which are recorded by marks to be delivered to the administration. Teachers rarely carry out diagnostic or formative assessment in order to adjust their instruction according to their students' needs and weaknesses. In other words, what teachers of reading comprehension do is evaluation, not assessment.

In evaluating reading comprehension, teachers generally use different techniques which may include gap filling, short questions, multiple choice questions, true or false questions, and yes-no questions, giving opinion, and writing summaries. For example, the advantages of using comprehension questions, based on a reading passage in testing reading , is that the answers should be searched, produced, and articulated by students rather than being given.

According to Weir (2005), the ultimate goal of a reading comprehension test is to scrutinize and measure reading literacy without counting for spelling or syntax. However, it is important to say that grammar knowledge plays a significant role in shaping and directing text comprehension. Therefore, testing reading should not involve only comprehension but also the basics that support or thwart this comprehension. In the case of the Algerian teachers, the reading comprehension test count for comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, grammar points, and even the writing style.

Generally, the reading tests include different types of authentic texts taken from books, magazines, research papers, or newspapers. These texts are accompanied with a variety of questions and activities which aim to test a variety of reading skills (Sally and Katie, 2008). In order to adequately evaluate students' reading comprehension abilities, many types of questions and activities are used. Among these techniques, one can cite: True- false questions, matching,

comprehension questions, yes-no questions, multiple-choice questions, gap filling, and essay writing.

a. True-False question: This type of activity is seen as the simplest task by students because they just need to read the text again and put the answer. This task includes a number of statements or ideas and requires the students to state the correct and the wrong ones according to the text's content. Several times, teachers add other statements which are not mentioned in the text and ask the learners to reveal them.

b. Matching: This is another common reading comprehension activity which isused by most examiners. In this activity, students need to choose from a list of statements, words, questions, or headings and match them with their explanations, answers, or definitions. For example, the students can be asked to link a description or an interpretation to particular paragraph in the text.

c. WH questions and Yes –No Questions: In testing reading comprehension, most teachers use *wh* questions such as*;" who, when, how, where, and what".* They are used to test students' literal understanding of the text. They serve to examine their ability to recognise information and to make adequate evaluations and predictions.

d. Multiple-Choice Questions: This type of reading comprehension activity is familiar to students. It includes a number of questions accompanied with several answers and the students need to choose the correct answer. The multiple-choice activity could also include incomplete statements with three or four words or phrases for choice.

e. Gap Filling: This activity includes sentences, texts, or diagrams from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs are deleted .These *gap- filling* exercises can also be used in evaluating students' comprehension, vocabulary,

grammar, cohesion, and coherence. They are useful for learners with low level of performance.

f. Synonyms and Opposites: In this activity, students are asked to provide synonyms or opposites of particular words from the text. They should know that words have multiple meanings which differ according to the context. Sometimes, they are given more complex words with different connotations. In some cases, they are given whole idioms and are asked to pick out expressions from the text that explain and match their meanings.

g. Essay Writing: In this activity, students are asked either to summarize the text or to write an essay which relate to the text content. Summarising tests learners' competence in identifying the main ideas of the text and their ability to rewrite and reorganise them in a concise paragraph that actually cover the whole meaning of the text.

In sum, one can say that at university level   assessment of reading should target higher order skills such as understanding, interpretation, critical thinking, and evaluation. Besides, it should give the evaluator the opportunity to reveal students' needs and weaknesses in order to adjust instruction and improve teaching.

2.15 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to bring   a clear view about ELT and reading in Algeria with reference to EFL classes. Apparently, the intricate global change and the revolutionary improvements in information and science have inspired the Algerian State, the scientists, and the educational experts to ponder over the appropriate procedures and methods to elaborate a comprehensive plan that endorses the English language teaching and learning.

More importantly, this chapter focused mainly on reading which is taught to first and second year EFL students. It is seen as a fundamental skill as it involves language ingredients such as syntax and lexis. It helps learners develop abilities to read in other subjects like literature and civilization. Actually, this chapter showed how reading is taught and assessed in the Algerian ELT departments.

As a matter of fact, students who read successfully are better able to reach higher achievements in their studies. Therefore, there should be a comprehensive and effective approach to teach reading to EFL students in the Algerian universities. This approach should be based on a clear programme and clear purposes.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Data Analyses

3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the research aims, procedures, and instruments that are included in this study. In fact, the researcher describes the objectives, the field, and the steps of this study and tries to provide clear arguments of his choices and options in designing and conducting this research.

Besides, the present chapter gives reason for the use of the two questionnaires designed for both teachers and students and demonstrates the classroom observation form and procedures. It includes detailed explanations of the data collection procedures and provides analyses and discussions of the results. Moreover, this empirical part of the current research defines the informants of this study and reveals their answers and suggestions concerning the reading instruction and the role of reading in developing the English language proficiency. In fact, it reports both students and teachers' attitudes and views concerning the research topic.

In brief, this chapter is aimed to clarify the research objectives, to show the data collection techniques, to analyse results, and to provide an overall discussion of the findings. Finally, it tries to explore the informants' proposals and implications in order to give answers to the designed research questions.

3.2 Research Aims

This research is intended to shed light on the importance of reading in language learning with reference to first year students at the English department. In fact, the main objective of this study is to show how reading can develop the English language proficiency domains.

Accordingly, the study scrutinises the reading instruction and tries to give answers and solutions to the questions raised in this research. Certainly, the reading instruction is partly emphasised in order to investigate the methods, strategies, and materials used in the classroom reading lectures.

In addition, the study explores the reasons and the factors that lead to reading deficits and tries to reveal the obstacles that face and demotivate first year students to be good readers. Besides, this work aims to examine teachers' practices and learners' performance in and out the classroom. In other words, it intends to address the reading instruction, the use of reading to teach the language skills, and the role of extensive reading in increasing students' language achievements.

Still, this research attempts to illuminate the links between reading and the skills of writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. In fact, it tries to gather evidence in order elucidate the adequate reading activities that could be used to develop each skill. In this respect, the study involves the informants' views and attitudes towards involving reading activities and extensive reading programmes to develop the language skills.

3.3 Research Design and Methodology

The study was conducted at the Department of English at Abou-bakr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. It addressed first year LMD students in this department and EFL teachers from different Universities. This research is conducted in the form of a case study and used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Three main research instruments were used: Teachers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, and the classroom observation.

3.3.1 Case Study

The use of this element of research helps the researcher to collect, analyse, and interpret data gathered from various sources. For example, information can be picked from individuals, groups, communities, or organisations. The case study model is considered as subjective, descriptive, and analytical. It allows the investigators to use different research methods and approaches and helps them assess and test the approaches, methods, and theories in different fields.

Furthermore, the case study usually refers to an equitable rigorous investigation of a single unit such as a person, a group of people, or a company. It can enable the investigator to search, understand, and analyse problems, phenomena, or academic issues. The case-study method is based on the following steps:

> ➢ Spotting the research problem.
> ➢ Setting the research objectives.
> ➢ Designing the research approaches and instruments.
> ➢ Collecting Data.
> ➢ Analysing data.
> ➢ Reporting the results.

Surely, the case study is an experimental probe which investigates and examines contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts (Yin, 1984). It is a concentrated examination which provides detailed accounts, facts and information about a given research topic.

3.3.2 Research Methods

In this study, two research approaches have been used: quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method is supported and favoured by the fundamental sciences and is based on the construction of hypotheses that can be tested and confirmed by collecting, evaluating, and analysing data in an empirical style. It is useful in finding facts and addressing the "what", "when", and "where".

As for the qualitative research method, it is sustained by the human sciences and is based on enquiring, exploring, and discovering. According to McDonough (1997:53): ***"Qualitative research usually gathers observations, interviews, field data records, questionnaires, transcripts, and so on"***. Indeed, it

entails various research instruments which help the researcher to gather reliable data that give reason for the findings. This approach addresses the "why".

Indeed, the use of a mixed research approach has been praised and recommended by many researchers because it provides ground for searching, analysing, and comparing subjects in a statistical way (Patton, 2002). Robert and Weir state the importance of triangulation as follows:

> *A combination of data sources is likely to be necessary in most evaluations because often no one source can describe adequately such a diversity of features as is found in educational settings and because of the need for corroboration of findings by using data from these different sources collected by different methods and by different people (i.e. 'triangulation'). It is now widely held that multiple methods should be used in all investigations.*

(Weir and Roberts, 1994: 137)

That is to say that the use of triangulation in conducting a research is important for the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the results. Indeed, using multiple methods is necessary in gathering evidence and evaluating the findings because no one source can perfectly provide adequate data about a certain phenomenon or subject.

3.3.3 Research Instruments

In this study, a combination of research methods and instruments has been used. In fact, researchers have shown the effectiveness of the mixed method approach as it provides different data sources which accurately describe diversities and features of educational settings. Besides, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods requires the use of various techniques and tools in gathering evidence. Indeed, multiple research instruments give the research a certain degree of validity and reliability.

Therefore, in this research work, three research tools have been used: two questionnaires and classroom observation:

3.3.3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is an instrument of collecting data in a written form which includes open and closed questions requiring answers from the participants (Nunan, 1992). It is a useful research instrument because it helps the researcher gather evidence from a large number of participants and analyze different responses of the same question. In this respect, Wray, Trott, and Bloomer (2006:158) view: ***"The questionnaire is useful for surveying a lot people in many different locations"***. That is to say that this instrument can be used in different fields and for different purposes as it is effective in collecting data from various sources. According to Clive (2012: 182), the questionnaires have the following advantages over interviews:

> ➢ *They are cheap to administer. The only costs are those associated with printing or designing the questionnaires, their postage or electronic distribution.*
>
> ➢ *They allow for a greater geographical coverage than face-to-face interviews without incurring the additional costs of time and travel. Thus, they are particularly useful when carrying out research with geographically dispersed populations.*
>
> ➢ *Using self-completion questionnaires reduces biasing error caused by the characteristics of the interviewer and the variability in interviewers' skills.*
>
> ➢ *The absence of an interviewer provides greater anonymity for the respondent. When the topic of the research is sensitive or personal it can increase the reliability of responses.*

Obviously, unlike the interviews, the questionnaire provides autonomy for informants and gives them time to think about the questions and to give their views and proposals. Indeed, the questionnaire allows the investigator to formulate the questions according to the research questions and hypotheses and proved easier to quantify, qualify, and analyze results.

3.3.3.1.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed for EFL teachers in different Algerian ELT departments. It was divided purposefully into three sections. At the beginning, it includes an introductory part which aims to provide information about the informants' names, profiles, specialties, work experience, and departments.

The first section was devoted for the reading instruction in ELT departments. This section was aimed to find out teachers' methodologies, practices, attitudes, and problems concerning the teaching of reading. The second section deals with the role of classroom reading in improving the language proficiency. In fact, this part targets both teachers of reading and of other language skills in order to gather data about the usefulness of reading as a classroom strategy in teaching and developing vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, and listening. As for the third part, it is concerned with the importance of extensive reading in developing students' language learning. Obviously, questions are aimed to elicit information from teachers about their consciousness and roles in making the students good readers. Some questions in this part are designed to reveal the reasons of poor reading in its dire consequences on language learners. Besides, this section tries to elucidate how extensive reading can build up the language proficiency.

3.3.3.1.2 Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed for first year EFL students at Abou-Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. The questions which are entailed in this questionnaire aimed to gather students' answers, worries, and views concerning reading. This questionnaire is segmented into three parts.

The first section tends to elicit students' needs, preferences, and opinions about the classroom reading instruction. In fact, the research attempts to know about their attitudes, convictions, and reactions towards the strategies and methodologies used by their teachers of reading.

The second section aims to gain information about how students can learn the language from reading. It deals with the use of texts and reading passages by teachers of writing, oral comprehension, listening, grammar, and phonetics. Indeed, the researcher attempts to reveal the importance of using reading in teaching and developing these areas of language.

As for the third section, the investigator intends to collect data about the practice of extensive reading by EFL students and its importance in enhancing the language attainments. The questions emphasize students' concerns and views with regard to this type of reading and its impact on their language learning. Indeed, some questions in this section are devoted to examine students' problems, needs, and preferences. In short, this part explores the links between extensive reading and the development of language proficiency.

3.3.3.2 Classroom Observation

As for the classroom observation, it is a useful research instrument in the field of foreign language teaching. In fact, it can provide an accurate description of the instructional practices. It gives the researcher the opportunity to observe and measure frequently the teaching-learning practices and the behaviors that take place in the classroom. Certainly, the classroom observation puts the investigator in real contexts and helps him to scrutinize his research interests in naturalistic settings.

Obviously, classroom observation is prepared and conducted to find out facts and to answer the research questions. This approach permits the investigator to observe the interactions and procedures that occur in the classroom (Flick, 2006). Moreover, this method helps the researcher to link what he/she observes to the other research instruments such as the questionnaire (Jonson & Turner, 2003).

Classroom observation can be either participant or non-participant. The former requires the researcher involvement in the context by interacting with the students and the teacher in a direct way. According to Burns (1999: 82): ***"The researcher becomes a member of the context and participates in its culture and activities"***. That is to say that the inquirer can even ask questions and have answers about the behaviors and the practices of both teachers and learners. As for the non-participant observation, the researcher sees, remarks, and records the activities without being verbally involved in context. Indeed, he /she could have a little contact with classroom members (Burns, 1999).

The classroom observation period depends firmly on the research aims and there is no time limitation. However, researchers have shown that the more time spent in observation, the better results are gained (Flick, 2006). In order to reach the research objectives and to answer the research questions, the observer needs to clearly define his/her goals, select what elements he/she really wants to observe, and set a clear timetable for his/her activities. These procedures should be in relation with the research topic. The following table illustrates the classroom observation plan used by the researcher in this study:

Skill	Level	Observation Sessions	Elements being observed
Reading	First year EFL Students at the University of Tlemcen.	Week one, two, and three	Teachers and learners' practices.
			-The reading difficulties and obstacles.
		Week four and five.	-The language learning benefits of the reading course.

Table 3.1 Classroom Observation Procedures.

During the observation sessions, the researcher tried to observe several elements related to reading. The first period was devoted to observe the reading instruction including teaching the reading skills and strategies. In fact, during the first three weeks, the researcher focused on both teachers and learners' practices and the reading obstacles in the classroom while the remaining sessions aimed to observe the reading activities that can improve other language skills including speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary, and grammar.

3.3.4 Sample Population

The informants are considered as the most important elements of any research work. According to Gardner (1974), population is a group of individuals who share common characteristics. Polit (2001) defines population as an aggregation of cases that meet specific criteria. In this study, the researcher involved two groups of participants: EFL teachers, and first EFL students.

The first group of informants entails 20 EFL teachers from different ELT departments in different universities including the University of Tlemcen, the

University of Tiaret, the University of Mostaganem, and the University Of Sidi Belabbas. The following table illustrates the teachers' profile:

University	Teachers
University of Tlemcen	Eight Teachers
University of Tiaret	Six teachers
University of Mostaganem	Four teachers
University of Sidi Belabbas	Two teachers

Table 3.2 Teachers' Profile

These teachers are of different English language specialties. They are 12 females and 8 males. Most of them have taught reading and other language skills. Five of them have taught English for more than 10 years, eight more than 5 years, and seven less than 5 years. Most of them are MAA and MAB teachers and five of them are MCB.

The second group of informants involves 100 first year students at the Department of English at Abou-Bakr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. Seventy of them are females and thirty are males. Their age is between 18 and 22. They were randomly selected in order to make the research more reliable and objective.

3.4 Students' Questionnaire Analyses

This part gives detailed analyses of the students' questionnaire and brings a brief summary of its results. The questions of the students' questionnaire are interpreted as follows:

Question 1: Do you like the reading course? Why?

The aim of this question is to know about students' attitudes towards the reading lectures. It intends to find out their reasons of liking or disliking this course.
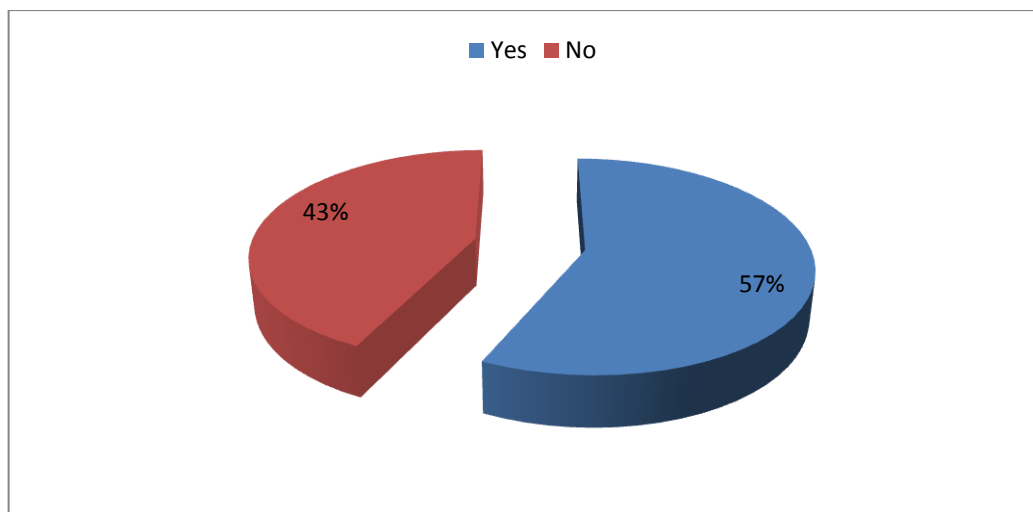
Pie-Chart 3.1 Learners' Attitudes towards Reading

According to students' responses to this question, 57% showed their liking of reading. Most of these students focused on the role of reading in learning vocabulary. Some justified their answers by revealing the language learning benefits of the reading course including improving pronunciation, developing writing, and acquiring the the reading and comprehension strategies. Two students said that they like reading because they have good teachers of reading. In contrast, 43% of the informants showed their dislike of reading. Some of them believe that the reading lectures are sometimes complicated and boring due to their learning weaknesses and their teachers' instruction methods. Some others said that they do not have the opportunities to practice real reading in the classroom and their teachers rarely raise post-reading discussions. One student said that reading is always done at the individual level, and no group work strategies are introduced in the classroom.

Question 2: Are you satisfied with the reading instruction and material in the classroom? Why?

This question is aimed to know about learners views concerning the reading materials used in the classroom.
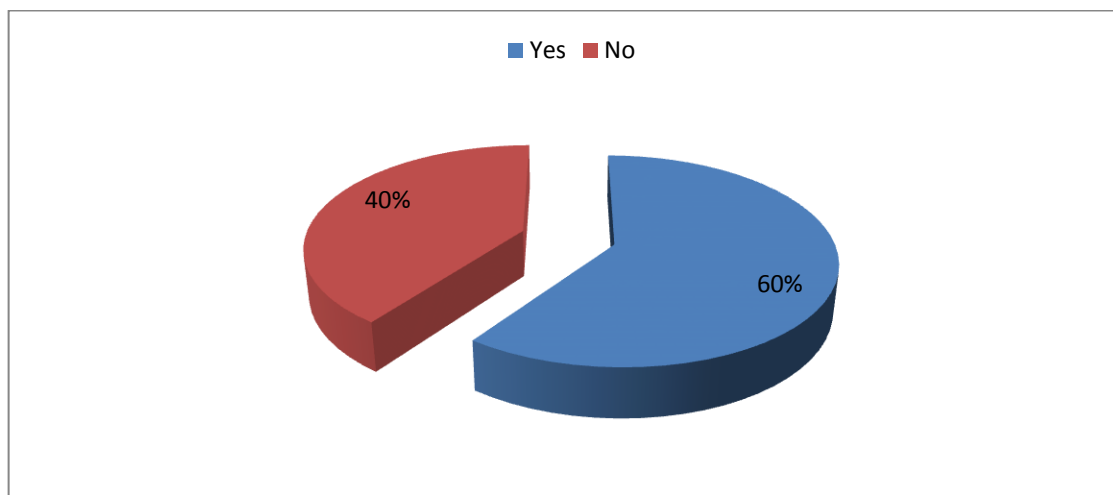
Pie-Chart 3.2 Students' Attitudes towards the Reading Instruction and Material.

Learners' answers reveal that 60% of them are satisfied with the reading material. Some of them argue that they need to deal with simple short texts which are consistent with their level. Few students believe that the material used in the classroom should provide real- life situations so as to learn a lot from it. Some informants think that the given texts and activities help them practice the reading strategies and acquire comprehension skills. On the other hand, 40% are reluctant to the type of instruction and texts used in the classroom reading. Some of them say that their teachers use the same type of texts with the same type of activities. According to them, some topics are not interesting and demotivating. Traditional topics with complicated comprehension questions make the reading lesson boring. One student says she needs poems, newspaper articles, and factual texts. Concerning the classroom instruction, these students think that they need new strategies and methods instead of the classical ones.

Question 3: Have you ever learnt or practiced the reading skills and strategies?

This question is intended to elicit information about the practice of the reading skills and strategies in a classroom reading session.
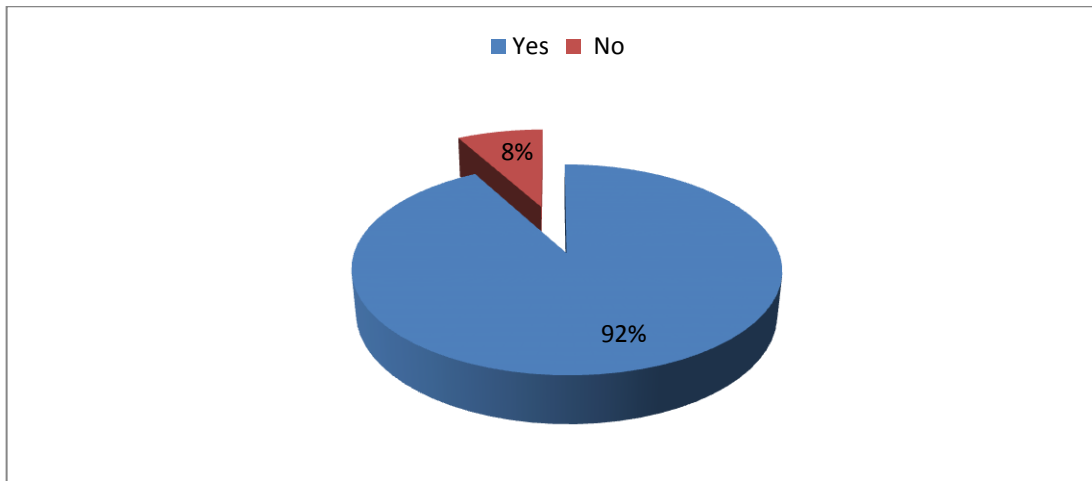
Pie-Chart 3.3 Learning and Practicing the Reading Skills

The answers show that the majority of the participants have learnt and practiced the reading skills and strategies. Indeed, 92% of them know about skimming, scanning, decoding, predicting, guessing meaning from context, and evaluating. Only 8% lack these skills due to, may be, teaching- learning deficits. Certainly, these skills are the bases of reading as they provide help in getting a full text comprehension and interpretation. Of course, a reading comprehension course cannot be taught or learnt without teaching and applying such strategies.

Question 4: What kind of texts do you prefer?

This question was designed to reveal students' preferences and wants concerning the texts used for a reading course.
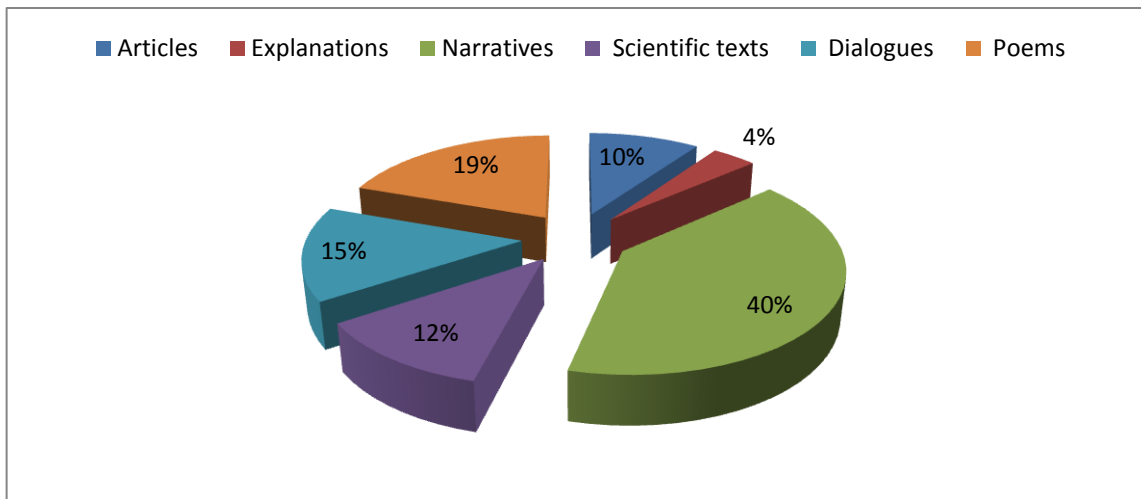
Pie-Chart 3.4 Students' Texts Preferences.

These statistics show that the majority of students prefer narrative texts. This due to the fact that literary texts are rich of language basics including vocabulary and style. Indeed, narratives make the reading more enjoyable. Some prefer articles and 19% like poems. Certainly, poems are literary genres which can be motivating since they involve different language styles including art, rhythm, and emotions. Still, 10% prefer dialogues as they are useful for the reading aloud procedure. Indeed, they provide a communicative language in real-life situations. Scientific texts are preferred by 12% of the participants. This leads us to say that teachers should take into consideration the scientific gusts of some students.

Question 5: What kind of reading difficulties do you generally face in the classroom?

This question is important to detect the problems that cause reading deficits.
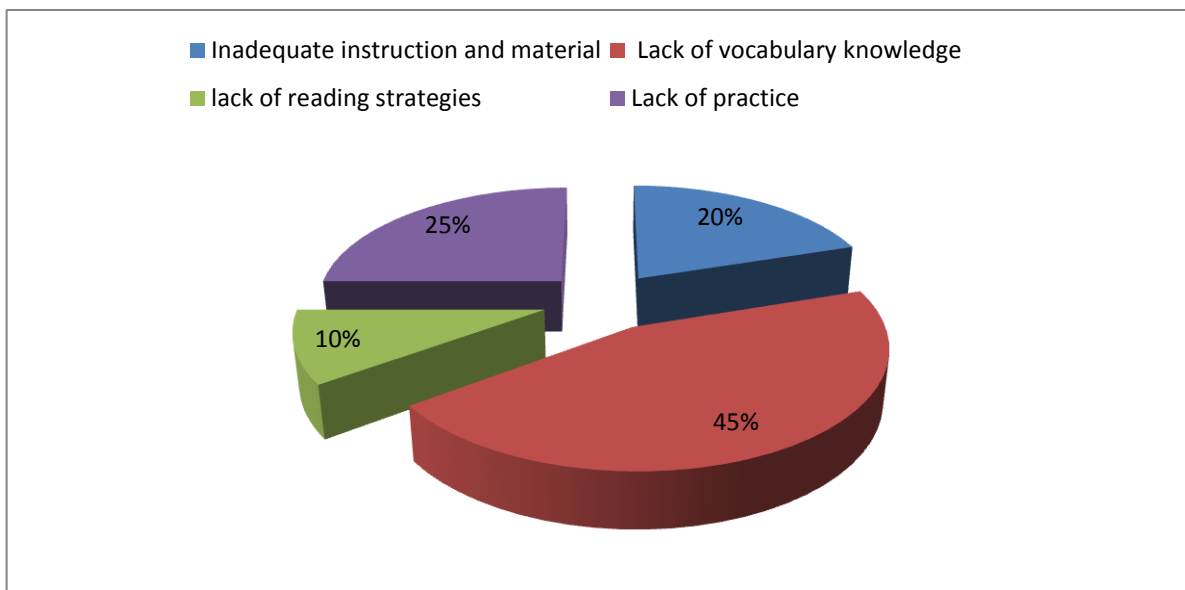
Pie-Chart 3.5 Students' Reading Difficulties.

Students' answers illustrate that the majority of them have vocabulary deficits. Surely, this hinders their comprehension and causes their reading failure. Therefore, this problem should be targeted by teachers of reading. A considerable number of participants think that the lack of practice is the cause of their reading problems. Insufficient time is another issue that should be considered. Besides, 20% of the students relate their failure to the reading material while 10% of them say that they lack the reading strategies that help them reach successful reading. This is, may be, due to the reading instruction methods that are applied by their teachers.

Question 6: Do you think that reading has positive effects on improving your language learning achievements? Why?

This question is intended to detect students' consciousness about the role of reading in enhancing their language learning.
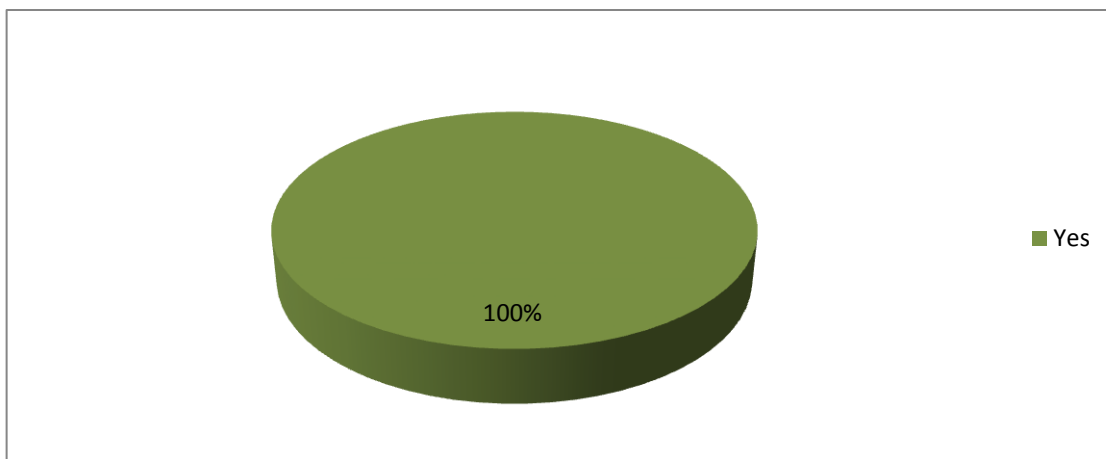
Pie-Chart 3.6 Students' Awareness of the Importance of Reading in Improving their Language Learning.

Students' responses to this question display that they are all aware of the significant importance of reading in developing their language achievements. All the participants, even those who said before, in question one, that they do not like reading, think that it is a tool to develop their general language knowledge because it exposes them to the foreign culture and develops their language skills. Some of them argued that reading leads them to better writing and expands their vocabulary bulk. Many of them said that, through reading, they can learn grammar, improve their pronunciation when they read aloud, and acquire language figures and styles. One female student argued that reading helps her work on all language skills.

Question 7: What effects does classroom reading have on your language learning?

The following figure displays the different students' answers to this question:

135
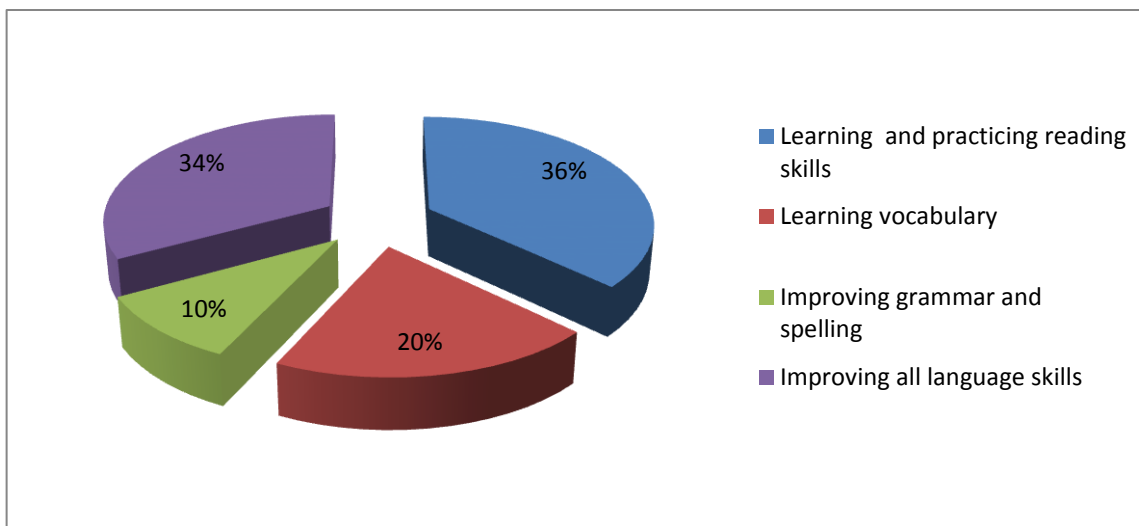
Pie-chart 3.7 The Effects of Classroom Reading on Language Learning

This figure shows the participants' different answers concerning the impact of the reading comprehension course on students' language learning. In fact, 36 % of students think that through a reading lecture, they can learn and practice the essential reading skills and 34% of them believe that the reading course make them practice all language skills. Besides, 20% think that classroom reading helps gain vocabulary while 10% say they learn more about grammar and spelling through reading.

Question 8: Do your teachers of the following modules: (Written expression, grammar, listening, oral expression, phonetics) use reading as a teaching strategy?

	Students Answers	
Modules	**Yes**	**No**
Written expression	40 students : 40%	60 students: 60%
Grammar	45 students: 45%	55 students: 55%
Listening	30 students: 30%	70 students: 70%
Oral expression	35 students: 35%	65 students: 65%
Phonetics	10 students: 90%	90 students: 90%

Table 3.3 Teachers' Use of Reading as a Teaching Strategy.

This table shows that reading is not used significantly by the teachers of the different modules. The majority of students' responses illustrate that their teachers of written expression do not include reading tasks for a writing course. A reading-to-write approach is important for writers because writers always write about what they have read. Listening and phonetics, with 30% and 10% of teachers who use reading, are the least modules which involve reading as teaching strategy. Still, 65% of oral expression teachers do not use texts for reading in order to raise discussions about the author opinion or the topic of the text. Certainly, most of teachers are not aware of the language learning benefits of reading. For example, grammar can be taught in contexts through introducing texts that include the use of prepositions, articles, and the other grammar ingredients. These texts put grammar rules in practice. So, the use of texts is a neglected strategy that should be given consideration by teachers of the language skills.

Question 9: Have you ever done extensive reading?

      a. If yes, state the number of the books you have read.

  This question aims to reveal students' readability.
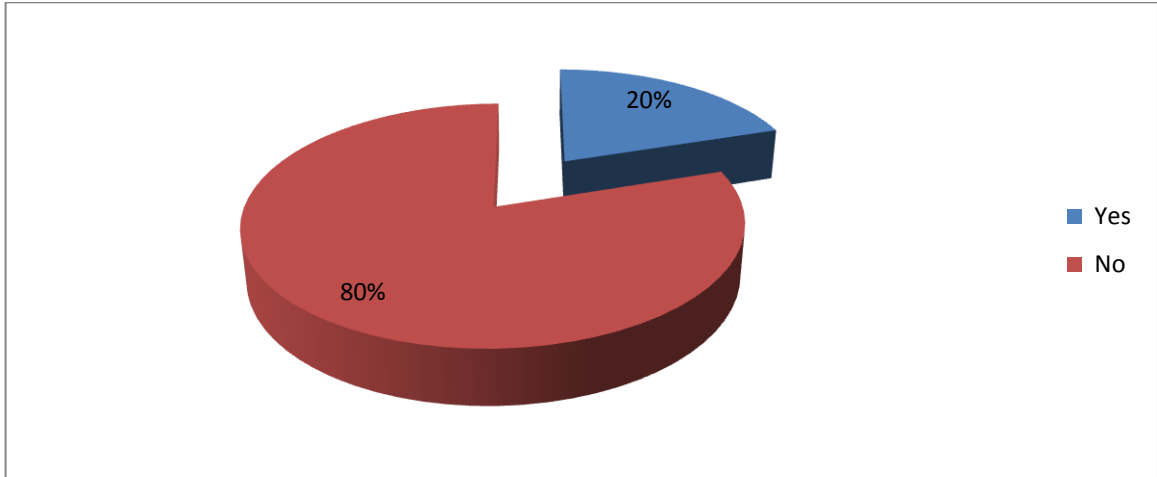
Pie-Chart 3.8 Students' Extensive Reading.

      The results show that 80% of the informants do not do extensive reading and only 20% of them practice non-classroom reading. This results lead us to view that students are not pushed and motivated to practice reading although they aware of its importance in the development of their language proficiency. Therefore, a need for an extensive reading programme is mandatory. Concerning the number of books that have been read by those who answered with *yes*, only one student said he had read 3 books, about 10 have read 2 books, while the majority have read 1 book. These results display how neglected extensive reading is although it is the only means that guarantees the continuity of learning out of the classroom. Surely, a new strategy is needed in teaching reading in the ELT departments.

B. If no, what are the problems and the obstacles that discourage you to do extensive reading?
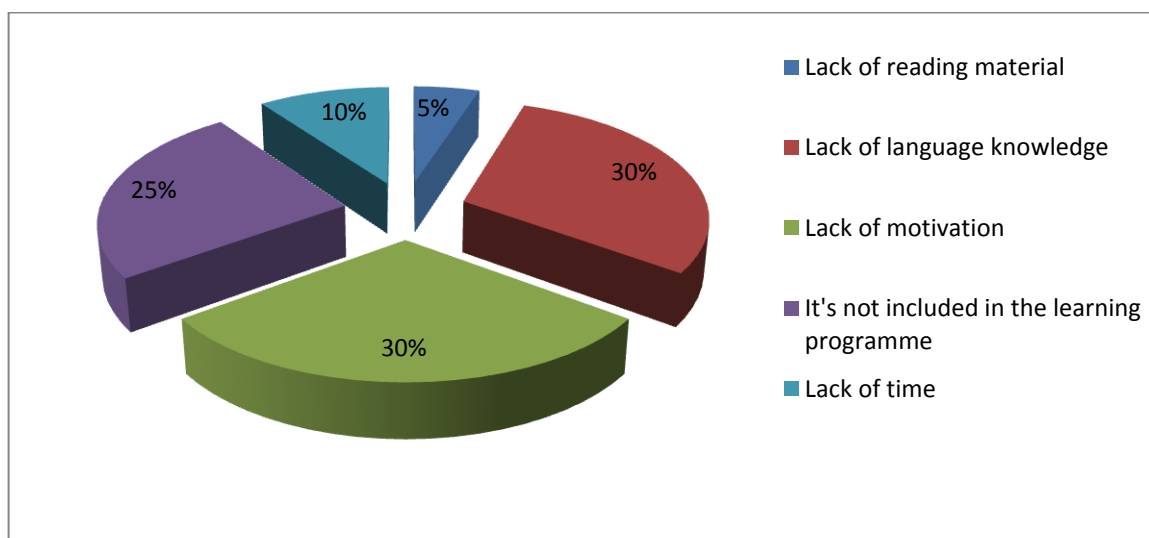
Pie-Chart 3.9 Learners' Extensive Reading Obstacles.

According to the results shown in the figure above, students confront different obstacles that hamper extensive reading. Many students do not read because this type of reading is not included in their learning programme. That is to say that the instructors and ELT specialists should rethink the methods and the effectiveness of the reading instruction because the Algerian students do not take the initiative if they are not compelled by an academic programme. Still, 30% of the informants do not read because they are not motivated. Indeed, motivation is another issue that should be reconsidered as it is an essential element in learning. The lack of language knowledge can be seen as a normal obstacle as the participants are still first year students but it is considered as a demotivating factor. Only 10% and 5% of the students relate their lack of reading to the lack of reading material and the lack of time. These cannot be seen as convincing excuses but rather reluctance to reading. Still, some students added that they are not helped and guided by their teachers.

Question 10: Do you think that extensive reading can develop your proficiency in the English language skills? Justify.

This question aims at showing students' views concerning the role of extensive reading in developing their language proficiency.
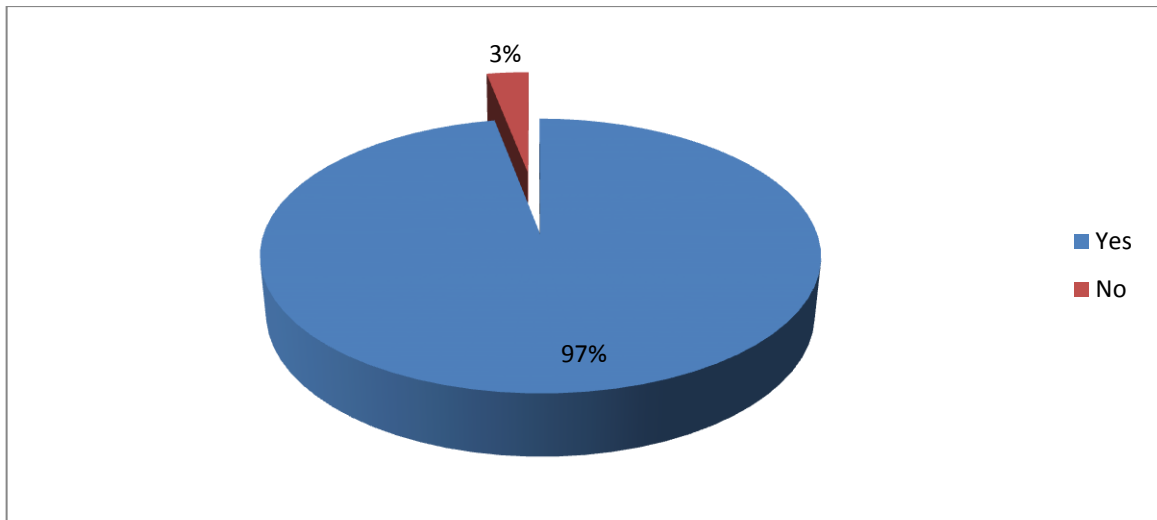
Pie-Chart 3.10 Leaners' Attitudes Towards the Role of Extensive Reading in Improving Language Learning

The results which are illustrated in the figure reveal that 97% of the participants are conscious about the role of extensive reading in improving their language proficiency. Most of them believe that this type of reading enhances their reading skills and fluency as it offers opportunities for learners to improve their comprehension abilities and to develop their cognitive competence. Techniques such as; decoding, inferring, predicting, and scanning can be best practiced through extensive reading. Concerning vocabulary and grammar, students believe that this type of reading helps them acquire vocabulary and learn grammar in context. As for writing, learners consider extensive reading as the most useful means to improve their writing skills as they gain ideas, vocabulary, and language style at higher levels.

Question 11: What kinds of reading materials help you better improve your language knowledge?
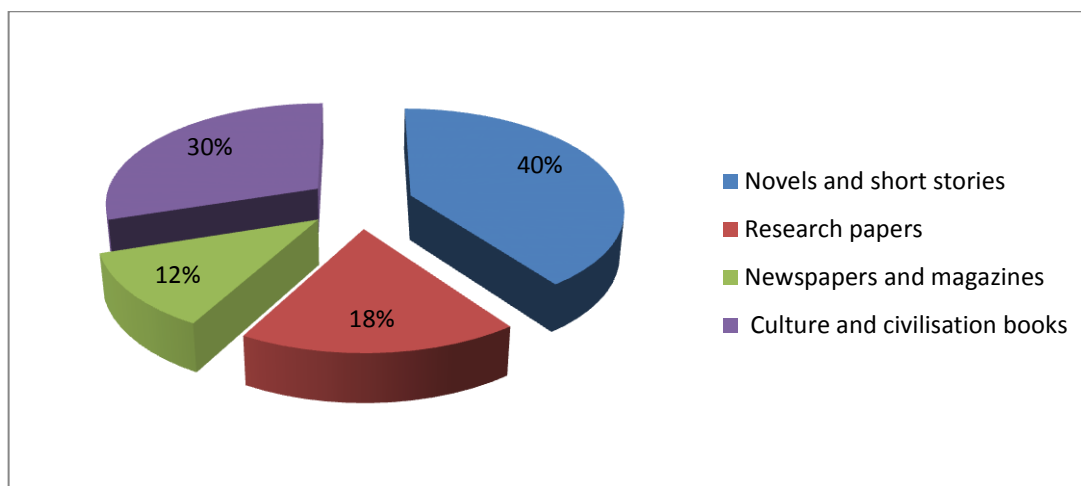
Pie-chart 3.11 Students' Extensive Reading Preferences.

The figures displays   that 40% of the informants believe that short stories and novels are the most effective elements that develop their language learning. Surely, this is due to the fact literary books are full of language styles, rhetoric expressions, vocabulary, and figurative language. Besides, stories involve entertainment and enjoyment. Cultural books are preferred by 30% of the participant as they entail factual information about peoples' cultures, traditions, and history. A considerable number of students prefer research papers as they provide a know-how information about different subjects and questions. Those learners like reading this kind of material because they involve facts, procedures, explanations, strategies, and knowledge. Magazines are newspapers were chosen by 12% of the participants as they provide information about current trends and events.

Question 12: Would you agree if your department sets an extensive reading programme? Justify your answer.
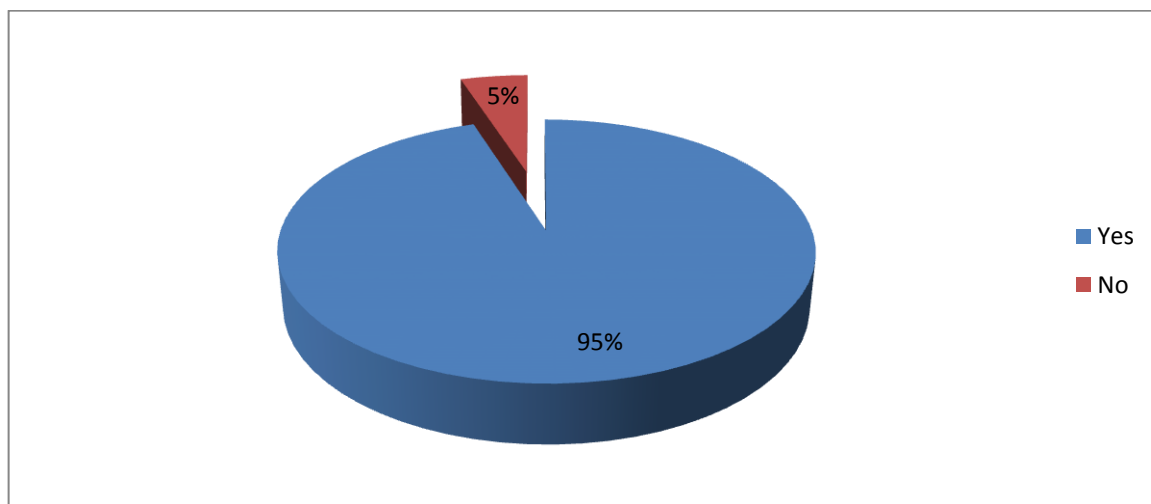
Pie-Charts 3.12 Students Attitudes Towards an Extensive Reading Programme.

The results shown on the figure denotes that most of the participants agree upon the introduction of an extensive reading programme due to its language learning benefits. Some justify their answers by mentioning its importance in broadening their language knowledge and in developing their vocabulary bulk .Others say that an extensive reading programme would help them improve their writing and provide them with the English language corpus including vocabulary, idioms, figurative speech, and grammar use. Many informants argued that this kind of reading could help them learn not only the target language, but also its cultural and literal concepts. Some believe that this programme would motivate and encourage learners to read different types of books which can develop their background knowledge and improve their cognitive thinking. For those who disagree on the usefulness of this programme, some say that students should be free in selecting their reading materials, as this type of reading should be done for pleasure. Others think that this programme would put extra burdens on first year students who should focus on the lower skills of reading.

Question 13: How would you like your teachers help you do extensive reading?

The aim of this question is to know how students expect their teachers of reading to help practice extensive reading. The following table sums up students' answers concerning their teachers' help strategies.

<table>
<tr><td>Students Suggestions for Extensive Reading Support</td></tr>
<tr><td>

➢ Bringing and selecting interesting books or titles for students.

➢ Guiding and monitoring   extensive reading.

➢ Rewarding and encouraging their students reading for motivation purposes.

➢ Discussing what students have read.

➢ Considering students' extensive reading in assessment and evaluation.

➢ Teaching the students the criteria of selecting interesting reading material.
</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3.4 Students' Suggestions for Extensive Reading Support.

This table shows students' suggestions concerning how their teachers can help them to do extensive reading. In fact, all of the participants want their teachers to select interesting materials for them because they lack the techniques that help them read the appropriate books that assist their learning. More importantly, motivation is the most important strategy that instils reading habits. Students think that applauding and rewarding their reading can be effective to guarantee the extensive reading continuity. Still, most of them believe that their teachers should show them how to select their own reading material.

3.5 Summary of the Main Findings

The results obtained from the students' questionnaire reveal that most of first EFL students are conscious of the importance of reading. However, they report that they have some difficulties in reading such as the lack of the world knowledge, deficient linguistic capacities, lack of motivation, and poor reading practice.

The lack of vocabulary knowledge is the main obstacle which cause their reading failure. Indeed, it is considered as an essential element to foreign language learning. It is necessary for good communication, adequate reading and comprehension, and for decent writing. Therefore, building and expanding the vocabulary knowledge is a key aspect to reading fluency and reading instruction.

In addition, the students' answers reveal that reading can affect their language development in many ways. They argue that reading helps them enhance their reading fluency, develop their thinking skills, improve their spelling and writing, and expand their vocabulary bulk. Classroom reading helps them practice reading strategies, develop listening skills, and improve oral competence. Still, the results show that literary materials are preferred highly by students. Most of them prefer short stories and novels. This is due to their entertaining features and their language learning benefits.

Still, the results indicate that first year EFL students rarely do extensive reading. This is one of the causes of the reading deficits. Certainly, the reasons behind poor reading are: lack of language knowledge, lack of motivation, absence of an extensive reading programme, and the lack of teacher's help and guidance. Besides, free reading is not rewarded by the department and is not taken into account in grading matters. We should mention that most of them agree on setting such a programme and including it the curriculum. This indicates that the students are aware of the importance of ER in their language learning. Some participants believe that teachers should help them to build reading habits.

For example, they can inform them about the decent authors, bring titles, and give them guidelines about the types of interesting and beneficial reading materials.

3.6 Teachers' Questionnaire Analyses

This part provides a detailed description of the teachers' questionnaire and gives a summary of its main results. The questions of the teachers' questionnaire are interpreted as follows:

Question 1: Do you think that reading is an important skill for language teaching? Why?
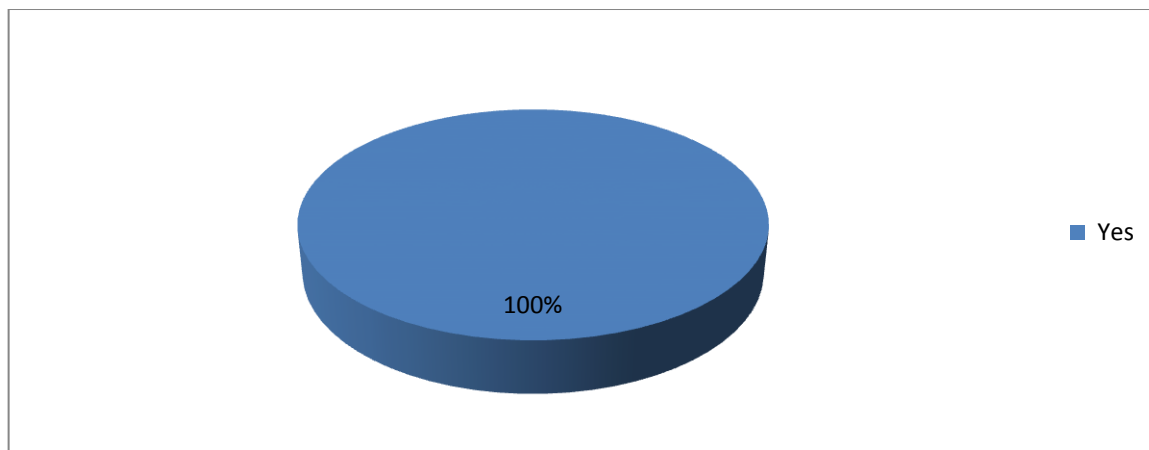
Pie-Chart 3.13 Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Importance of Reading.

The figure reveals that all the participant teachers believe that reading is an important skill to language teaching. Some of them say that reading helps improve the linguistic and the communicative competence of learners. It was described by a teacher as a king skill as it is a key to language learning and life-long process. In fact, it brings learners closer to language and put them in a continuous exposure to it. Many participants argued that reading is a means to develop the other skills. For example, it expands vocabulary volume, improves spelling, instils new ideas for writing, increases reading fluency, and enhances oral abilities. It allows learners to sound out letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs, and thus, it helps them ameliorate their pronunciation, spelling, and

grammar. In other words, full language proficiency cannot be achieved without this skill. A participant said that reading is the inspiration for both teachers and learners.

Question 2: What techniques and strategies do you use in teaching reading?

These are the different techniques that most of teachers use:

Teachers' Reading Instruction Methods
➢ Selecting interesting, up-to-date, and authentic topics which meet students' interests.
➢ Texts' variation.
➢ Silent and loud reading.
➢ Emphasising vocabulary.
➢ Emphasising the reading skills and strategies.
➢ Emphasising comprehension
➢ Emphasising critical reading.
➢ Reading activities
➢ Culture-bound activities.
➢ Assessment and evaluation.

Table 3. 5 Teachers' Reading Instruction Techniques.

The table above illustrates the sum of the strategies and techniques which are used by the teachers of reading. Indeed, many of them shared the same instructional methods. For example, all the participants use both silent and reading aloud procedure because it is considered as the essence of the classroom reading instruction. Still, most of the informants focus on the authenticity of the reading material in their instruction since it provides the foreign culture of the target language. Comprehension is emphasised by all the informants since it is

the ultimate goal of reading. Vocabulary is given the utmost importance by most of the participants. Twelve teachers say that they focus on the implementation of the reading strategies or skills such as scanning and skimming. Text variation is another strategy which is shared by all the participants because students should be exposed to different types of texts. Few teachers focus on developing students' critical reading. This neglected strategy should be considered as a fundamental part of the reading instruction.

Question 3: What kind of difficulties do teachers of reading face?

Teachers' Reading Instruction Obstacles			
Lack of Students' motivation	**Text and topic selection**	**Students' lack of language and reading comprehension competence**	**Students' vocabulary shortage**
14 teachers	**18 teachers**	**16 teachers**	**18 teachers**

Table 3.6 Teachers' Reading Instruction Difficulties.

The results provided in the table show that all the participants have multiple difficulties. In fact, 70% of them have motivation problems and 90% have difficulties in making topic choices. Indeed, text selection plays an important role in motivating learners. Carefully selected texts are essential to a successful reading instruction. Still, language literacy and reading comprehension competence are other issues that need to be considered when choosing texts for a reading course. Teachers need to adjust their instruction to their students' learning abilities. As for students' lack of vocabulary knowledge, 90% of the informants face this difficulty. Certainly, effective techniques and methods should be introduced in order to solve this problem because vocabulary is a vital ingredient of the reading skill. Since the participants are from different

universities, one can say that most of them share the same teaching problems as far as the reading instruction is concerned.

Question 4: How does reading relate to the following areas of language: vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, and listening?

Most of the teachers shared the same responses which mention the link between classroom reading and language areas. Concerning vocabulary, it is clear that reading is the most effective means that exposes them to new words and expressions. For first year students, texts are rich of unfamiliar items and the use of dictionary while reading helps them a lot to learn about the multiple meanings and the roots of each difficult word. As for grammar, students can learn about the forms, uses, and functions of tenses, adjectives, adverbs, articles, prepositions, and all other elements in context. Writing is another skill which can be best developed through reading activities. Teachers believe that reading makes students minimize spelling mistakes and vocabulary is another gain for writing production. Besides, summarizing is considered as a post-reading activity that truly link reading to writing. Still, speaking and listening have received the same answers as teachers think that classroom reading-aloud activities are effective techniques to improve pronunciation and listening. Some participants revealed that post-reading discussions are important to develop the speaking skills.

Question 5: which of the following reading materials do provide better language learning?
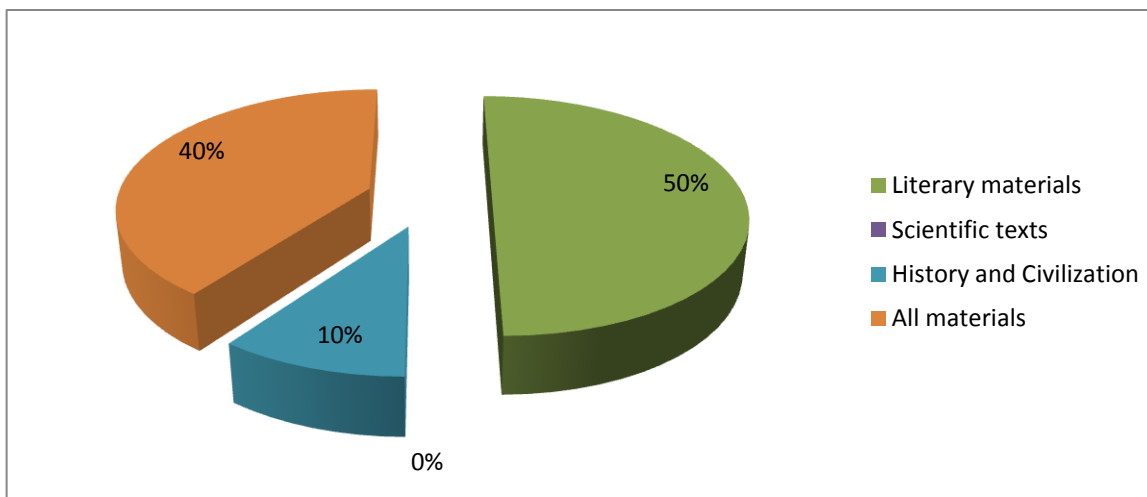
Pie-Chart 3.14 Types of Materials that Provide better Language Learning.

The figure reveals teachers' views concerning the type of reading materials that provide better language learning. In fact, literary materials are thought to be the most beneficial in improving the language literacy by 50% of teachers. Still, 40% of the informants believe that all types of texts are rich of language. Books of history and civilization are selected by 10% of the informants while no participant believe that scientific texts alone can offer language enrichment.

Question 6. **A.** Do you think that classroom reading can be used to teach and improve the language skills?

> **B**. If yes, what reading activities do you suggest to develop proficiency in following language areas: (writing, speaking, and listening)?
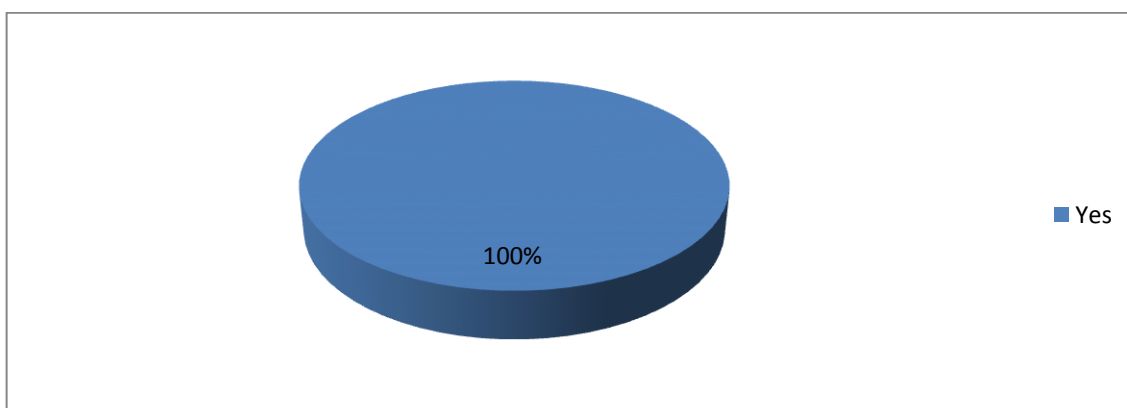
Pie-chart 3.15 The Use of Reading in Teaching and Improving the Language skills.

The figure illustrates that all the participants believe that reading activities can be useful in developing the language skills.

The following table sums up the suggested reading activities that can be used to foster each skill:

Language Areas	Reading Activities
Writing	-Summarising. -Gap filling. -Sentence and paragraph completion. -Topic-based editing. -Commenting in a written form.
Speaking	- Using texts in the form of dialogues, interviews, and plays. -The reading aloud procedure. -Discussing and debating the content. -Asking students opinions about the author. -Read and comment activities.
Listening	- Reading aloud -Pre-reading activities. -Colloquial and idiomatic texts. -Media-realised texts. -Reading-while-listening activities.

Table 3.7 Reading Activities to Develop Language skills.

For developing speaking and communication skills, many teachers proposed the use of texts in the form of dialogues and plays. Still, discussing the authors' ideas in the classroom and asking students opinions can be useful to improve the oral abilities. To develop listening proficiency, the reading aloud

procedure was suggested by all the informants. One teacher recommended the use of texts written in colloquial language and media-realised texts. Surely, these texts should be introduced in audio and printed forms in order to practice the listening- while- reading activities.

As for writing, most of teachers see summarisation activities as the best reading tasks to practice writing. One teacher recommended the use of sentence and paragraph completion according to the text meaning. Others suggested composition-writings, dialogue completion, and writing ends to stories as post-reading activities.

Question 7.A: Do you advise your learners to do extensive reading?

B: If yes, what type of material do you recommend?
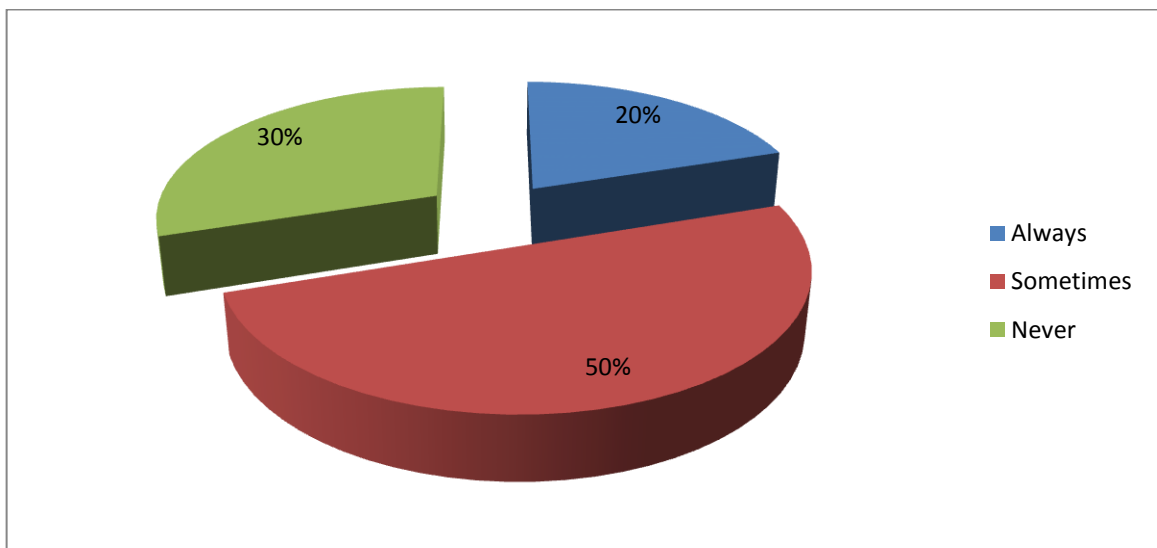
Pie-chart 3. 16 Teachers' Extensive Reading Instruction.

The results in the figure indicate that half of the participants advise their students to do free reading. In fact, only 20% of them constantly recommend extensive reading. Still, 30% informants say that they never ask their students to read. Thus, one can say that teachers are aware of the importance of this type of

reading in learning. Indeed, extensive reading is the starting point to develop all language proficiency domains. With regard to the reading material, most of the informants say that they usually recommend short stories. Surely, short stories are rich of learning benefits as they involve language, culture, and knowledge. Unlike novels and books, short stories are considered as motivating reading material as they involve simple short plots and entertaining trends. Similarly, few teachers advise for magazines and and newspapers despite the fact that they involve different language modes including politics, science, culture, and sport. Definitely, this would enrich students' knowledge in different domains and bring them to different vocabularies and expressions.

Question 8: What are the language learning benefits of extensive reading?
The following table illustrates the main teachers' answers to this question:

Teachers' Answers
-Installing reading habits.
-Improving reading speed and fluency.
-Developing language literacy.
-Broadening vocabulary bulk.
-Improving reading skills.
-Deductive learning of grammar.
-Frequent exposure to vocabulary and grammar structures.
-Developing critical thinking.
-Exposing students to infinite language styles.
-Exposing students to foreign culture.
-Extension of background knowledge.
-Developing communicative competence.
-Lexical enrichment.
-Developing writing abilities.

Table 3. 8 The Language Learning Benefits of Extensive Reading.

The table above provides the essence of teachers' answers concerning the role of extensive reading in improving language learning. Many of them focused on vocabulary as a major gain of extensive reading. Undoubtedly, students have infinite opportunities to learn deductively different types of vocabularies as they go through different topics and contents. Grammar structures and the functions of parts of speech are unconsciously learned. Moreover, extensive reading exposes students to the foreign language cultural concepts including idioms, proverbs, figurative speech, and colloquial language. Absolutely, writing is another language skill that can be developed through extensive reading. Certainly, this occur through gaining ideas, getting ready-made expressions, improving spelling, discovering cohesion and coherence,

visualizing punctuation, seeing ample formats and contents, and getting techniques of writing.

Question 9: How can extensive reading be used to develop the following language skills?

The following table illustrates and sums up the main teachers' answers:

Language Skills	Extensive Reading Activities
Writing	-The use of portfolios - Realizing projects. -Asking learners to write summaries and comments about what they have read.
Communicative Competence	-Selecting authentic materials for communicative purposes. -Asking learners to read about different topics and discussing them in the classroom.

Table 3.9 The Use of Extensive Reading to Develop Writing and Speaking.

The table shows that extensive reading can be a useful means to improve writing and speaking. We should mention that not all teachers answered this question. Few of them shared these answers. Obviously, writing can be fostered by asking learners to write summaries about what they read. This strategy can be accompanied with the use of portfolios which help students document their readings and helps teachers assess their learners' progress. Still, extensive reading can be effective to improve speaking through asking learners to discuss and debate in the classroom what they read at home.

Question 10. A: Would you agree if your department sets an extensive reading programme?

B : If no, why? If yes, how would you monitor students' extensive reading?
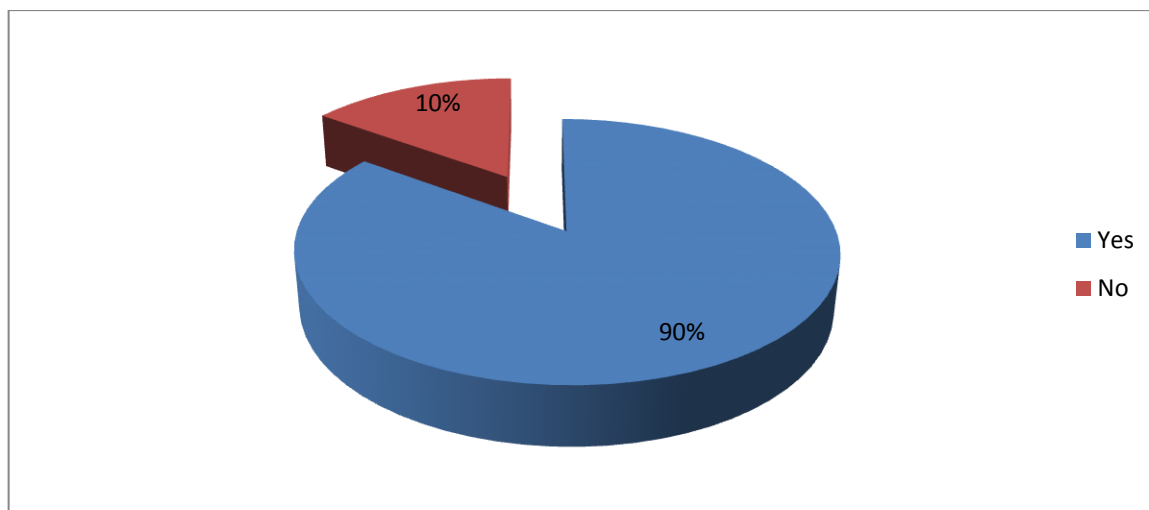
Pie-chart 3.17 Teachers'Opinions Towards Setting an Extensive Reading Programme.

The results illustrated in the figure above signify that the majority of the informants agree on introducing an extensive reading programme. Only 10% of them think that there is no need for this programme because extensive reading should be done for pleasure. They say that students already have other modules that compel them to read such as British and American literature. As for guiding and monitoring students' extensive reading, the agreeing teachers gave different strategies. Some of them say that teachers can indicate different types of interesting reading material and give the students the chance to choose what they want to read. Others proposed the organization of regular sessions for discussing and exchanging ideas about what the students have read and should read. One teacher suggested the assignment of pair or group readings and encourage peer monitoring.

Question 11: State your proposals about offering a successful reading instruction.

The teachers' proposals can be summed up and listed as follows:

➢ Offering useful classroom intensive reading with focus on the reading strategies, reading fluency, vocabulary teaching, and classroom activities.

➢ Appropriate reading material selection.

➢ Asking learners to read extensively.

➢ Conducting good assessment procedures.

3.7 Summary of the Main Findings

The results reveal that the reading instruction faces some obstacles which could lead to reading deficits. Teachers reports that motivation represents a great concern for them as the majority of students are not motivated to read. Teachers are not only required to teach the curriculum, but also to motivate their students to read by using different strategies and styles. Further, the lack of language knowledge is another problem for teachers of reading. Certainly, most of first year students lack the decoding skills, the syntactic knowledge, the reading strategies, and the vocabulary knowledge. These elements are necessary for a successful reading.

According to teachers' answers, an effective reading instruction should involve classroom intensive reading and extensive reading. In the classroom, teachers focus on the reading skills and strategies and provide practice and drills. For free reading, teachers can help their students select the reading material and organise their reading through a set of procedures.

The results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire shows that reading has a positive impact on developing language learning. In fact, it improves oral fluency, broadens general information, and expands vocabulary. Besides, it

improves students' syntactic knowledge, develops reading skills, enhances writing abilities, increases motivation, enlarges world knowledge, and fosters language.

For example, reading can affect oral language production. Students who are engaged in extensive reading of texts that entail dialogues or communicative situations are better able to improve their communicative proficiency. In fact, they become acquainted with idioms, collocations, and other basics of conversation. The results argue that exposing learners to texts that are similar to oral language, such as plays and comics, help them bridge the gap between written and spoken language, and thus, improve their oral language proficiency.

Moreover, the results show that reading can help students develop writing and reading proficiency. Indeed, there is a firm relationship between reading and writing. In fact, by reading extensively, learners become better able to master the textual and grammatical structures which they can later use in their own writing. Further, extensive reading helps students to improve their reading skills, enlarge their vocabulary storage, and develop general language proficiency.

In addition, teachers view that classroom reading can be used a strategy to teach and improve the language skills. For example, texts that take the forms of dialogues could develop the communicative competence in different situations. Pre-reading and the reading aloud can be useful to develop listening. Post reading activities are useful to develop writing and speaking.

3.8 Classroom Observation Analyses

As far as this research work is concerned, the researcher carried out four observational weeks at different times. The following table illustrates the observed elements and the collected data:

Collected Data
- Teachers and learners' practices. - The reading difficulties. -The language learning benefits of classroom reading.

Table 3.10 Classroom Observation Data.

The table above entails the elements which were observed by the researcher. During the classroom observation period, the researcher tried to focus on the reading instruction, the reading problems, and the language gains of classroom reading.

3.8.1 Teachers and Learners' Practices

In the classroom, the teacher emphasized different elements including definitions of the reading skills and strategies such as previewing, skimming, scanning, and guessing meaning from context. The teacher gave his students handouts including clarifications of these strategies. The following sessions were devoted to the practice of these strategies. Definitely, the teacher used texts with reading activities. In fact, she used different texts with different activities. The questions, the activities, and the instructions took the following forms:

➢ Scan and skim over the text to answer the following questions (scanning and skimming).

➢ Read carefully the sentences bellow and *guess* the appropriate meaning. (guessing).

➢ Give another word or phrase to replace the following words as they are used in the text. (scanning).

➢ Use the dictionary and give the appropriate synonyms to the following words.

- ➢ Supply the missing words.
- ➢ Read and supply the appropriate definitions to following words.
- ➢ Read and answer the following questions using your own words.
- ➢ Read the text and select five verbs and five adjective that refer to the author's stands.
- ➢ Do you agree with authors views?
- ➢ Summarize the text.
- ➢ Imagine another end to the story.

These activities shows that the teacher intended to assess his students' abilities to practice the reading strategies. With respect to the development of the reading abilities, students can improve their comprehension through answering the comprehension questions as they are asked to read, skim, and scan the text many times. Indeed, these questions lead them to practice different reading strategies such as guessing and making inferences. In addition, most of the reading tasks involved activities that target comprehension skills, vocabulary knowledge, and writing abilities.

3.8.2 The Language Learning Benefits of Classroom Reading

The following table illustrates the benefits of intensive reading in language learning and its links with the other language areas:

Language Areas	The Language Learning Benefits of Classroom Reading
Vocabulary	-Using the dictionary while reading. -Discovering idiomatic expressions. -Learning new words in different contexts. -Learning synonyms and opposites.
Grammar	-Learning grammar in context including tenses, passives, conditionals, and parts of speech in context.
Speaking	-Reading aloud. -Post reading discussions. -Developing pronunciation through reading aloud. - Classroom interaction . -Negotiating and communicating text's content.
Writing	-Learning how words, sentences, and paragraphs are structured and linked. -Improving spelling and punctuation. - Using new words and expressions in writing. -Summarizing . -Knowing texts structures. -Learning about coherence and cohesion. -Gaining new ideas to write about.
Listening	-Classroom reading aloud . -Listening to teachers' reading and explanation. - Listening to peers' reading.

Table 3.11 The Language Learning Benefits of Classroom Reading.

When the students are asked to find synonyms, definitions, and antonyms for words or phrases from the text, they are learning vocabulary from reading. Skills of guessing and inferring are important for students to know how to give

the appropriate meaning to the appropriate word in specific contexts. Certainly, all the classroom reading lectures were rich of new words and the learners were interested not only in the words given in the activity, but also the difficult words included in the text. In fact, most of them were underlining the unfamiliar words and using the dictionaries to get their meanings. Undoubtedly, this practice, which is imposed by the text, broadens learners' vocabulary storage.

As for the reading-to-write activities, students were asked to answer comprehension questions in full sentences and using their own words. Sometimes, they were demanded to evaluate the authors' ideas and to give their own views in full paragraphs. Besides, most of the time, they were required to summarize the text or write essays about their own experiences which are related to the text's topic. Definitely, these activities lead the students to practice writing. In fact, they get information from text, link it to their own knowledge, and produce their own piece of writing. Further, they learn a lot about capitalization, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar while they practice the reading-to-write activities. Seemingly, summarizing, commenting, and producing topic-bound essays can be considered as effective reading activities that truly improve writing.

Furthermore, the reading course has speaking gains as the students get inside the reading practice. Generally, the teacher asks some questions that needed oral answers and put some activities that required oral answers. Still, most of the time the teacher discussed with his learners the use of the reading strategies where the students got into oral interaction with their teacher and their peers. Sometimes, the teacher raise topic-bound discussions and give time for oral questions and comments. Absolutely, this reciprocal practice give the students the opportunity to speak and to improve their communicative abilities. In fact, the reading lecture can be an opportunity for them to express their ideas and opinions freely without being bound to specific rules. Of course, grammar

mistakes, and pronunciation errors are tolerated and seen as natural process as they are in a reading session.

As for the reading practice or activities that can be seen as useful in developing the listening skill, one can cite the teacher and the students' reading aloud. Surely, the reading aloud procedure makes the students listen attentively in order to get full comprehension. Besides, the teacher's pre-reading explanation can be also seen as more a listening practice than a reading activity. Teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction are other elements which are subsumed in the reading sessions and which lead to the development of listening. In short, one can say that the reading aloud strategy can develop significantly students' listening abilities.

Moreover, Grammar is learned deductively from the reading lectures as the students are generally exposed to infinite grammar structures. When they read, they develop a learning curiosity in order to discover how words are linked, how nouns and pronouns function, how tenses are used, how adjectives are placed, and many other grammatical trends. Indeed, the reading sessions are an opportunity for them to see and detect the grammar rules and functions in different contexts.

3.8.3 The Reading Difficulties

Generally, the limited language knowledge including decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge , and syntactic competence, caused several difficulties for learners to reach full texts' comprehension. Most of them rely heavily on dictionaries to find out words' meanings. Actually, this impedes fluency, decreases the reading speed, and leads to poor comprehension. This was clear in their oral and written responds to the reading questions and activities.

In addition, large classes put a real challenge on both teachers and learners. In fact, effective classroom reading instruction requires a small number

of students as they can all participate in the lesson. This gives them the chance to read aloud, to ask questions, to interact with the teacher, and to give ideas. Further, motivation is another concern of both teachers and learners. Indeed, some of the participants did not show interest in the classroom as they were discussing other issues while the teacher was giving his instruction. This caused some problems of discipline and put burdens on both peers and teachers.

3.4 Discussion and Interpretation of the Main Results

The results obtained from the two questionnaires and the classroom observation sessions lead us to say that reading is an important skill that have countless advantages as it incorporates the various language domains and skills. Both teachers and learners believe that reading provides constant language exposure and can be considered as a source of inspiration.

Actually, the students and the teachers' questionnaires provide significant data about reading and its role in improving students' language learning. In fact, learners showed different preferences and needs with respect to the reading instruction and the reading material. Indeed, the students need authentic material with modern subjects including real-life situations. The results denote that teachers of reading should plan carefully their instruction by setting clear purposes and selecting motivating texts. Novelty, eclecticism, and authenticity are vital elements that should be taken into consideration in order to meet students' different interests. Definitely, teachers of reading should introduce a variety of texts' types including poems, narratives, scientific illustrations, historical texts, and social facts. Certainly, this would provide learners with knowledge of different texts' forms and structures and make them familiar with different language styles.

Concerning the difficulties that lead to major reading problems, the classroom observation and the questionnaires' data reveal that vocabulary shortage is the main obstacles that faces first year students. Absolutely, teachers

need to seek and apply the useful techniques that alleviates the dire effects of this problem on students' learning and motivation. For example, they can recommend the use of dictionaries, provide time for vocabulary teaching within the reading course, and advise for free reading. Another problem that could minimize the reading gains is the lack of language knowledge. The evidence gathered from the research instruments illustrate that teachers of reading deal with first year students who lack grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, reading and writing skills. Certainly, these obstacles cause demotivation and reluctance to reading. Therefore, both teachers and learners should supply extra efforts to overcome these problems by practice. Teachers should set assessment plans so as to offer constructive feedback. Furthermore, texts' selection and instructional methods are other challenges that face teachers. Surely, the texts' types and contents play important roles in increasing students' motivation and reaching higher learning outcomes. The teachers of reading should clarify the reading skills, provide sufficient practice, apply the suitable teaching methods, and select the appropriate texts. Moreover, they should be facilitators and motivators in the classroom.

Concerning the students' attitudes towards the reading instruction, the results indicate that most of them know about the reading skills and strategies. Surely, teachers of study skills deal with these skills in theoretical and practical ways. As for learners' preferences, the data show that the majority prefer literary texts, and especially narratives and modern short stories. Indeed, this type of reading material provides them with both language and culture. Undoubtedly, they can be seen as a source of motivation as they include both excitement and entertainment. However, teachers should use different texts' types and genres including scientific texts, factual reports, newspaper and magazine articles, poems, and dialogues in order to satisfy the learners' different gusts. This strategy would offer the students different language styles, different language knowledge, and different vocabularies. The results obtained from the teachers'

questionnaire and the classroom observation reveal that the teachers use a variety of texts' sorts.

In addition, the evidence obtained from the three research instruments induce that classroom reading has positive effects on students' language learning. In fact, the reading lectures provide them with parallel language gains in the areas of speaking, listening, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. For example, the reading course offer infinite opportunities for students to learn about vocabulary. Indeed, different texts' types provide different vocabularies. Certainly, first year students need to increase their vocabulary package and reading seems to be the most effective way to do so. When the learners are asked to find synonyms and antonyms, they need to make use of the decoding, guessing and inferring reading skills. These strategies help develop their abilities to give the appropriate definitions according to the context. During the while reading phase, many teachers ask their learners to underline the unfamiliar words and check their meanings in the dictionary in order to build up adequate text's comprehension. Surely, this reading activity increases students' vocabulary volume.

Further, the reading aloud procedure can serve to develop listening and pronunciation while guessing and inferring lead to develop vocabulary and cognitive thinking. Certainly, the pre-reading activities or the post reading discussions are other element that improve students' listening abilities. Still, reading proficiency is improved through silent and loud reading followed by comprehension questions that require the application of the substantial reading skills including predicting, scanning, skimming, and evaluating. Furthermore, the speaking skill is involved in the reading course at different parts. Actually, the speaking proficiency can be increased through the oral communication that take place between the teacher and the learners. The post reading discussions about different texts' topics provide multiple communicative contexts where the students develop their oral competence when they are engaged in such activities.

Moreover, writing activities are unavoidably involved in all reading activities. In fact, the students are generally asked to answer the question in written forms using full sentences and paragraphs. This practice requires and develops their writing skills. Besides, when the students are asked to read and summarize the text or to write an essay about the content, they are, in fact, practicing writing. Therefore, one can say that the classroom reading lectures impact positively the writing skills as the learners are demanded to write answers, give opinions, paraphrase authors' ideas, and summarize the texts. Certainly, this would lead them to learn about spelling and word formation, coherence and cohesion, the use of topic sentences and paragraphs, and the use punctuation.

Furthermore, grammar is learnt in many indirect ways through the classroom reading. Indeed, the texts entail unlimited grammar structures which are used in different contexts. In other words, the reading passages provide contextualized grammar rules and demonstrate the different functions of these rules with reference to meaning. Certainly, the students relate their grammar knowledge to the phrases and sentences involved in the text. They can go through the use of conditional sentences, phrasal and irregular verbs , the use of prepositions, and the use of tenses. For example, when they use the dictionary to check words meaning during reading, they know about their types, roots, and morphology because words can be verbs, adjectives, adverbs, countable or uncountable nouns.

As for the use of reading as a technique in teaching and developing learners' proficiency in the other skills, the results reveal most of teachers of written expression, listening, phonetics, grammar, and speaking do not use constantly the reading-to-learn strategy. However, all the participating teachers in this study argue that the use of texts is effective for the development of language proficiency domains. Indeed, the research provide ample evidence about how to

include the classroom reading in teaching the language skills. Certainly, strategies such as read and perform, read and discuss, read and write can be included in different modules.

For the reading-to-write method, teachers suggests multiple activities including the use of texts with activities about the reading topic. Definitely, the students can extract ideas from text and write about them. For example, for teaching punctuation, the teacher can introduce a specific text where the focus is on capitalization. For essay writing, the teacher of writing can select an interesting text, ask the students to read, and work on the content in order to show them how to write a coherent essay.

As for the use of reading to teach listening, the results indicate that the reading aloud procedure is the most effective activity that can be involved in a listening session. Introducing texts in different subjects bring the students closer to oral language styles. For instance, the teacher can apply the reading-while listening strategy by giving the students printed authentic texts which are recorded in audio tapes. Indeed, listening proficiency can be developed by using multiple texts' types and genres.

Concerning teaching and improving oral skills through the use of reading as a teaching strategy, one can say that this approach can be applied due to its effectiveness in developing students' communicative competence. Actually, the teachers of speaking can introduce texts in different forms, ask the students to read, and raise discussions about the text. The different texts' topics increase learners' abilities to discuss and comment on different matters. Besides, texts in the form of plays and dialogues provide valuable speaking practice as they put the students in different communicative situations.

Moreover, the teaching of grammar through texts can be a useful strategy that put the syntactic rules in real use. Actually, grammar cannot be taught

without including it in context. Certainly, the use of texts offers an opportunity for teachers to focus and work on a specific grammatical structure. For example, the teacher of grammar can ask the learners to read the text and underline the prepositions in order to build up the lecture. Indeed, students' grammatical knowledge can be well developed through the use of texts as they learn and practice the rules in different contexts.

Furthermore, the data about the extensive reading illustrate that the majority of the students do not read extensively because of various factors. In fact, motivation is considered as an essential factor to extensive reading. Actually, lack of language knowledge including vocabulary shortage, grammar deficiency, and comprehension strategies lead automatically to demotivation. Besides, students are not demanded and encouraged by their teachers to read. Really, first year students need to be pushed, guided, and monitored in order to help them   select the appropriate material for free reading. According to the results, teachers advise but do not oblige their learners to read. In this respect, students' unwillingness to reading is the result of the absence of an academic extensive reading program in their learning curriculum. Therefore, we advise for this kind of program within the reading instruction with separated scores in order to instill reading habits because extensive reading is a key element to the development of the general language proficiency.

More importantly, both teachers and learners believe that extensive reading has abundant language learning benefits. In fact, students are exposed to infinite linguistic and cultural concepts of the target language including grammar structures, vocabularies, idioms, expressions, and proverbs. Certainly, vocabulary can be considered as an important gain of extensive reading as learners go through a variety of topics and contexts which provide a continuous exposure to unlimited number of words.

Besides, extensive reading develops students' reading proficiency as they can improve their cognitive thinking, decoding skills, and comprehension abilities. In addition, they can practice and develop their reading skills such as guessing and evaluating as they read in different domains. Still, they can develop critical attitudes in different matters as they become resistant rather submissive readers. As a result, they become more proficient in setting their reading purposes and selecting their reading materials. Indeed, they acquire a background knowledge that can help them not only in their language learning but also in their personal lives. Extensive reading leads learners to develop literacy in different domains.

Actually, ER provides learners with infinite ideas that can inspire them to write about different topics at higher levels. Surely, they can acquire ready-made expressions, figurative language, vocabulary, and writing mechanism which can be reflected in their writings. In fact, when reading, students learn across the use of grammar, cohesion and coherence, texts forms, punctuation, and spelling. Therefore, one can say that reading is truly an inspiration for writing. Teachers can make use of ER to develop the writing skill by asking learners to read, document their reading, and write essays and summaries about what they have read. The use of portfolios is an effective tool to know about students' extensive reading and to assess their achievements.

Moreover, students can improve their communicative competence as they build up linguistic, cultural, conceptual, and world knowledge that allows them to discuss various matters. Actually, the students can be asked to read about different subjects and discuss them in the classroom. In this way, they can develop different language styles including scientific, narrative, argumentative, sport, political, historical, media, and literary sorts.

Essentially, the findings of this study meet our hypotheses and provide sufficient answers to our research questions. Concerning the obstacles and

difficulties that cause reading deficits, the results meet our research hypothesis which indicates that the lack of language knowledge, guidance, and motivation are the most important factors that lead to poor reading achievement.

Further, the results of this research answer our research questions about the language learning benefits of both intensive and extensive reading. In fact, they consents our hypothesis which denotes that reading can play significant roles in improving students' language proficiency. Therefore, a successful reading instruction should involve both effective classroom reading and extensive reading programs. In fact, our hypothesis is endorsed by the fact that EFL learners and teachers assent the idea of integrating an ER program in the learning syllabus. Indeed, the results match our research questions about the language learning gains of the reading and consent our hypothesis which indicates that reading offers multiple opportunities of the language use and practice.

Besides, the findings provide answers to the research questions concerning how intensive reading can be used as a teaching technique to teach and improve the language skills. These results prove our hypothesis which suggests the effectiveness of this strategy in developing students' language proficiency involving listening, communication, writing, vocabulary, grammar. In fact, multiple reading tasks and activities can be used according to the purpose of the instructor. This evidence prove our hypothesis which states that intensive reading is a useful technique that can be used by teachers of the language skills.

In sum, the participants gave different views concerning reading and its effectiveness in developing their language proficiency; including writing, communication, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. Many of them suggested different strategies in order to give reading more importance in their learning programme. Some of them proposed the introduction of a module for extensive reading with specialised teachers as they believe that reading

should be taught by teachers who are specialised in reading. Others focused on the role of reading in the development of language skills and mentioned its language learning benefits . A number of students proposed that teachers of reading should play greater roles in pushing and motivating autonomous reading by asking their learners to read interesting books and bringing their summaries as homework. Motivation was emphasised by a great number of participants as they consider it as an essential factor to reading. In this respect, students showed their need for their teachers' help and guidance. Some teachers viewed that for learners to be good writers and good communicators, they should be good readers. This estimation is considered as the best idea as it reveals accurately the importance of reading in improving the language proficiency.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the importance of reading in developing the English language proficiency and tried to reveal the general objective of this study. It attempted to justify the research methods, procedures and choices of the researcher. In fact, it explained the combination of qualitative and the quantitative approaches that are involved in this research. Explicitly, it detailed students and teachers' questionnaires and the classroom observation procedures and illustrated the purposes of each instruments. Besides, it gave elucidations about the sample population of this investigation and provided a description of the research participants.

Furthermore, this part of the research provided quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Actually, it included the interpretation of the results   provided by the questionnaires and the classroom observation. Still, the investigator ended this chapter by giving a general discussion and interpretation of the main results and linked these analyses with the research questions and hypothesis .

In brief, this chapter can be considered as the practical phase of the study as it defined the specific field of the research and clarified the basic research

aims, design, and instruments. Besides, it entailed the analyses of the participants' answers, views, and recommendations and attempted to give adequate interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER
FOUR

Chapter Four: Recommendations and Suggestions

4.1 Introduction

Research has, over decades, revealed that there are strong links between the reading skill and language learning success. Actually, effective reading instruction is a basic element in language teaching. In fact, reading can be considered as a valuable source of foreign language learning.

This chapter provides suggestions and recommendations about the reading instruction and shows how an extensive reading programme can be set for first year students of English in order to widen language knowledge and help them to be good readers. In fact, the researcher suggests a set of procedures that could facilitates the implementation of this programme.

Based on the findings of this research, this concluding chapter sheds light on the relation between reading and language skills' development, and involves classroom reading procedures that can be applied to teach the language skills. Besides, this part of the study illustrates and explains a reading -to-learn approach including the reading-to-speak, the reading-to-write, and the reading-listening approaches and entails some reading tasks that can be introduced to build up language skills. Still, this chapter demonstrates the importance of reading in developing language literacy.

4.2 Recommended Reading Instruction

Reading is seen as the most important canal through which learners can develop their English after the classroom course is over. A decent reading program offers instruction in the skills required at various areas with plenty of practice. In order to achieve this, the reading program should include two kinds of reading tasks: intensive and extensive. The following figure demonstrates our recommended reading instruction:

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │     The Reading Instruction      │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                       ↙                           ↘
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Classroom Intensive  │      │ Setting an Extensive │
        │      Reading         │      │   Reading Program    │
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
                  ↓                              ↓
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │    Setting goals     │      │ Setting clasroom     │
        │                      │      │      library         │
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
                  ↓                              ↓
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Teaching the reading │      │ Motivating and       │
        │ skills and strategies│      │ monitoring students' │
        │                      │      │      reading         │
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
                  ↓                              ↓
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Introducing          │      │                      │
        │ appropriate          │      │   Using portfolios   │
        │ texts and activities │      │                      │
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
```
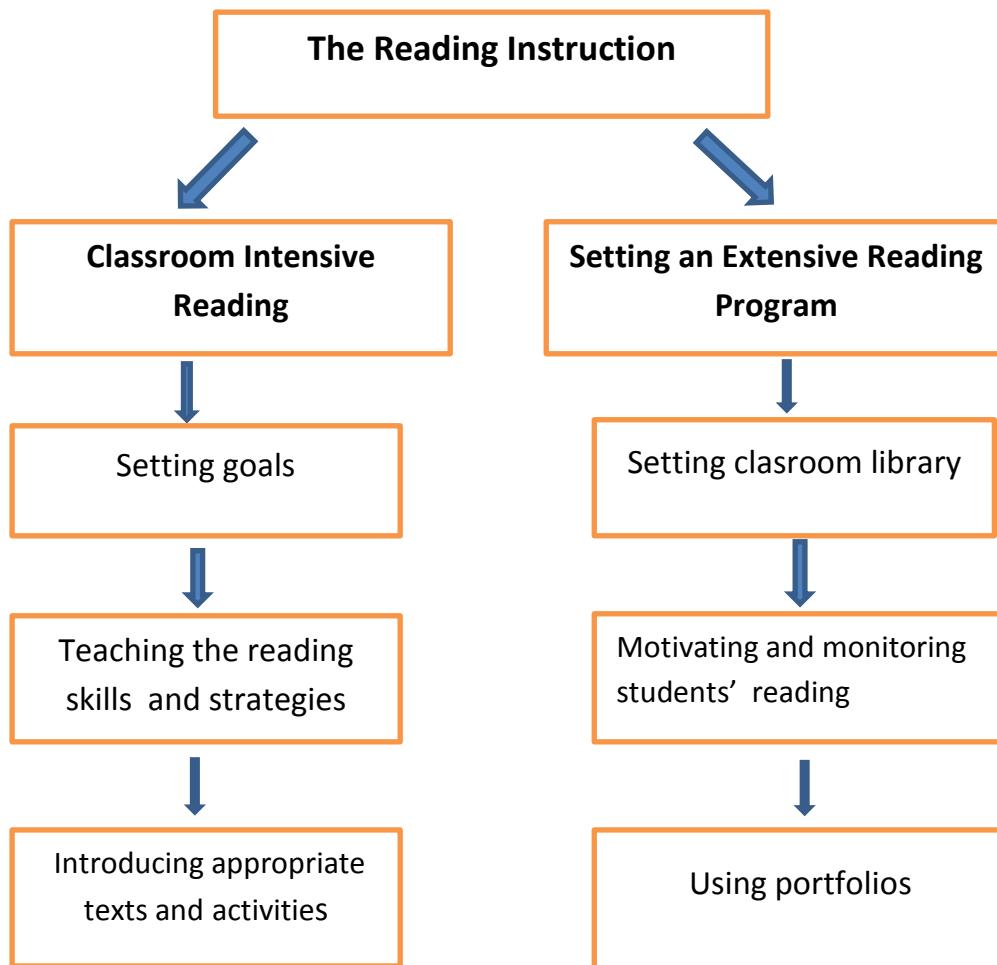
Figure 4.1 Recommended Reading Instruction.

This figure illustrates our recommended plan for a successful reading instruction. For example, intensive reading can be used to teach vocabulary and grammar skills, while extensive reading is a long term engagement which is useful in developing learners language literacy and proficiency at all levels. Therefore, teachers should use extended texts as well as short passages. Indeed, learners must read long articles, novels, research theses, or books outside the classroom, as they need to receive intensive instruction in the classroom to work with paragraphs and short texts.

There are two categories of skills in reading: lower level skills; such as decoding words, understanding vocabulary, and recognizing grammar points , and higher level cognitive skills such as; previewing, analysing, questioning,

synthesizing, predicting, and criticising (Schleppegrell and Bowman, 1986). Therefore, teachers need to design and base their reading program on both levels to develop both types.

Good reading means the ability to focus on the ideas of the text rather than emphasizing individual words. In the classroom reading, it is important for teachers to train their learners to use the context of the text to guess and understand the meaning of words instead of being slowed down by using the dictionary every time. Besides, learners must practice the reading task for various purposes such as: using their background knowledge to reach adequate understanding of the text, recognising key ideas, extracting specific information, and discovering the writer's goals and attitudes.

In the classroom, the reading comprehension course is normally aimed to improve students' reading fluency and to learn and practice the reading skills because learners should know how to read and how to build meaning. Therefore, a set of reading strategies and activities should be introduced to first year students. We propose the following steps which can be followed by the teachers of reading in order to reach higher achievements:

4.2.1 Setting Clear Goals for the Reading Course

In the light of how best reading can be taught and how successful students interact with texts, a reading course in English could include the following learning goals:

➢ The ability to decode words, sentences, and paragraphs.
➢ Implementing appropriately different reading strategies such as skimming and scanning.
➢ To improve reading fluency.
➢ To reach adequate text comprehension.

➢ To be familiar with different texts types including; texts, discourse, dialogues, and poems.

➢ To improve vocabulary bulk and to build schematic knowledge in order to make adequate text interpretation.

I order to help students to achieve these goals, teachers should play effective roles in motivating their students by selecting appropriate texts, designing useful reading activities, and establishing useful classroom procedures.

4.2.2 Teaching the Reading Strategies

The difference between a skill and a strategy is that a skill is something that is done automatically or spontaneously without a lot of thinking about it and which is done the same way every time. An example of a reading skill is the recognizing and the saying of the word *the* instantly. In contrast, a strategy is a plan that is thought about and set for a specific task. For example, making prediction during reading is a strategy as students use the text's clues, text structure, and their prior knowledge to guess and find out the meaning from the text (Duffy, 2009).

Generally, students are faced with comprehension difficulties related to different subject areas. In fact, they are obliged to develop skills that help them move from being able to decode words and sentences to being able to build adequate understanding and produce critical response to the topic. At this level, reading involves the ability to interact cognitive processes during reading in order to give meaning to the text (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

Reading comprehension strategies are reading procedures that active readers use to better understand what they read. For example, students may remember and use what they already know about the topic before and during reading and sum up the main ideas in order to derive meaning. Therefore, the reading strategies should be taught to learners in order to help them develop their metacognitive awareness and to improve their reading skills. The skills and

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strategies approach requires students to use background knowledge and schemata while the teacher prompts them to produce relevant answers to comprehension questions (Day and Bamford, 1998).

Simply speaking, good readers need to use background knowledge, generate questions, adjust their understanding, and solve their comprehension problems in order to decide about the text's meaning. The reciprocal teaching is an effective instruction strategy that helps students understand and practice these reading strategies.

It is known that reading is not an easy passive task where learners simply need to decode words, but instead; it is an active process in which students should use cognitive strategies in order to get information and build meaning. For that reason, teachers are required to explicitly teach the reading strategies to help their learners build meaning as they read., make interpretations, and learn from the text. They should learn how to interact with text, find out meaning, predict and preview information, assess and organize information, use background knowledge, and monitor comprehension. In this respect, many studies have shown that explicit reading comprehension instruction enhances learners' text understanding (Block and Pressley, 2002 and National Reading Panel, 2000).

In order to develop their reading skills and familiarity with the reading comprehension tasks, learners need to be taught a series of reading procedures and strategies that apply to all kinds of reading activities. The following table entails before reading, during reading, and after reading strategies:

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
-Establish purpose for reading.	-Identifying the main ideas and supporting the main details.	-Summarize
-Activate background knowledge.	-Create mental images -Make inferences.	-Make inferences
-Make predictions.	-Make informed predictions/ verify predictions.	-Verify predictions
-Generate questions about the text.	-Generate questions about the text.	-Generate question about the tex.t -Summarize what was learnt to respond to the questions.
-Evaluate text structure.	Use text structure as a frame work for comprehension. -Monitor understanding of words and use vocabulary strategies. -Monitor Comprehension.	

Table 4.1 Strategies Used by Effective Readers.

(Denton et al., 2007 : 66)

This table illustrates the reading strategies that should be taught to students in order to help them read, interpret, understand, and evaluate the text. In short, these strategies are useful in the development of instructional procedures that help learners acquire skills and practice strategies on their own when they read.

In brief, students should be trained to use a number of strategies such as; reflection, annotation, analysing, and drawing conclusions in order to build an adequate text understanding.

4.2.3 Selecting Interesting Texts for Classroom Reading

Getting access to copious interesting texts is an ideal objective that few teachers can meet. Some teachers choose their reading texts to meet the needs of their learners and to fulfil academic purposes. Other teachers may deal with prescribed texts available in a coursebook. Others could formulate and create texts for classroom use. More importantly, teachers need to provide their students with authentic reading material that is rich of language knowledge, culture, and advanced style so that they can acquire new vocabulary, grammar, and literacy.

Indeed, authentic materials, which involve a variety of topics, encourage a comprehensive approach to teaching reading. The authenticity of the reading material is an essential element to create interest, motivate learners, and prepare them to the necessary reading skills. In this regard, Widdowson views :

> *It has been traditionally supposed that the language presented to learners should be simplified in some way for easy access and acquisition. Nowadays, there are recommendations that the language presented should be authentic.*

(Widdowson, 1990: 67)

That is to say that authentic reading material leads learners to practice reading texts where they can miss few words and are able to find out the general meaning. Certainly, when students come to contact with real language, they work harder to reach adequate understanding. The following table shows the criteria that help teachers select authentic material:

Suitability	Exploitability	Readability	Presentation
-Does the text interest the students? -Is it relevant to students' needs? -Does it represent the type of material that the student will use outside the classroom?	-Can the text be exploited for teaching purposes? -For what purpose should the text be exploited? -What skills/strategies can be developed by exploiting the text?	-Is the text too easy/difficult for the student? -Is it structurally too demanding/ complex? -How much new vocabulary does it contain? Is it relevant?	-Does it look authentic? -Is it attractive? -Does it grab the student's attention? -Does it make him want to read more,

Table 4.2 Important Factors in Selecting Authentic Reading Materials.

(Anthony , 2006:63)

Definitely, the table above entails the criteria that should be addressed by teachers when selecting interesting, motivating, and useful authentic texts for classroom reading. These criteria can be summed up as follows:

  ➢ Objectives of the reading course.
  ➢ Suitability of the text topic, content, and concept.
  ➢ Text type and genre; narrative, expository, discourse…
  ➢ Text complexity.
  ➢ Vocabulary items that can be gained by the students.

Still, teachers can use another strategy in selecting interesting texts by giving students the freedom of choice. Many teachers have successfully tried this method by asking students to find texts that they believe will interest the class. Further, it is possible to gather evidence of learners' interests by setting questionnaires so as to know about the genres and types of texts they like to read.

In sum, variety is a useful strategy that can be considered in selecting interesting texts. For example, teachers can introduce texts that vary in terms of topic, length, rhetorical organization, and the reading purpose. A teacher of reading can introduce newspaper articles, catalogues, guidelines, recipes, poems, reviews, lampoons, letters, announcements, manuals, directories, instructions, weather forecasts, advertisements, short stories, leaflets, and notes. Certainly, this could meet students' different interests and preferences.

4.2.4 Teaching Critical Reading

ELT experts called for the development of critical reading skills as part of the reading curriculum. They argue that the ability to read critically depends on the consciousness of how elements of language are manipulated by writers. In fact, critical reading instruction requires close mastery of the language in order to know what the author intends by the text.

Procedures of critical reading may help students challenge the writers' assumptions but do not prescribe alternatives to ideas demonstrated in the text. When selecting texts for critical reading, the teacher should avoid imposing value judgements. Elliot (1991) provided some guidelines for teachers aiming to develop critical reading skills:

  ➢ Teachers should not use their authority to promote their own views.
  ➢ The mode of inquiry in controversial ideas should be based on discussion rather than instruction.
  ➢ The discussion should protect divergence of opinions among students.

Students need to discover the purpose of the writer. It is important to say that the purpose of the text cannot be stated necessarily in any part of the text, however; grammar and vocabulary can be considered as a good indicator. A

text that is aimed to entertain the reader includes narrative tenses, whereas if the writer's intention is to advise the reader, the text entails structures such as imperatives and modals of obligation (Sally and Katie, 2008). In the same sense, Hedge gives this example**:**

> ***A political writer using the pronoun "we" attempts to create a bond with the reader by assuming a shared view of discussion. The implication is of "we, the politically astute". In this way, the use of the pronoun positions the reader.***

(Hedge, 2000:197)

That is to say that a political writer use the pronoun "we" in order to join the reader and tie him to his views. Therefore, students need to be trained to detect the attitudes, the convictions, the implications, and the tone of the author. As for the the tone of the author, they should look for information in different parts in the text and never in one single section or paragraph. A multiple choice question such as the following one can be used to ask learners to discover the writer's tone:

The author's views on politics in America are:

A. critical   *B. Ironic*   *C. Admiring*

 Moreover, teachers can use text-comparison as a basis for critical reading. For example, they can use different newspapers' articles   with different political leanings but written on the same event in order to enable learners to appreciate how the use of language generates different impressions about the same event. A classroom debate can be raised by dividing the class into groups and asking each group to read, summarize, and comment on one of the articles. Certainly, at the end of the course, the teacher and the learners discuss the significant differences and views.

4.2.5 Setting an Extensive Reading Programme

Extensive reading should make part of the reading instruction because it is important for the development of language skills. Therefore, we recommend a supportive programme which includes appropriate materials, tasks, and facilities.

According to Nuttal (2005: 128): *"**The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it"**.* Actually, reading extensively helps learners build their world knowledge, develop language literacy, and acquire cultural knowledge. According to Day and Bamford (1998), the extensive reading instruction has the following advantages:

> ➢ Motivating the students to read as much as possible and leading them to learn by reading.
> ➢ A variety of topics and interesting reading material is available.
> ➢ The purpose of reading is often related to pleasure and no academic goals are imposed on leaners.
> ➢ The students benefit from their teachers' guidance and support.

Extensive reading usually takes place when students are on their own, whereas intensive reading is generally taught under the guidance and the control of the teacher inside the classroom. According to Collin (1995), any classroom will be poorer for the absence or the lack of extensive reading programmes. In this sense, Nuttal viewed:

> *We want our students to be able to read better, fast, and with full   understanding. To do this, they need to read more. And there seem to be two ways to achieve this: requiring them to do so, and tempting them to do so.*
>
> (Nuttal, 2005: 128).

Indeed, no one can deny the fact that extensive reading helps significantly in exposing EFL students to English and especially when the class time is limited. Requiring and motivating learners to read are two effective elements to make this programme successful. When setting an extensive reading programme, we suggest the following strategies to push learners to keep reading extensively:

4.2.5.1 Setting a Classroom Library

The class library should not be so grand but it can be simply a box including different titles appropriate for first year students' language proficiency. When organizing a class library, teachers may think about important questions such as; how to select books appropriate to students? How to organize the library? And how to support learners in their extensive reading. A teacher of reading can make a list of titles selected from the faculty library and require his learners to choose from this list.

More importantly, this library should include a variety of books with different topics so as to meet various students' needs and interests. There can be about fifteen titles so that teachers can guide, control, organize, and manipulate students' extensive reading. This strategy motivates students to read as it helps them read similar titles and share the reading experiences.

Simenson (1987) divides materials for extensive reading into three types: authentic, pedagogic, and adapted. For teachers of students with more advanced levels especially those working with EFL learners, they should use authentic materials. Certainly, for university students, it is advisable that the library includes books, articles, research papers, and magazines written for native speakers. This requires authentic reading materials with authentic vocabulary and literature. Besides, it is important to select the most interesting books that fit students learning subjects, preferences, and levels. For example, books of fiction are advantageous in speeding and extending the reading as the plot develops

while non-fiction needs a close attention that is characterized by " a stop –and-start" style of reading.

It is important for teachers to involve their students in setting a library which entails interesting books. Once these books have been spotted, they should be coded for level and genre so that they can be easily identified. Both teachers and learners need to devise some strategies to maintain the library's collection. In other words, they should act as partners to set and administer this library.

Further, for an extensive programme to be successful, it is necessary that students choose and read materials they can understand in order to maintain pleasure and motivation in reading. Nevertheless, students should be trained to select the appropriate reading material necessary for their language learning. Actually, proficient learners choose purposefully what to read and know how to preview a book and quickly decide about their interests.

Since students can be given the opportunity to choose their reading materials from the library according to to their likes and interests, teachers should inquire them to report back on their reading in different ways. For example, they can devote a special time every two weeks to give the students the opportunity to ask questions, tell their friends about the books they have read, and give summaries about their readings. By doing so, students can develop skills such as; retelling, summarizing, reflecting, clarifying, recalling details, sharing reactions, synthesising, and reviewing personal impressions. Similarly, teachers can make sure that students have really read the books.

In sum, it is important for 1[st] year students to read authentic material which would respond to their needs and abilities. Linguistic, cognitive, and content simplicity are features of simplified materials. This makes them committed to reading and gradually develops their abilities.

4.2.5.2 Monitoring Students' Reading

Generally, learners cannot do a lot of extensive reading by themselves unless they are encouraged and guided by their teachers. Certainly, the role of teachers is crucial in promoting students' reading. For example, a teacher can select a variety of books that he likes and shows his learners how exciting these books are.

Moreover, teachers can act as organizers and tutors. In fact, they can indicate to their learners how many books they should read over a given period of time. They can help them select their reading material by suggesting a variety of interesting books that they enjoy such as; fiction, romantic novels, books of history, civilization, and literature. In addition, teachers can engage learners in discussions about the criteria of the useful books and push them to have a list of the interesting ones. For the same purpose, they should advise their students to give up the uninteresting books or those that they do not like.

One way to encourage extensive reading is to give time for short interviews with learners about their readings. Teachers can use this time to recommend books, advise on reading problems, answer questions, offer help, suggest activities, and drive students to reflect on their reading by discussing the books they have read. In addition, a teacher can organize book conferences where students are asked to discuss the book they have already read. The teacher elicits answers and views through a range of questions such as; did you enjoy the story? What about the characters? Which characters did you sympathize with?....etc.

Another useful approach in supporting extensive reading is setting reading groups in which members of a group read different books and share their experiences with their peers. By doing so, learners can probe questions as well as responding to them. Parrott (1987: 412-14) says that the reading group or syndicate can follow a five-step procedure:

1. The teacher divides the class into small groups.
2. The class discusses a range of books to be chosen and the teacher facilitates the process by having a list of titles.
3. Students read their books of their choice in a two-week deadline.
4. The teacher organizes tutorials on each book.
5. The syndicates meet and members recount their reading.

In short, students should be given the opportunity to choose their books for extensive reading. Teachers should help them in selecting their books, assess their reading, and guide them to the right direction.

4.2.5.3 Motivating Students' Reading

Having a great love to reading is the greatest gift that teachers can offer to their learners. In fact, they should install reading habits and encourage them to go to the library every day to select their own books. Certainly, motivation and guidance are essential elements to extensive reading. Therefore, teachers need to help their learners by suggesting interesting materials for their free reading according to specific goals and interests. Students can be motivated to read by convincing them that reading is a necessity in their life. For instance, they can use reading as follows:

➢ For entertainment, they should read popular novels.
➢ Getting information about specific concerns requires reading expository books about these concerns.
➢ When learners try to decide about public matters or current events, they need to read newspapers and magazines.
➢ In order to use a video game, they should read the directions of the game.

In other words, learners need to know the reasons and understand the purposes of their reading as they should know that reading enables, empowers,

and helps them gain experience in their learning as well as in their lives. In fact, they need to be persuaded that "*reading is power*" by putting them in situations that make them experience the power of reading.

In order to offer learners real extensive reading support, teachers need to have a clear vision of the power of reading. In this respect, Duffy (2009:6) states: ***"Your vision brings literacy to life for students. Because you value what literacy can do for students in the real word, you strive to give students experiences with real- world reading"***. In other words, teachers can visualise reading as a vehicle for social development in order to provide students with experiences in real-life situations. For example, teachers can advise their learners to read about how to improve services to the homeless, how to be a good citizen, or how to help the poor. In addition, they can envisage reading as a means for improving humanity and engage students in reading literature about human conditions. Still, they can assume reading as a useful tool to solve problems and involve students in reading application forms, driver's tests, newspapers, recipes, or reference material. More importantly, they can envision reading as a means to improve learning and impulse students to read textbooks, booklets, and manuals.

Further, in order to push learners to read, teachers can give additional marks as a reward for extensive reading. These marks can be considered in the continuous assessment activities and should be counted in their grading system. We suggest that extensive reading should be evaluated and marked within the reading or the study skill module. By doing so, students give much importance to extensive reading and consider it as part of their learning curricula.

4.2.5.4 Using Portfolios

Portfolios are multipurpose assortments of students' tasks, projects and activities which are accumulated by the students themselves. In their portfolios, students describe their learning contexts, register their work, and show their achievements. The collection is kept in a folder, book, box or other mode.

Portfolios can be used for two major purposes: a means of learning and an instrument of assessment. Certainly, they involve students' collections over longer periods, reflect their achievements, and reveal their needs and interests. Besides, they can be used as part of formative assessment and as an appropriate mechanism to monitor learners' progress. Indeed, the evidence included in the portfolio demonstrates the learners' proficiency on a number of tasks.

As for extensive reading, portfolios help teachers know about what their learners read and make them assess their performance. Besides, they give learners the opportunity to be involved in the process of assessment and learning as they select their reading materials and update them in a regular way. Through portfolios, learners can demonstrate their work and skills, and develop criteria of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their extensive reading. Actually, portfolios are designed to represent the learners' work and to show how their work has evolved over time. In this respect, Dawson (2005: 24) states: *"The achievements in extensive reading should be the part of the student's portfolio which records the student's work during the school year and is included in the overall assessment"*. In other words, portfolios are regular and meaningful collections of students' work which display the students' efforts, progress, and achievements in different areas during a certain period of time. They help learners decide about their learning, develop their autonomy, and helps teachers evaluate and monitor their learners' progress.

In brief, portfolios can improve the learning process and assess learners' performance in extensive reading. They push learners to assume the responsibility of their learning by making them organize their reading material for a specific purpose, evaluating their achievements, and reflect on their own learning. Actually, portfolios help students document their readings and experiences.

4.3 The Role of Reading in Language Learning

At university level, learners are expected to make a shift from the learning to read to the reading to learn phase (Chall, 1983). In fact, they should be asked to read literary books, short stories, magazines, poems, fiction and non-fiction books, and texts in different subjects. The following statement describes the importance of reading:

> *Reading is a wonderfully rich and complex human activity. It provokes reflection, introspection, and imaginative thinking and allows us to create and explore new ideas. It introduces us to different representations of the world. It fills our needs for information and communication and enables us to learn about different subjects, perform various tasks, participate in the workplace, and understand and evaluate our place in the world. It also gives us the intrinsic pleasure of linguistic and imaginative activity.*

(The International Reading Association, 1996: 19)

Indeed, reading familiarizes students with various literary genres as they deal and respond to a variety of texts. They are exposed through reading to different real- life topics which make them gain information and ideas. More importantly, they become involved with rich language styles and trends such as grammar and vocabulary.

Language experts have significantly appreciated the nature of reading and its role in language learning. In fact, it can be a useful means to teach and enhance all language skills and ingredients. For example, in teaching speaking and listening, texts can be presented in the form of dialogues and conversations that should be read orally by learners. In other words, teachers can use the read-aloud procedure to teach these skills. The following figure places reading at the centre of language skills learning:
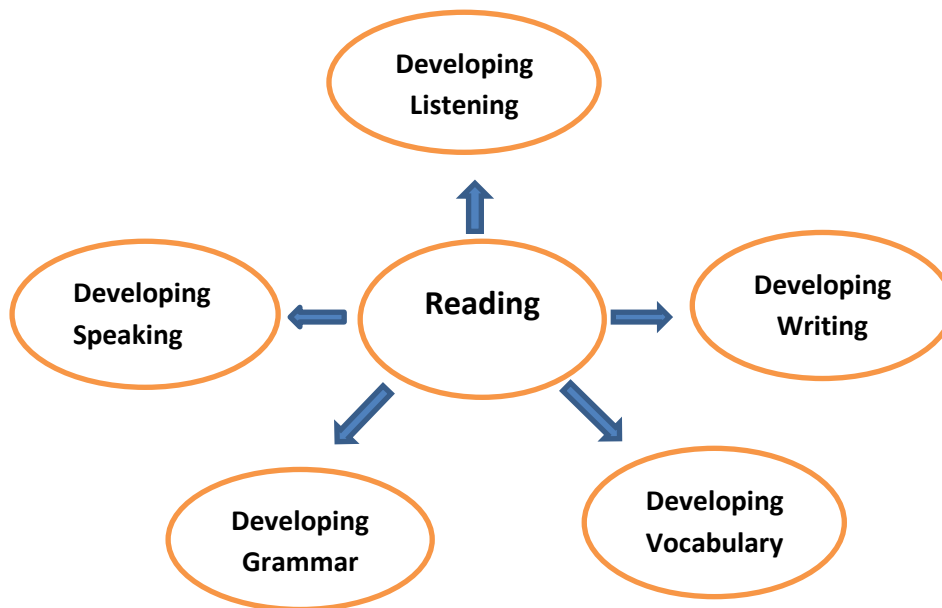
Figure 4.2 Placing Reading at the Centre of Language Learning

This figure shows how reading can play central roles in improving language skills. Indeed, using reading to learn or to teach English as a foreign language has received significant attention in the area of ELT. For example, researchers like Brown (1993) views that reading provides EFL students with a comprehensive input and raises the opportunity for effective second language learning. Good readers can reach higher success in writing as they acquire concrete knowledge through wide reading. Still, they are better able to possess the essential skills that help them listen and understand to talks, movies, and conversations in different topics. Certainly, good readers become highly successful in speaking and communication as they gain input through reading.

In order to plan and offer successful reading tasks, teachers need to take into account the development of the other language skills. In fact, they should place and consider reading as the core of language learning.

4.3.1 The Language Learning Benefits of Extensive Reading

Researchers argue that learners can develop their language knowledge through extensive reading. Indeed, it is a necessary activity which gives students the chance to respond to their wants and interests without being forced to follow a class programme. Extensive reading is defined by Maley (2005: 354) as: ***"the single most effective way to improve language proficiency"***. In fact, a lot of research has shown the learning gains of extensive reading in the areas of writing, vocabulary, syntax, listening, speaking, reading, and general language proficiency.

While the focus of classroom intensive reading is on decoding and comprehension, the theory of extensive reading is based on comprehensible input necessary for second language acquisition (Krashen, 2004). It includes students reading large amounts of reading materials in different topics. This could improve their motivation and promote the non-classroom learning. This type of reading can have the following benefits:

a/promoting the incidental learning.

b/Enhancing the reading proficiency.

c/Increasing and developing vocabulary knowledge.

d/ Improving speaking, writing, and listening skills.

In addition, research has demonstrated that extensive reading is a good way to develop language literacy. In this respect, Krashen States:

> *Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar competence, and the only way we become good spellers.*

(Krashen, 2004: 226)

In other words, through extensive reading, students improve their autonomous learning and decrease their dependence on their teachers. For instance, students of English as a foreign language can have access to large amount of vocabulary in different contexts that they can use later in their daily speech or their essay writing. Certainly, extensive reading is a useful strategy to build up language literacy in various domains.

Further, research has showed that ER and gains in language learning are highly connected. Definitely, learners who constantly can attain larger content knowledge than those who do not read. Many studies have revealed that extensive reading is a useful strategy to improve the growth of vocabulary repertoire, language fluency, and general cultural knowledge of students (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988). Indeed, reading improves intuition skills, broadens comprehension, provides experiences, and raises opportunities for better language learning.

Further, extensive reading is an independent approach to reading improvement, and therefore, it should be included in a foreign language programme, as a separate instruction. Day and Bamford (1998) have given the following benefits of extensive reading:

- ✓ Developing positive attitudes toward reading in a foreign language.
- ✓ Increasing motivation.
- ✓ Improves reading fluency.
- ✓ Enhancing vocabulary and grammar knowledge.
- ✓ Improving writing skills.

Furthermore, many researchers have focused on the positive effects of extensive reading on the development of writing proficiency. In fact, better reading leads to better writing in the target language. Day and Bamford (1998)

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view that it is only via continuous actual reading in L2 that students can acquire the intricate linguistic, world, and relevant literacy that is necessary for learning.

Nowadays, there is plenty of evidence which illustrates the positive effects of ER on the development of language proficiency. Reportedly, learners who read constantly show great proficiency in reading comprehension, in their writings, in their vocabulary use, in their grammar knowledge, and even in their communicative styles. Therefore, ER is a crucial solution to ensure the continuity of learning in non-pedagogical contexts and to build up learners' general and language knowledge.

4.3.2 Teaching Language through Reading Literature

Language and literature are closely interrelated as they constitute each other. Indeed, literature is rich of language points and language is a necessary element to access literature. According to Brumfit and Carter (1986), literature is an ally of language because it has been used largely as a teaching approach in ELT. For example, literature was the essential element in the Grammar Translation Method as teachers used to introduce literary texts for teaching reading, writing, translation, and grammar.

In addition, literature is seen as a valuable ELT asset. It raises ample opportunities for students to have a better interaction with foreign culture and people because most of them could not have a direct contact with native speakers. It includes authentic texts and rhetoric language with higher linguistic elements such as metaphors, similes, vocabulary, syntactic forms, and other features of language use (Lazar, 1993). Besides, reading literature can be a useful means to develop students' communicative skills as it introduces them to actual communicative settings that take place between characters in stories and novels.

Using literature as a means to teach and improve language skills is a pedagogical practice in modern language teaching. Researchers have listed

various benefits of using literary material in teaching a foreign language. For instance, it is seen as an authentic source which is rich of cultural and linguistic elements as it increases learners' cultural awareness and makes them familiar with the foreign language culture. Still, it gives students the chance to practice the language skills, to improve their creative thinking, and to develop critical attitudes. According to Stern (2001), literature can be used as a subject matter for writing, speaking, and listening activities.

Moreover, reading literature has been a key element to improve learners' language proficiency. To help learners attain this aim, the texts or books selection plays an important role to increase their motivation in reading. Indeed, when they are interested and motivated in what they read, they can learn a lot from reading. Therefore, researchers have recommended the use of authentic literary material in the language classroom because it provides rich language and cultural trends of the target language (Collie & Slater, 1994).

Actually, poems and stories can play significant roles in developing students' language learning as they expand their imagery and provoke their thinking. Poetry provides learners with different language aspects, different meanings, unusual words order, and unfamiliar intonation. As poems include uncommon language, students become compelled to develop strategies to find out imaginative meanings by making appropriate phonological and semantic connections (Ramsaran, 1983). In addition, stories can be useful tools to motivate learners because they contain real emotions, facts, dialogues, historical events, cultural trends, and real language use. Short stories have copious advantages in language teaching. They are truly motivating as they make the reading task easier, give students concise view of other cultures, take short but enjoyable time, increase interest, improve the critical thinking, and reduce stress and anxiety. For example, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a good sample that improves students' linguistic, cultural, political, and critical competence.

Literature-based teaching may include classic or modern literary works. Indeed, learners' literary skills can be developed when they become familiar with the specific lexicon and conception of literary analyses. In fact, they can develop a fine literary language and use aesthetic expressions in their writings and communications. Furthermore, literary texts, including fiction, essays, poems, plays, and prose, raise copious opportunities for learners to engage in philosophical thinking about the foreign ethics, beliefs and cultures across different times and places. In other words, students not only acquire language styles, but they also discover the historical aspects and the social traits that are depicted in the literary works. Truly, reading literature extends students' understanding of the intricacies of human life and language and helps them to develop their critical thinking. In fact, they learn how to question various perspectives and adopt different critical attitudes towards different events and subjects.

In brief, reading literature in the classroom offers learners authentic illustrations of language styles, texts' types, and other linguistic and cultural functions. Texts of literary genres motivate learners and lead them to ask questions, discuss opinions, and comment on these texts. This enriches their cultural knowledge, and develops their language proficiency. For this reason, teachers of reading should introduce their students to different literary texts of different types such as novels, stories and poems, and recommend books of literary genres for extensive reading.

4.4. The Role of Reading in Developing Language skills

Reading can be used to teach and improve language skills. Certainly, there are firm relationships between reading and writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar. In this respect, we suggest the following procedures and reading activities that relate to the development of each language domain:

4.4.1. Extensive Reading for writing

For a long time writing and reading in EFL classrooms have been taught separately. However, teachers can use reading as a means to teach and improve writing proficiency because the two skills share similar cognitive features (Grabe, 2003). Many researchers have explored the link between reading and writing and the role of reading activities in the improvement of writing skills. For example, Carson (1990) view that these two language skills include common structures and processes such as the comparison and contrast patterns. In other words, reading and writing have the same cognitive process of meaning construction because they cooperate with each other and that their skills can be transmitted to each other.

Actually, many studies argue that extensive reading has a positive effect on writing. According to Taylor and Beach (1984), reading improves learners' expository writing and helps them construct organised and meaningful paragraphs as they go through reading new ideas, new vocabulary, and new language styles. According to Grabe (2003), ER can enhance writing skills. Learners who make deliberate readings of magazines, newspapers, and books outside the classroom can improve their writing styles and literacy. In other words, the reading-to-write method improves writing abilities in terms of language use, text information, and rhetorical structures.

Generally, writers write on the bases of what they have read because writing is seen as the result of reading. Indeed, extensive reading provides writers with topics to write about, the linguistic elements necessary for good writing, rhetoric language, ideas and knowledge, and with writing models. The use of portfolios can be useful in equipping students with a variety of topics to write about. This technique helps them index and memorise their readings. Besides, teachers can give their students topics to read about and ask them to report their readings in sound essays. In addition, projects can be useful in pushing writing through reading. In fact, teachers can give their learners a monthly programme in

which students are obliged to read and accomplish projects about what they have read and present them to their peers in the classroom. These projects could include summaries or analyses of novels, books…etc.

Actually, through reading, learners can have sufficient exposure to accurate written texts which help them enhance their language skills and build up writing schemata. Therefore, we recommend an extensive reading programme for EFL students.

4.4.2 Classroom Reading for Writing

In academic practices, reading and writing connections are unavoidable. The classroom reading lecture is certainly followed by some writing activities such as analysing, annotating, paraphrasing, answering comprehension questions in written forms, and summarising. In this respect, summarization is the most important reading component that truly joins reading with writing, and therefore, it needs more attention and practice.

In the classroom, the Reading Response Theory focuses on the role of the student as an active reader. Indeed, students can be asked to read and perform a variety of tasks. For example, they could be asked to fill a particular text with missing sentences or ideas. These sentences are not explicitly mentioned in the reading passage, but they are included in different ways. This strategy enhances leaners' abilities to use the texts' ideas to create their own meanings. In other words, students should think and act as writers when they read. In fact, they should create new texts with different terms, illustrations, and arguments without deviating from the original meaning of the reading passage. Indeed, learners become able to integrate and improve their reading and writing skills.

Learners need their teachers' help to improve their writing skills. In fact, they should learn and practice different tasks of writing in order to be able to create different texts in different subjects. They need to master the systems and

the rules of the language such as; spelling, punctuation and grammar. To achieve this, they should be engaged in meaningful reading and writing activities.

Indeed, teachers of writing can use reading as a means to teach and improve students' writing skills. They could engage them in reading activities in which they are required to produce appropriate essays according to their text comprehension. Some researchers view that the tasks included in teaching reading and writing are interrelated because they both deal with written texts rather than oral language. Reading deals with recognising the aspects and the structures of the written texts, while writing is concerned with the production of those texts. Therefore, reading is seen as a vital element in any writing activity. The following figure illustrates the suggested reading-to-write plan:

Source of information	Text type
Text Background knowledge	Short story, persuasive essay, notes, poems, newspaper article…

The reading-to-write plan

-Responding to the topic

-Reviewing and commenting

-synthesising and paraphrasing

-Interpreting

-Summarizing the text

Strategies

-Gist and list

-Gist and comment

-Say it in your own words

-Skim, scan, and answer in a written form

-Find out the organising ideas

-Use the text topic for your own purpose

-Demonstrate understanding

-Show what you have learnt from the topic

-Summarise the text

Figure 4.3 A Reading-to-Write Plan

This reading-to-write plan can be applied by both teachers of reading and writing. This type of tasks can improve students' abilities to create coherent

essays based on their text comprehension. These essays should include introductory paragraphs, topic sentences, transitions, and conclusions. More importantly, students should be trained to use the reading topic as a springboard to trigger their thoughts and comments. Certainly, this reading-to-write plan develops the process of integrating students' own knowledge with that of the source text.

For instance, the review and comment activity requires the students to find a middle ground between summarising and abandoning the source information. In fact, they need to add their own comments and even include opinion paragraphs in their essays. Indeed, the critical reading is one of the reading skills that should be fostered as it helps learners build their own opinions towards the author's style, ideas, and aims.

Summarisation is seen by many teachers of reading as the appropriate activity that reveals students comprehension of the text. It requires students to rebuild the text information in their own words without adding any criticism or personal judgments. They should know how decide about what is interesting and what is trivial. They should introduce topic and concluding sentences with reference to the text.

In addition, synthesising is another activity that requires learners to go beyond summarising or commenting. In fact, they need to read the text, discover and synthesise ideas, organise information, and create their own text around the central concept of the source text. As for interpreting the text information, students should be asked to read, understand, and interpret the text in a written form. They are encouraged to set writing goals, add rhetorical dimensions, make claims, set up alternative issues, ask questions about the text ideas, and to provide answers and clarifications. More importantly, they should know that different readers need different interpretations.

Surely, writing summaries, making syntheses, giving personal judgements, and interpreting and commenting in written forms are acts that truly link reading to writing skills. The reading-to-write activities push learners to read, comprehend, and create their own essays by integrating the author's ideas with their own ideas. We suggest the following reading-to-write activity which can be used to teach learners about the paragraph and the topic sentence. The text is from a beginning of a newspaper article.

Instruction: *Read the following text and answer the questions:*

Text: **Switzerland-Something Interesting at Every Turn**   (**By Ken Jones**)

If you dream to travel to a country with beautiful mountains, delicious food, wonderful places to go sightseeing, and polite people, you should visit Switzerland. If look at the map, the first think you notice is that Switzerland has many mountains, including some of the highest in Europe. Climbing or Skiing down the mountains is great fun. Another thing you will notice is that Switzerland shares its borders with five different countries: France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Liechtenstein. In fact, there are four official languages in Switzerland: German, French, Italian, and Romansch. All these groups of people make Swiss very interesting.

Finally, Switzerland has many cities and interesting places to visit. Cities such as Bern have modern buildings like the Paul Klee Zentrum, yet the traditional alpine refuges in the mountains show that the country's old traditions are still alive. All the people, places, and things to see definitely make Switzerland a great place for holiday.

Adapted from: Academic Writing From Paragraph to Essay.
(Zemach and Rumisek, 2005: 11).

Questions:

1. *How many paragraphs are there in this newspaper article?*

2. *What is the topic of the text?*

3. *What is the main idea about the topic?*

4. *What ideas help explain the main idea?*

5. *Read the text and circle the topic sentence.*

6. *Underline the supporting ideas.*

7. *Underline the concluding sentence.*

8. *Write a paragraph about your country and underline your topic and concluding sentences.*

These instructions push learners to read several times in order to put the right answer. For example, they should read intensively in order to discover the topic sentence, the main topic, the main ideas, and the number of paragraphs. Still, they need to use strategies such as skimming and the scanning strategies in order to decide about the essential and the unimportant ideas. By doing so, learn from the text how a paragraph should be structured. At the end, they are asked to write a paragraph to practice paragraph writing with a focus on the topic and the concluding sentence.

The reading -to-write practice can also include the task of looking for specific information in the text and writing about it. In this activity, students need to apply reading skills or strategies in order to set their writing purpose. Teachers should make concrete connection in the classroom through using reading -to-write activities. For instance, the teacher can select an interesting text and ask the students to imitate or reproduce this text in their own words.

4.4.3 Extensive Reading for Speaking and Communication

As a central skill to language proficiency, speaking poses a great challenge for foreign language learners because they need to master various

complex microskills such as pronunciation and intonation. Unfortunately, students have limited opportunities to practice speaking in the classroom. Even speaking sessions do not give enough time for oral interaction.

Therefore, a sound solution to this problem can be the use of an integrated approach where speaking can be improved through reading. This approach allows learners to integrate these two skills as they are asked to practice reading activities that enhance their speaking abilities. Certainly, teachers of speaking can use reading as a teaching strategy in order to provide communicative drills.

Extensive reading helps learners improve their speaking and listening skills in many ways. In fact, it provides them with colloquial language, idiomatic expression, figurative speech, and vocabularies of the target language and culture. When detecting these elements in written forms, they can use them in different communicative situations.

Further, reading-based instruction to improve oral and communicative skills includes the use of various types of texts. These texts are intended to provide learners with different communicative situations in different contexts. In fact, students should read topics such as work interviews, telephone calls, discussions in a conference, buying in shopping centres etc. According to Jack (2006), the reading material that can be used for communicative purposes could involve the following:

> **Expositions:** reviews, arguments, discussions.
> **Conversations and short functional texts:** dialogues, postcards, and letters.
> **Procedures**: procedures used in carrying out a task, protocols, and instructions.

- ➢ **Explanations:** explaining why and how things occur.
- ➢ **Information texts:** fact pieces, reports, and explanation.
- ➢ **Narratives:** stories and fables.
- ➢ **Functional texts:** e-mails, notices
- ➢ **Factual recounts:** magazine and newspaper articles.
- ➢ **Personal recounts**: anecdotes, diaries, journal entries.
- ➢ **Exchanges:** Simple exchanges relating to information and goods and services, problematic and complex situations, and casual discussion.
- ➢ **Persuasive texts**: Opinion texts, expositions, conversations.

Teachers can ask their learners to read about a certain topic for a week in order to raise classroom debates. This strategy makes learners integrate reading with speaking. In fact, they become obliged to read in order to discuss.

4.4.4 Classroom Reading to Improve Speaking

Classroom reading activities which are designed for communicative purposes should be authentic and should reflect the real world. In this respect, Clarke and Silberstein state:

> *Classroom activities should parallel the "real world" as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message and not the medium. The purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life*.

(Clarke and Silberstein, 1977: 51)

That is to say that authentic reading materials are important for developing learners' communicative skills. They expose them to the target language culture and knowledge. We suggest the following types of classroom reading-to-speak activities which can be considered to improve speaking proficiency:

Activity 1: Read and perform

This activity is used to push learners to read a text or a story in a form of a dialogue involving many characters. For instance, after looking up meanings and comprehension, the teacher can ask a number of students to read loudly the dialogue where each student takes a role in the story. This activity can be outlined as follows:

> ➢ The class is divided into groups and the teacher assigns a chief of each group whose role is to distribute the students' different roles and to organize their performance.
> ➢ Learners are given time to read the story silently in order to reach a full comprehension of the plot.
> ➢ The students start reading the dialogue loudly.
> ➢ After students' readings, the teacher gives opportunities for classroom discussion.

Definitely, this kind of activity integrates reading and speaking and puts learners in communicative situations. Still, it improves their pronunciation and intonation.

Activity 2: Read and discuss

In this activity, learners are involved in a debate that stems from an article or a text or any other interesting source. The text selected for this activity should contain provocative issues so as to motivate students to read and discuss. The activity can be set as follows:

> ➢ Students read the text and focus on the controversial subject.
> ➢ Students start debating the issue. Some will be in favour and others will be against it. They are required to bring arguments and quotations from the text.

> ➢ Students are required to give personal views about the topic in debate them with the whole class.

Certainly, this activity can improve students' communicative abilities as they learn how to defend and view orally their opinions. Moreover, the teacher can introduce collaborative reading activities in order to stimulate learners and lead them to deeper thinking. This task includes pair work exercises that involve students reading a text, debating its content, and sharing information with other students. Certainly, these activities offer students comprehensible input where communication is meaningful.

In order to carry out these tasks, the teacher can assemble learners in small groups and ask them to read a given text to find out specific information. The task could entail comprehension questions that are carefully set for communicative purposes. After finishing reading, students start discussing the answers and enquiring the reading comprehension questions with other groups in order to give place to debate in the classroom. For example, they could ask questions such as *"Why did you answer the first question in this way?" "Your answer to the second question is not true" "How can prove this idea?" "where in the text did you got this answer?" ….etc.*

Activity 3: Read and interview

This activity can be based on argumentative or narrative texts. It can be organised as follows:

> ➢ Students read the text for global understanding.
> ➢ Students are grouped in pairs. One plays the role of the interviewer and the other acts as interviewee. The former asks questions about the text's content and the latter should answer these questions using ideas and facts from the text.
> ➢ Students read the text again and switch roles.

Indeed, this activity provides many opportunities for learners to ask, answer, and talk   about the text they have read and deepens their understanding of the text. In other words, they use the information from the reading material to practice speaking.

Activity 4: Read and Communicate

ELT teachers can use reading as a technique to achieve communicative purposes such as asking for permission, asking for help, getting someone to do something, giving excuses, etc. These activities should target communication rather than focusing on language rules.

Obviously, the reading task should include dialogues or interviews and the students need to read them, perform them, and create their own dialogues about the reading topic. Besides, the reading-to-communicate activities should provide communicative social contexts where students can practice real language as they are given the chance to reveal their ideas and views.

This approach is based on texts that include real-life situations such as; *At the Bank, At the Airport, and at the University*, where students read and communicate. Moreover, texts could be presented with different contents including; telephone calls, work interviews, and buying in shopping centres, conversations, and emails. Among the reading-communicative activities, one can cite gap filling, matching, comprehension questions, and dialogue completion. The reading-to-communicate activities have many advantages:

➤ Connecting oral and written language.
➤ Developing and improving communicative skills with reference to the text's content.
➤ Learning vocabulary and grammar through text content.

➢ Detecting and learning language features in written and spoken texts.

In brief, when using reading as a means to improve the communicative skills, students not only read and understand information in the text, but also process information, negotiate meaning, and fulfil communicative tasks based on text content.

4.4.5 Extensive Reading to Improve Reading Proficiency

In reading, proficiency can be seen as the ability to read and understand a text quickly and effortlessly with little attention to word decoding or grammar structures (Meyer, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to include tasks that truly improve student reading proficiency such as extensive reading and effective classroom activities.

Proficient readers set a clear purpose for their reading and apply different strategies and techniques according to their needs. Reading extensively is the key for students to become knowledgeable and proficient readers. In fact, they need to go through many reading experiences and deal with different types of texts. In other words, ER makes learners skilful readers as they study and review a wide range of texts that help them know how to generalise new reading demands and expectations. Besides, they can apply the classroom reading strategies in order to understand, interpret, and assess what they are reading.

We recommend extensive reading because it is actually an important tool to enhance the reading proficiency as the students are repeatedly confronted with the same words, expressions, and combinations in different topics and contexts. This helps them acquire word recognition automaticity and improve their reading speed and comprehension. Furthermore, when students are exposed to large quantities of reading materials in the foreign language, their literacy can be considerably enhanced and consequently they become able to reach adequate

comprehension of different subjects or themes (Grabe, 2004). Therefore, encouraging independent reading and offering regular reading instruction is a successful strategy to improve reading proficiency because reading is a skill that develops with practice.

Still, ER helps students use and rely on their experiences and link them to new information in order to reach adequate text interpretation. For instance, when they read stories, they become familiar with the conventions and mysteries used by authors when they use clues and plot events. As they read more stories, they become able to anticipate these conventions and use them to monitor their understanding (The International Reading Association, 1996). Therefore, learners should read a variety of texts or books in different contexts and for different purposes in order to become proficient readers. For example, they need to read novels, newspapers, poems, magazines, reference materials, biographies, and journals.

4.4.6 Classroom Reading to Enhance Reading Fluency

In the classroom reading, we recommend the use of Timed Reading Activities in order to improve the reading speeds and fluency of their students. This strategy is based on the working memory and relates to the mental stimulation for immediate storing and processing. For example, learners can be asked to read a number of texts that are carefully selected for length and level, and given some comprehension questions for answering. For many students these activities pose great cognitive and complex challenges because meaning construction and memorisation should be achieved in a short time. In this respect, learners should be put under time stress in order to have them read rapidly without overlooking comprehension which is the ultimate goal of any reading activity. This can help them promote their memorisation skills, improve their fluency, and enhance their comprehension.

There are various types of activities for developing the reading skills. Some of them can be used as pre-reading , while reading, and post-reading activities. The first type of these activities is aimed to stimulate learners' interest and activate their background knowledge. They are also used to introduce students to the text's topic, type, and structure. The second type is used to check students overall understanding and   direct their attention to the author's ideas purpose. The third type is used to push learners to give their point of view of the text's content and form. They oblige students to focus on the lexical and the logical relationships between the parts of the text.

4.4.7 Reading to Develop Listening

The listening skill is seen as a central factor in second language learning and is viewed to be essential in ELT. Indeed, it has been considered as fundamental in language classroom for it plays crucial roles in providing EFL students with considerable language input. Actually, without the listening skill, learners would never be able to access effective communicative skills.

Many studies have argued that listening skills can be enhanced through direct accurate instructional strategies that focus on listening strategies that are similar to those of reading comprehension instruction. In many illustrations, listening comprehension is discussed with relationship to reading comprehension. Besides, many studies have shown that the reading-while-listening method (RWL) has a positive impact on other reading microskills such as; decoding, comprehension, and fluency (Carbo, 1981and Durkin, 1989). On the other hand, repeated readings and the read-aloud strategy rely on listening to help learners ascribe the right prosodic patterns to a given text.

In EFL classrooms, students have limited exposure to authentic listening materials. Generally, they face difficulties such as unfamiliar vocabulary, fast speech, and failure to correspond spoken to written language. Therefore, researchers have recommended non-classroom input to improve learners' listening skills (Chang, 2009 and Goh, 1999). An example of this support is the

use of captions which provide students with written forms of the listening material. Besides, tape scripts of texts could be beneficial and purposeful in practicing the reading-while-listening task.

Further, classroom reading can be used as a means to improve listening skills in many ways. For example, the teacher can read aloud a text while the students read silently and listen to his reading. Surely, this technique helps learners listen to the language sounds and connect the aural text with the written form of the same text. In addition, a variety of reading-listening materials such as recorded tapes with their written forms can be used. In fact, the teacher can give students written short stories and ask them to read silently and listen to the tape. This technique is often used in EFL classrooms.

Still, the teacher can use the reading-aloud procedure in the classroom. For example, he can ask one of his students to read loudly a text while the others listen. During this task, the teacher keeps controlling the process of the reading-listening activity, correcting mistakes, and asking the students to pay attention to their peers' reading.

Certainly, the reading aloud procedure is a useful way that helps students benefit from reading to develop their listening proficiency. Reading aloud to students makes them work on both reading and listening. In fact, they listen and pay attention to their teachers' pronunciation and intonation patterns. Besides, they join reading and listening to catch the features of both spoken and written language, and make adequate interpretations of clues and complex sentences which might be beyond the learners' ability. If possible, students can be asked to listen to recordings of reading assignments to connect reading with listening.

Moreover, teachers can use the think aloud procedures in a reading course in order to verbalise the thinking and help their learners make inferences and understand the text. This procedure helps them to locate information, put

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together prior knowledge, and make effective reasoning. By doing so, the students can pay attention to their listening abilities and become more interested in listening than in reading. In fact, they give more importance to the teacher's reading aloud so as to catch his words, intonation, and even explanation.

Prosody might also be useful for the practice of reading aloud to improve listening. It is concerned with the rhythm and the tune of the language and deals with the auditory features of speech. Indeed, prosody entails large amount of acoustic information about the language such as; stress, pauses, and pitch. Moreover, prosody can affect listening comprehension in many ways. In fact, it emphasizes the words and the ideas of the text and reveals to the student the emotions, the feelings, and the intentions that are not explicitly mentioned in the text. Still, prosody gives special attention to quotations and important ideas of the text. It can clarify the hierarchical features of the information in discourse by referring to key ideas and significant words through long pauses and strong pitches (Noordman et al., 1999).

In addition, visuals, graphs, tables, and charts can be included, whenever possible, with listening activities. In fact, they can be used to have learners engaged in active listening while reading and interpreting them. Still, reading passages joint with cloze exercise is a good technique to improve students' listening comprehension abilities. For example, teachers can give their leaners a short passage with some missing words, read the passage aloud two or three times, and ask them to fill in the missing words. At the end, students need to read again the passage to make corrections.

4.4.8 Reading to Develop Grammar

Later studies targeting grammatical development in reading propose that many language students have weaknesses in their application as well as understanding of syntax. For example, Cromer and Wiener (1966) suggest that unskilled students do not give significant importance to grammar in decoding and

comprehending written texts. Vogel (1975) views that learners may have deficits in areas measuring *"the syntax of expressive language"* and found a significant relationship between productive syntax scores and reading comprehension scores.

Anderson (1982) shows that poor readers reveal syntactic lacks in the written language. Some Researchers link poor readers' difficulties with their grammatical weaknesses and link these weaknesses with poor reading. Indeed, the lack of grammatical knowledge interferes with higher-level text comprehension. Moreover, students' awareness of syntax affects the whole reading process. More specifically, grammar knowledge operates during reading and texts' comprehension can be severely decreased if students generate incorrect or incomplete text representation.

Obviously, extensive reading provides unlimited and continuous learning of grammatical rules including tenses, conditionals, and modals. Actually, learners are exposed to infinite grammatical structures in different contexts. These structures involve parts of speech including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and adjectives in different contexts.

Further, grammar can be best taught in connection with reading tasks. For instance, teachers can improve their students' syntactic knowledge by having them focus on grammatical structures which appear in the L2 reading passage, such as verb forms, possessives, adverbs, adjectives, the use of tenses, and comparative forms. We suggest the following example that can be used by teachers of grammar to emphasise countable and uncountable nouns:

Text:

We welcome you as a guest at the Sherwood Holiday Village and hope that you enjoy your holiday with us.

The sports complex is open from 7 a.m. and facilities are available for tennis, squash, bowling, table tennis and snooker. You can hire equipment at the complex for a nominal fee. If you require tuition, there is coaching available but you must book in advance. For those of you who enjoy competition, there will be tournaments taking place throughout the week. Please sign your name up on the notice board if you are interested. And if you need something to quench your thirst after an energetic game, you can purchase fruit juice, mineral water, and herbal drinks as well as a variety of healthy snacks from the health-food bar. May we take this opportunity to inform you that appropriate footwear must be worn for all activities and heavy shoes are not allowed in the sport complex.

Next to the sports complex, you will find our brand-new swimming pool, complete with water slides and a wave machine. The lighting in the pool area gives the effect of sunlight even on the dullest days. And if you want to look your best, in the pool, our sport shop stocks a wide range of designer swimwear.

If you require any advice or information, please come to the Reception Desk and we will be glad to assist.

Janice Hughes, Manager.

Adapted from: Grammar Practice for Upper Intermediate Students

by: (Elaine and Steve, 2000: 2)

The teacher can ask his learners to read the text silently and underline all the nouns. He tries to review the types and categories of nouns as being abstract, common, proper, singular, and plural. Then, he gives the following instruction:
-Read the text again and fill the following table:

Countable Nouns	Uncountable Nouns	Countable/Uncountable Nouns
…………...............	………………………….	……………………………
……………………..	………………………….	……………………………
……………………..	………………………….	…………………………..

Surely, the students would find difficulties to distinguish the countable and the uncountable nouns. The teacher should use their mistakes as a basis to offer his grammar lecture. He should give explanations about countable and uncountable nouns. The students should read and understand the text because some nouns can be either countable or uncountable but the text context makes the difference. After that, they do the task together in the classroom.

In addition, the teacher can introduce a text with missing prepositions, verbs, conjunctions, or articles as an activity and asks the students to put the appropriate word. Besides, the teacher can select a text which includes copious use of past simple and present perfect and asks the students to read and underline the verbs. Certainly, the teacher needs to emphasise only the present perfect and the past simple forms and uses. Surely, the students would read several times before doing the activities. In sum, teachers of grammar can use texts to teach their topics because grammatical rules and structures are better contextualized through reading passages.

4.4.9 Reading to Develop Vocabulary Knowledge

Researchers have become more conscious of the position of reading in the development of language proficiency and its role in developing vocabulary knowledge. According to Nation (2001), reading is central to vocabulary learning because studies have showed that written texts are richer in lexis than oral ones. The following figure illustrates the importance of reading in developing vocabularies:
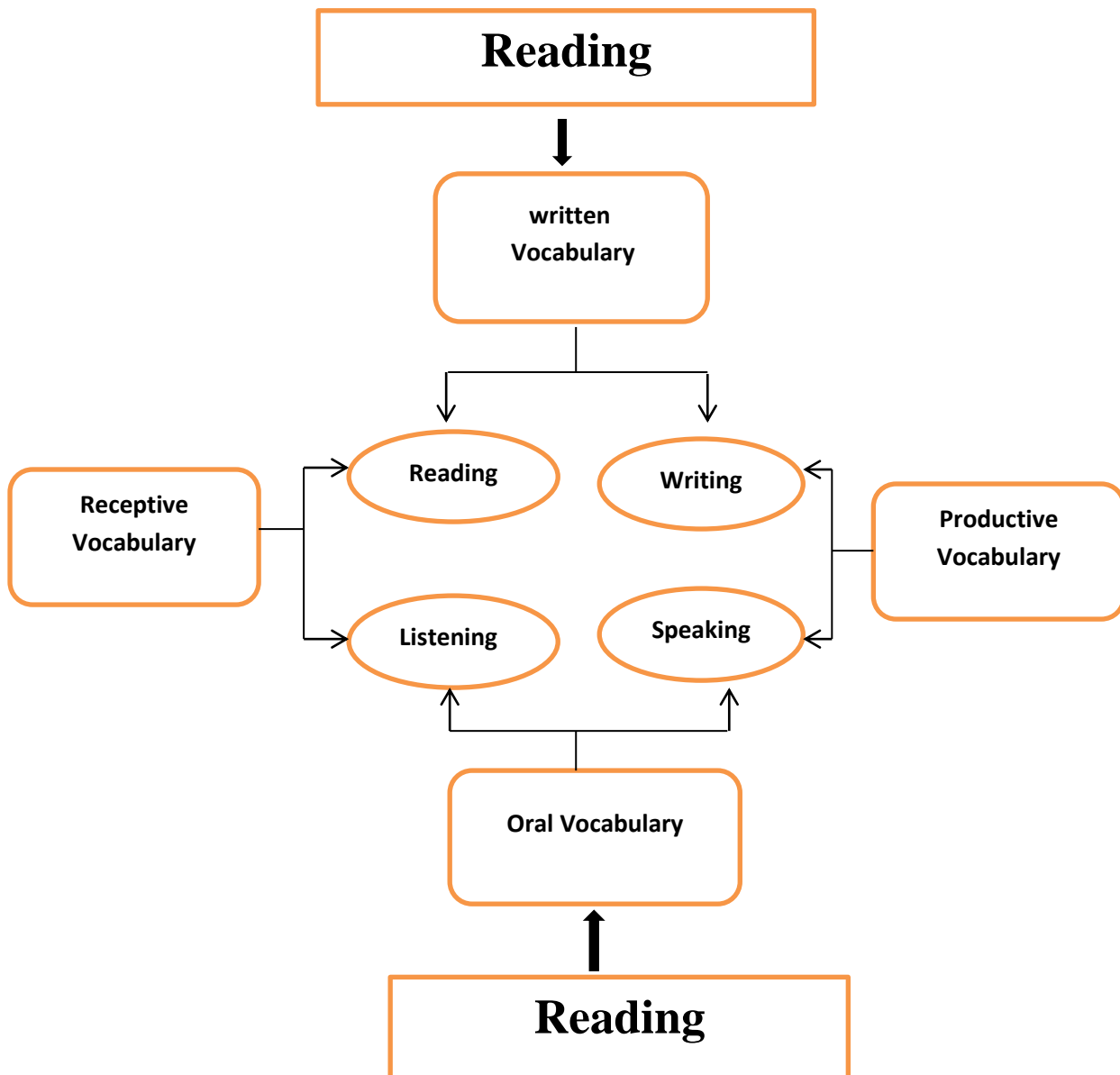
Figure 4.4 Developing Vocabularies Through Reading.

This figure shows the contribution of reading in building students' vocabulary knowledge. Actually, the most successful strategy to build and extend vocabulary knowledge is by reading. In fact, continuous exposure to words in different contexts builds up the knowledge and the function of those words. Students encounter the words repeatedly in different contexts, and thus, they can learn and memorise these words with their different denotations.

One essential approach to improve vocabulary knowledge is through extensive reading. It is considered as an important learning procedure to increase learners' vocabulary knowledge. It can be used in EFL curricula as an operative means of vocabulary development. By reading extensively, learners are exposed to various vocabulary items in different subjects and contexts. According to Day and Bamford (2004), introducing extensive reading programmes in the EFL syllabus is crucial for ELT. Not only is extensive reading useful in developing reading ability, it can also enhance students' overall language proficiency.

Certainly, broader reading is useful in expanding exposure to the L2 meanings and forms. It can be seen as a good learning practice to increase students' vocabulary knowledge. According to Bell (2001), extensive reading is that type of reading instruction that can be used as a useful means to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, we call sturdily for including this ER in EFL programmes because it provides exposure to the foreign language meanings and forms.

In order to develop students' vocabulary proficiency through classroom reading, teachers can use different forms and genres of texts. Basically, they can use newspapers, reports, songs, poems, short stories, legal documents, or magazines. Using multiple types of texts and useful reading-vocabulary activities give learners the opportunity to build up meaning in different contexts. For example, in a political text, students can be asked to negotiate meanings of the following items or phrases: "*Political asylum, enacting new laws, cabinet reshuffle, electoral campaign….*"

4.6 Conclusion

This concluding chapter gave some suggestions and recommendations about teaching reading to first year EFL students. It offered some procedures that illustrate the practices that should be included in the building of this skill both in

and outside the classroom. Actually, it dealt with the useful practices and tasks that teachers need to introduce in order to improve students' reading skills. In fact, it provided proposals about how to select texts, how to set reading programmes, and how to motivate students to be real readers.

Further, this part of the present study emphasised the importance of reading as an essential skill in language learning. Therefore, it highlighted the importance of both intensive and extensive reading in improving the language proficiency. Indeed, it showed how reading can be used to develop grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing, and listening. It illustrated some examples and classroom reading activities that can be useful in developing each skill.

In sum, the inclusion of an extensive reading programme in the curriculum is necessary for it plays significant roles in improving the reading fluency, building literacy, and enhancing oral and writing skills. Extensive reading can be used as an approach to language teaching and learning through encouraging students to read texts, stories, or books. In this approach, the principal goal is to install a reading habit in learners and expose them to the foreign language.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

In this study, the researcher tried to display the very important roles of reading in the development of language proficiency. In fact, this research attempted to reveal the links between reading and language skills and tended to illustrate the tasks and the activities that can be used for the development of each skill. Further, the research focused on the reading instruction in the ELT departments and explored the obstacles and the difficulties that confront both EFL teachers and learners. Still, the study provided some recommendations for adequate reading instruction and showed how classroom and extensive reading can enhance language learning.

In order to objectively gain useful results, the researcher used a case study as a research style and combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches in collecting and analysing data. Three main research instruments were used: teachers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, and classroom observation. The research was conducted in the department of English at Abou bakr Belkaid University of Tlemcen where first year EFL students and teachers were involved. For reasons of reliability, other teachers from the universities of Mostaganem, Sidi Belabbas, and Tiaret participated in this study. The main objective of this work is to find answers to the research questions. In other words, this study tried to seek the obstacles that cause reading failure, to reveal the language learning benefits of reading, and to provide a plan for a successful reading instruction.

As for the thesis layout, this work included four main chapters. The first chapter gave a literature review of both reading and language proficiency. In fact, previous theories and studies about these two concepts were tackled. The second chapter gave an overview about the Higher Education   and dealt with the English language teaching in Algeria. Mainly, it focused on the reading skill in the Algerian ELT departments and showed its situation in the curriculum. As for the third chapter, it clarified the research aims, procedures, methods, instruments, and informants. Further, it explained the research design, revealed the findings,

and discussed the results. The fourth chapter was intended to provide some suggestions and recommendations based on the research findings. In fact, it brought proposals about the reading instruction procedures, the use of reading to improve language skills, and put plans to involve an extensive reading programme for first year EFL students.

The findings reveal that first year EFL students face a variety of difficulties which could hamper their reading and lead to poor achievements. The main obstacles are the lack of motivation and the lack of language knowledge including slow decoding of scripts, comprehension problems, topic unfamiliarity, insufficient vocabulary storage, and diminutive syntactic knowledge. Besides, some struggling learners devote much of their time to decoding and face major problems in monitoring their comprehension. These findings are convenient with our hypothesis that confirms that the lack of motivation and language competence are major obstacles that cause reading deficits.

Therefore, the reading instruction should include effective techniques and plans in order to overcome students' weaknesses and obstacles. In fact, we recommend that a sound reading instruction should be based on two main brands: classroom reading and extensive reading. As for the classroom instruction, teachers should deal with the reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, inferring, predicting, monitoring, annotation, and evaluating. For this reason, explicit strategy instruction can be given to learners where they can understand which strategy they use and why and how it can be applied.

Moreover, teachers need to carefully select their reading material in order to responds to students' interests and increase their motivation. They should use simple authentic materials that help improve students' reading fluency and help them learn and practice the reading skills. Still, useful classroom reading activities should be included in any course. The focus in the classroom instruction should be on the improvement of comprehension abilities including

the lower and the higher decoding skills, vocabulary emphasis, skill and strategy practice, and fluency building. Further, students should learn how to assess the content and to detect the author's attitudes and reasons. In other words, teaching critical reading is an important part of the reading instruction.

More importantly, the results lead us to say that setting extensive reading programmes is necessary for a successful reading instruction. In fact, this type of reading is seen as fundamental language skill where students read a variety of topics according to their needs and interests. Indeed, they can develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to their learning. The findings of this research reveal that such a plan is important for first year EFL students in order to provide them with a continuous language exposure. Actually, extensive reading is the most effective means to enhance language proficiency. It provides opportunities to foster autonomous reading, practice strategies learnt in the classroom, enhance reading speed and fluency, and experience authentic material. In other words, it improves overall reading by engaging learners in self-motivated reading process, building up thinking skills, and leading to independence and resourcefulness. Furthermore, extensive reading develops writing abilities, widens vocabulary knowledge, improving speaking abilities, activates students' deductive learning, and deepens learners' understanding of grammatical rules in different contexts.

Therefore, ELT departments should include an extensive reading programme within the reading module in order to engage EFL students in continuous reading. This can happen through setting clear plans and mechanism that makes students good readers. Certainly, motivation is the most important element that leads to successful reading.

As for the use of reading as a means to develop the language skills, the findings argue that a reading-based instruction can be useful for improving proficiency in speaking, writing, and even listening. According to teachers' answers, texts are useful in the classroom for teaching all skills. For example,

reading aloud can be useful for improving listening, summarising is effective to develop writing, inferring is important to gain unfamiliar vocabulary, and debating content is useful to boost speaking. These results confirm our pre-set hypothesis that say that classroom reading can be used for teaching language skills through the use of multiple activities.

In addition, the findings show that literary reading materials are recommended for extensive reading as they comprise the real language literacy. Obviously, literature meets the linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and cultural objectives of foreign language teaching. Actually, literature offers valuable authentic material, rich language settings, and cultural knowledge. It enhances learners' language knowledge as it affords evidence of extensive and refined vocabulary usage and abundant syntax. Moreover, literary works are highly motivating instruments in the reading instruction as they install reading habits in learners and raise their interests. In fact, they often deal with fundamental human subjects and go beyond the cultural dissimilarities. Further, they develop language awareness, encourage interaction, boost discussion, and educate and strengthen student's personality. Indeed, they touch learners' feelings, experience, hopes, and dreams.

In sum, the findings lead us to say that reading is essential for the improvement of the general language proficiency. Indeed, it offers copious opportunities for learners to go across a variety of language structures, styles, culture, and skills. Actually, reading is a valuable source of foreign language learning. In the classroom, it can be used to teach and develop all language skills by using skill-bound reading activities. In non-classroom contexts, extensive or free reading seems to be the most efficient means to guarantee the learning continuity. Truly, it provides contextualised grammar and vocabulary, develops writing and reading proficiency, and enhances communicative abilities. Including this programme in the reading instruction at university level would certainly increase students' motivation and helps them to shift from the learning to read to

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the reading to learn framework. Besides, they get the chance to cater to their different needs and to respond to their individual interests. Indeed, students learn how to assume responsibility for their own leaning.

Actually, the results confirm our hypothesis which says that reading has abundant learning benefits and leads to the development of the English language proficiency. Still, the findings endorse our hypothesis concerning the inclusion of both classroom reading and extensive reading within the reading instruction. Indeed, a successful instruction should be carefully planned and should include these two major types of reading.

Certainly, reading is central to language learning as it helps learners gain vocabulary, recognize grammar use, acquire ideas, broaden world knowledge, improve reading fluency, enhance writing, and develop communicative competence. This can happen through the continuous exposure to language elements that is offered by reading. Therefore, teachers should provide adequate reading instruction and make every possible effort to motivate their students to be good readers. The following questions can be investigated for further research: Should reading be taught by specialised teachers who have made previous research about reading? Should we introduce an independent module devoted to extensive reading? How can teachers of reading cooperate with the teachers of other modules such as literature, speaking, and writing?

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

   This questionnaire is part of a doctorate research in TEFL. It aims at gathering your opinions, needs, and views about the reading instruction and its role in improving your English language learning. This questionnaire emphasises mainly the effects of reading on the development of language proficiency. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the questions and and to state your preferences and wants. Besides, you are invited to contribute in this doctorate research by putting you proposals and recommendations.

I actually appreciate your contribution.

General Information

    Name…………………………………………………………………………….

    Gender………………………………………………………………………………

    Age………………………………………………………………………………..

    University/Institute…………………………………………………………….

    Level…………………………………………………………………………

    Part one: Classroom Reading

1. **Do you like the reading course?**

    Yes ▭   No   ▭

    Why?

    …………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………

2. **Are you satisfied with the reading instruction and material in the classroom?**

    Yes ▭   No   ▭

    Why?

    …………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………

3. **Have you ever learnt or practiced the reading skills and strategies ?**

    Yes ▭   No   ▭

4. **What kind of texts do you prefer?**

    Explanations ▭   Factual reports ▭

    Narratives ▭   Scientific texts ▭

    Poems ▭   Dialogues ▭

5. What kind of reading obstacles do you generally face?

Inadequate instruction and material ☐

Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge ☐

Lack of reading strategies ☐

Lack of practice ☐

Part Two: <u>Classroom Reading and Language Learning</u>

6. Do you think that reading has positive effects on improving your language learning achievements?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Why?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

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7. What effects does classroom reading have on you language learning?

Learning and practicing reading skills ☐

Learning vocabulary ☐

Improving grammar and spelling ☐

Improving all language skills ☐

8. Do your teachers of the following modules use reading as a teaching strategy?

Written expression ☐   Listening ☐

Grammar ☐   Phonetics ☐

Oral expression ☐

Part Three: <u>Extensive Reading and Language Learning</u>

9. Have you ever done extensive reading?

Yes ☐   No ☐

A. If yes, state the number of books you have read.

 ………………………………………………………….

B. If no, what are the problems and the difficulties that discourage you to do extensive reading?

 Lack of reading material   ☐   Lack of motivation   ☐

 Lack of language knowledge   ☐   Lack of time   ☐

 It's not included in the learning programme   ☐

Others:…………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………….

10. Do you think that extensive reading can develop your proficiency in the English language skills?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Please, explain:

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………….

11. What kind of reading materials help you better improve your language knowledge?

Novels and short stories   ☐   Newspapers and magazines ☐

Culture and civilisation books   ☐

Research papers   ☐

12. Would you agree if your department sets an extensive reading programme?

Yes ☐   No ☐

 Justify

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

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13. How would you like your teachers help you do extensive reading?

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14. Please, state your views, suggestions, and wants about reading and its importance in enhancing your language learning achievements.

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Thank you for your contribution

Appendix 2

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Colleagues,

I am currently conducting a doctorate research in TEFL at the University of Tlemcen. This research is an attempt to clarify the very important roles of reading skills in improving the English language proficiency. It tries to explain how reading can develop writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. Besides, the study aims to seek the various techniques and methods that help teachers use reading as a teaching-learning strategy to increase learners' outcomes. Further, the study seeks opinions and ideas about the construction of a reading programme that truly motivates students to read.

This questionnaire is designed to gather evidence about the effects of reading on language learning at university level. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the questions and to give your proposals and recommendations about the research topic.

I appreciate your contribution to this research.

Teachers' information

Full name:…………………………………………………………

Gender: Male :

Female :

University/ Institution:………………………………………………...

 Grade:……………………………………………………………

Speciality:

 TEFL and Applied Linguistics

Literature and Civilisation

ESP

Linguistics

Others…………………………………………………………………

How long have you been teaching English?

Less than 5 years

5 years to 10 years

More than 10 years

Modules you have taught:………………………………………………..

Part One: <u>The Reading Instruction</u>

1.Do you think that reading is an important skill for language teaching ?

Yes　[　]　　　　　　　　　　No　[　]

Justify please?

………………………………………………………………………………………

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2. What techniques and strategies do you use in teaching reading?

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3. What kind of difficulties do teachers of reading face?

(You can tick more than one)

-Lack of students' motivation　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[　]

-Text and topic selection　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[　]

- Lack of students' language and reading comprehension competence　[　]

- Students' vocabulary shortage　　　　　　　　　　　　　[　]

Others:…………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………….....

Part Two: <u>Classroom Reading and Language Learning</u>

4. How does reading relate to the following areas of language?

Vocabulary…………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………….

Grammar……………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

Speaking……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Writing……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Listening…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Which of the following reading materials do provide better language learning?

Literary materials ☐   Scientific texts ☐

History and civilisation ☐   All materials ☐

6. A. Do you think that classroom reading can be used to teach and improve the language skills?

Yes ☐   No ☐

B. If yes, what reading activities do you suggest to develop proficiency in the following language areas?

Writing……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Speaking…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Listening…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Part Three: Extensive Reading and Language Learning

7. A. Do you advise your learners to do extensive reading?

Yes ☐   No ☐

B. If yes, what type of material do you recommend?

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

8. What are the language learning benefits of extensive reading?

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

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……………………………………………………………………………………….

9. How can extensive reading be used to develop the following language skills?

Writing:

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

 Communicative competence :

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

10. A. Would you agree if your department sets an extensive reading programme?

Yes   ▭   No   ▭

B . If no, why? If yes, how would you monitor students' extensive reading?

....

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....

11. State your proposals about offering a successful reading instruction.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank You Very Much for Your Help

Appendix 3

Sample of a Reading Course

1St Year LMD :

Module: Study Skills: Reading

Definition

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). It is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. It is a complex interaction between the text and the reader.

Strategies for Reading

Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include:

1. Previewing: reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection.

2. Predicting: Using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary, and content.

3. Skimming and scanning: using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question predictions.

4. Guessing from context: using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up.

5. Paraphrasing: stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text.

Appendix 4

Sample of Reading Practice

Lesson: Reading

Practice:

Text :

'It's Only Me'

After her husband had gone to work, Mrs Miller Richards sent her children to school and went upstairs to her bedroom. She was too excited to do any housework that morning, for in the evening she would be going to a fancy dress party with her husband. She intended to dress up as a ghost and as she had made her costume the night before, she was impatient to try it on. Though the costume consisted of a sheet, it was very effective. After putting it on, Mrs Richards went downstairs. She wanted to find out whether it would be comfortable to wear.

Just as Mrs Richards was entering the dining room, there was a knock on the front door. She knew that it must be the baker. She had told him to come straight in if ever she failed to open the door and to leave the bread on the kitchen table. Not wanting to frighten the poor man, Mrs Richards quickly hid in the small store-room under the stairs. She heard the front room open and heavy footsteps in the hall. Suddenly, the door of the store-room was opened and a men entered. Mrs Richard realised that it must be the man from the Electricity Board who had come to read the meter. She tried to explain the situation , saying 'Its only me', but it was too late. The man let out a cry and jumped back several places. When Mrs Richards walked towards him, he fled slamming the door behind him.

(In L.G. Alexander, Developing Skills, 1967: 36)

Activities:

A. Scan and skim over the text to answer the following questions:

1. What was Mrs Richards hiding on her husband?

2. Why was she excited not to do any housework?

3. How Mrs Richards costume look like?

4. Why was it late for Mrs Richards to explain the situation to the man from the Electricity Board?

5. Do you think Mrs Richards will tell her husband what happened to her? Why?

B. Give another word or phrase to replace the following words as they are used in the text.

Intended: Failed to-fled:

Impatient: Slamming:

Try it on: Whether:

Consisted:

C. Give the opposites of the following words

Excited: Effective:

Impatient :   Comfortable:

D. Supply the missing words in the passage to know the reaction of Mrs Richards' husband to what happened to his wife.

After her…………………got back from…………………Mrs Richards was no longer…………………as a……..…………She………………………upstairs doing some………………...Hearing her husband …………………she told him what ………………to her and that she was…………………for the……………………man who…………………chocked.

E. Read the text carefully then select five verbs and complete the table

Verb	Noun	Adjective
………………………	………………………	………………………
……………………	………………………	…………….………………
………………………	………………………	………………………….

F. Read carefully the sentence bellow and guess the most appropriate meaning

She was impatient to try it:

    a. She was excited to try it on.

    b. She was enthusiastic to try it on.

    c. She was reluctant to try it on.

ملخص

يحاول هذا العمل دراسة آثر القراءة و المطالعة في تحسين الكفاءة اللغوية ويركز على توضيح دورهما في تحسين مهارات اللغة المختلفة. هذا و يسعى هذا البحث الى اظهار العوائق التي تتسبب في ضعف المقروئية لدى طلبة اللغة الانجليزية كما يقترح ارشادات لتدريس القراءة لطلبة السنة الاولى للغة الانجليزية. لهذا الغرض، تم إجراء دراسة ميدانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة تلمسان. استنادا إلى النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من خلال الاستبيانات الموجهة للطلبة و الاساتذة و الملاحظة داخل القسم ، كشفت هذه الدراسة أن القراءة تلعب دورا هاما في تحسين المهارات اللغوية. كما اظهرت النتائج ان نقص الحوافز و الكفاءة اللغوية سببان رئيسيان في ضعف القراءة و المطالعة. بالإضافة الى ذلك , توصي هذه الدراسة بضرورة وضع برنامج الزامي للقراءة و المطالعة لطلبة السنة الاولى نظرا للمكاسب اللغوية التي يوفرها هذا البرنامج.

الكلمات الرئيسية :مهارات القراءة - الاتقان اللغوي- مهارات اللغة – القراءة المركزة- المطالعة- المحفزات

Résumé

Ce travail tente d'étudier les effets des lectures sur le développement des compétences linguistiques et essaie de révéler les rôles de la lecture dans l'amélioration des compétences linguistiques. En outre, il a tendance à énoncer les obstacles qui causent une mauvaise lecture et cherche à proposer un enseignement de la lecture adéquate pour les étudiants de première année d'Anglais. Pour cette raison, une étude de cas a été menée dans le département d'Anglais à l'Université de Tlemcen. Sur la base des résultats obtenus à partir des deux questionnaires et l'observation en classe, cette étude a révélé que la lecture joue un rôle important dans l'amélioration des compétences linguistiques. Les lectures intensives et extensives ont des avantages abondants pour l'apprentissage des langues. Également, les résultats ont montré que le manque de motivation et les compétences linguistiques sont les principaux obstacles qui causent une mauvaise lecture. D'ailleurs, cette enquête a fait valoir qu'un programme de lecture extensive est obligatoire pour les étudiants de première année d'Anglais car elle conduit à la maitrise et l'amélioration de la langue.

Mots clés: Compétences de Lecture- Compétence Linguistique- Les compétences de la langue- Lecture Intensive – Lecture Extensive-Motivation.

Summary

This work tries to investigate the effects of reading skills on the development of language proficiency and attempts to disclose the roles of reading in improving language skills. Besides, it tends to reveal the obstacles that cause poor reading and endeavours to suggest an adequate reading instruction for first year EFL students. For this reason, a case study was conducted in the department of English at the University of Tlemcen. Based on the results obtained from the two questionnaires and the classroom observation, this study revealed that reading plays important roles in improving language skills. Both classroom and extensive reading have abundant language learning benefits. Still, the results showed that the lack of motivation and language competence are the main obstacles that cause EFL students' poor reading. Besides, this investigation argued that an extensive reading programme is compulsory for EFL students as it leads to copious language gains.

Key Words: Reading skills- Language Proficiency-Language skills-Intensive Reading-Extensive Reading-Motivation.

For literate communities, reading is considered as an essential part to life. It is central to learning in school, work, and in everyday life. It is an important tool in education and individual development as it plays central roles in individuals' lives. It is seen by some scholars as a life-long activity that is conducted for specific purposes. Indeed, reading is central to learning as it sets the foundations for learners' future success.

Reading can be viewed as the process of creating meaning through the dynamic interaction between the reader's existing knowledge, the text information, the author, and the context of the reading situation. It includes the integration of various skills which lead to good text comprehension. In fact, readers implement reading strategies, pick out information from the text, and use their background knowledge in order to achieve their reading purpose. For advanced learners, reading should be taught at higher levels. Actually , students should know how to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, understand the sequence of events, find out the main ideas, evaluate content, discover the author's purpose, and give personal judgments.

As far as ELT is concerned, reading is one of the chief purposes of the teaching-learning process. Indeed, it is a valuable source of foreign language learning as it involves several tasks that provide students with copious opportunities to develop their language knowledge and to practice reading for learning purposes.

The reading instruction is a particular challenge to language teachers as they need to acquire a sound knowledge of theories, methods, and materials. Besides, they are required to apply adequate strategies and useful techniques in order to reach higher achievements. In fact, high quality reading instruction involves an integration of many processes and approaches which are imposed by

students' levels and interests. In this respect, researchers have argued that effective teaching of reading includes devoting sufficient time to the reading task in order to meet ample objectives because time has an impact on the choice of methodology and materials.

Needless to say that reading is one of the most important skills that EFL students should accurately learn. At university level, reading is among the increasing demands placed on EFL students as they will confront many complex reading materials than ever before and will be required to read, decode, infer, analyse, understand, evaluate, and discuss content. Therefore, it is important to develop text's understanding, to enhance fluency, to expand vocabulary knowledge, to build up background knowledge, and to practice reading skills and strategies. At higher levels, students need to adopt higher learning standards. With respect to reading, they should deal with more advanced texts with different genres and purposes in order to practice complex strategies, reach good learning outcomes, and build significant knowledge.

Recently, there has been significant concern about the role of reading as a useful means to develop language learning. In fact, considerable research has revealed that EFL students can benefit from reading in many ways. Indeed, learners who read constantly are better able to read fluently, write skilfully, have a good mastery of grammar, and possess a large vocabulary amount. Certainly, reading can engage students actively in the foreign language and culture. When opportunities to speak or hear the foreign language are rare, reading is the only practice that gives learners access to boundless amount of the language patterns such as ; idioms, sentence and paragraph structures, vocabulary, contextualized grammar, and other cultural clues of the native speakers. The more they read, the more they become proficient in the target language. In fact, they become good readers, writers, speakers, and listeners.

More importantly, this research tries to show how reading can contribute to the improvement of language proficiency. It explores the language learning benefits of both intensive and extensive reading and demonstrates their roles in developing the communicative competence, the writing skill, the listening ability, vocabulary amount, and grammatical knowledge. Moreover, it investigates the factors that affect students' reading and attempts to examine the difficulties and the problems that cause reading deficits. It tries to illustrate the issues that help teachers offer a successful reading programme and tends to suggest the steps and the procedures necessary for providing an effective reading instruction.

This study tries to investigate reading and its effects on the development of language proficiency. In this respect, it tries to provide answers to the following research question:

1. What are the obstacles and the difficulties that cause students' poor reading?

2. What are the language learning benefits of reading?

3. How can reading be used to develop the language skills?

4. How to provide effective reading instruction to EFL students?

These research questions are explored on the bases of the following hypotheses:

1. Lack of motivation, guidance, and language knowledge could be the main reasons of students' reading deficits.

2. Reading has ample learning benefits and leads to the development of language proficiency.

3. Reading can be used to develop the language skills through the use of multiple activities.

4. A successful reading instruction combines classroom intensive reading and extensive reading programmes.

This thesis entails four main chapters. The first chapter provides a literature review of both reading and language proficiency. In fact, related studies, theories, and approaches are provided in order to clarify the different views and concepts. Indeed, the first part of this chapter is devoted to reading where definitions, descriptions, types, components, levels, skills, strategies, and processes of reading are provided. The second part of this chapter is devoted to language proficiency. In fact, it deals with language proficiency domains with reference to ELT including, writing, speaking, listening, and reading proficiency. In this respect, different visions, explanations, levels, and fields of language proficiency are highlighted.

The second chapter aims to shed light on the English language teaching in the Algerian ELT departments. It brings an overall view about the university systems, problems, and reforms and highlights the syllabus, the methods, and the objectives of ELT in Algeria. Principally, this chapter emphasises the position of reading in the curriculum and brings a description of how reading is taught to the Algerian EFL students. In fact, this chapter emphasises reading as a module and as a language skill in the the Algerian ELT departments within the LMD system.

As for the third chapter, it is considered as the essential part of this study. It is the empirical phase of the research as it elucidates the research objectives, instruments, methodology, and participants. Further, it entails the data collection and analyses, and gives the interpretation of the main results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, the students' questionnaire, and the classroom observation. It is important to mention that the research was carried out in the department of English at the University of Tlemcen where a sample of first year students and EFL teachers were involved. Still, a group of EFL teachers from other ELT departments were included.

The fourth chapter is the concluding chapter. It is intended to give some recommendations and proposals about reading and its effects in the development of language proficiency. First, this chapter provides recommendations about how reading should be taught in the ELT departments. Second, it offers some suggested reading activities and techniques that can be used to improve each language skill. In other words, this part of the study shows how classroom and extensive reading can be useful in enhancing students' proficiency in writing, speaking, and listening.

Certainly, reading is central to language learning as it helps learners gain vocabulary, recognize grammar use, acquire ideas, broaden world knowledge, improve reading fluency, enhance writing, and develop communicative competence. This can happen through the continuous exposure to language elements that is offered by reading. Therefore, teachers should provide adequate reading instruction and make every possible effort to motivate their students to be good readers. This study attempts to provide some procedures that help teachers install reading habits amidst learners and lead them make use of their reading.

This research is intended to shed light on the importance of reading in language learning with reference to first year students at the English department. In fact, the main objective of this study is to show how reading can develop students' language proficiency domains.   Accordingly, the study scrutinises the reading instruction and tries to give answers and solutions to the questions raised in this research. Certainly, the reading   instruction is partly emphasised in order to investigate the methods, strategies, and materials used in the classroom reading lectures.

In addition, the study explores the reasons and the factors that lead to reading deficits and tries to reveal the obstacles that face and demotivate first year students to be good readers. Besides, this work aims to examine teachers'

practices and learners' performance in and out the classroom. In other words, it intends to highlight the reading instruction, the use of reading to teach the language skills, and the role of extensive reading in increasing students' language gains.

Still, this research attempts to illuminate the links between reading and the skills of writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. In fact, it tries to gather evidence in order elucidate the adequate reading activities that could be used to develop each skill. In this respect, the study involves the informants' views and attitudes towards involving reading activities and extensive reading programmes to develop the language skills.

The study was conducted at the Department of English at Abou-bakr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. It addressed first year LMD students in this department and EFL teachers from different Universities. This research is conducted in the form of a case study and used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Three main research instruments were used: Teachers' questionnaire, students' questionnaire, and the classroom observation.   In this study, two research approaches have been used: quantitative and qualitative methods.

The results obtained from the two questionnaires and the classroom observation sessions lead us to say that reading is an important skill that have countless advantages as it   incorporates the various language domains and skills. Both teachers and learners believe that reading provides constant language exposure and can be considered as a source of inspiration.

Actually, the students and the teachers' questionnaires provide significant data about reading and its role in improving students' language learning. In fact, learners showed different preferences and needs with respect to the reading instruction and the reading material. Indeed, the students need authentic material with modern subjects including real-life situations. The results

denote that teachers of reading should plan carefully their instruction by setting clear purposes and selecting motivating texts. Novelty, eclecticism, and authenticity are vital elements that should be taken into consideration in order to meet students' different interests. Definitely, teachers of reading should introduce a variety of texts' types including poems, narratives, scientific illustrations, historical texts, and social facts. Certainly, this would provide learners with knowledge of different texts' forms and structures and make them familiar with different language styles.

Concerning the difficulties that lead to major reading problems, the classroom observation and the questionnaires' data reveal that vocabulary is the main obstacle that faces first year students. Absolutely, teachers need to seek and apply the useful techniques that alleviates the dire effects of this problem on students' learning and motivation. For example, they can recommend the use of dictionaries, provide time for vocabulary teaching within the reading course, and advise for free reading. Another problem that could minimize the reading gains is lack of language knowledge. The evidence gathered from the research instruments illustrate that teachers of reading deal with first year students who lack grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, reading and writing skills. Certainly, these obstacles cause demotivation and reluctance to reading. Therefore, both teachers and learners should supply extra efforts to overcome these problems by practice. Teachers should set assessment plans so as to offer constructive feedback. Furthermore, texts' selection and instructional methods are other challenges that face teachers. Surely, the texts' types and contents play important roles in increasing students' motivation and reaching higher learning outcomes. The teachers of reading should clarify the reading skills, provide sufficient practice, apply the suitable teaching methods, and select the appropriate texts. Moreover, they should be facilitators and motivators in the classroom.

Concerning the students' attitudes towards the reading instruction, the results indicate most of them know about the reading skills and strategies. Surely, teachers of study skills deal with these skills in theoretical and practical ways. As for learners' preferences, the data show that the majority prefer literary texts, and especially narratives and modern short stories. Indeed, this type of reading material provide them with both language and culture. Undoubtedly, they can be seen as a source of motivation as they include both excitement and entertainment. However, teachers should use different texts' types and genres including scientific texts, factual reports, newspaper and magazine articles, poems, and dialogues in order to satisfy the learners' different gusts. This strategy would offer the students different language styles, different language knowledge, and different vocabularies. The results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire and the classroom observation reveal that the teachers use a variety of texts' sorts.

In addition, the evidence obtained from the three research instruments induce that classroom reading has positive effects on students' language learning. In fact, the reading lectures provide them with parallel language gains in the areas of speaking, listening, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. For example, the reading course offer infinite opportunities for students to learn about vocabulary. Indeed, different texts' types provide different vocabularies. Certainly, first year students need to increase their vocabulary package and reading seems to be the most effective way to do so. When the learners are asked to find synonyms and antonyms, they need to make use of the decoding, guessing and inferring reading skills. These strategies help develop their abilities to give the appropriate definitions according to the context. During the while reading phase, many teachers ask their learners to underline the unfamiliar words and check their meanings in the dictionary in order to build up adequate text's comprehension. Surely, this reading activity increases students' vocabulary volume.

Further, the reading aloud procedure can serve to develop listening and pronunciation while guessing and inferring lead to develop vocabulary and cognitive thinking. Certainly, the pre-reading activities or the post reading discussions are other element that improve students' listening abilities. Still, reading proficiency is improved through silent and loud reading followed by comprehension questions that require the application of the substantial reading skills including predicting, scanning, skimming, and evaluating. Furthermore, the speaking skill is involved in the reading course at different parts. Actually, the speaking proficiency can be increased through the oral communication that take place between the teacher and the learners. The post reading discussions about different texts' topics provide multiple communicative contexts where the students develop their oral competence when they are engaged in such activities.

Moreover, writing activities are unavoidably involved in all reading activities. In fact, the students are generally asked to answer the question in written forms using full sentences and paragraphs. This practice requires and develops their writing skills. Besides, when the students are asked to read and summarize the text or to write an essay about the content, they are, in fact, practicing writing. Therefore, one can say that the classroom reading lectures impact positively the writing skill as the learners are demanded to write answers, give opinions, paraphrase authors' ideas, and summarize the texts. Certainly, this would lead them to learn about spelling and word formation, coherence and cohesion, the use of topic sentences and paragraphs, and the use punctuation.

Furthermore, grammar is learnt in many indirect ways through the classroom reading . Indeed, the texts entail unlimited grammar structures which are used in different contexts. In other words, the reading passages provide contextualized grammar rules and demonstrate the different functions of these rules with reference to meaning. Certainly, the students relate their grammar knowledge to the phrases and sentences involved in the text. They can go through the use of conditional sentences, phrasal and irregular verbs , the use of

prepositions, and the use of tenses. For example, when they use the dictionary to check words meaning during reading, they know about their types, roots, and morphology because words can be verbs, adjectives, adverbs, countable or uncountable nouns.

As for the use of reading as a technique in teaching and developing learners' proficiency in the other skills, the results reveal most of teachers of written expression, listening, phonetics, grammar, and speaking do not use constantly the reading-to-learn strategy. However, all the participating teachers in this study argue that the use of texts is effective for the development of language proficiency domains. Indeed, the research provide ample evidence about how to include the classroom reading in teaching the language skills. Certainly, strategies such as read and perform, read and discuss, read and write can be included in different modules.

For the reading-to-write method, teachers suggests multiple activities including the use of texts with activities about the reading topic. Definitely, the students can extract ideas from text and write about them. For example, for teaching punctuation, the teacher can introduce a specific text where the focus is on capitalization. For essay writing, the teacher of writing can select an interesting text, ask the students to read, and work on the content in order to show them how to write a coherent essay.

As for the use of reading to teach listening, the results indicate that the reading aloud procedure is the most effective activity that can be involved in a listening session. Introducing texts in different subjects bring the students closer to oral language styles. For instance, the teacher can apply the reading-while listening strategy by giving the students printed authentic texts which are recorded in audio tapes. Indeed, listening proficiency can be developed by using multiple texts' types and genres.

Concerning teaching and improving oral skills through the use of reading as a teaching strategy, one can say that this approach can be applied due to its effectiveness in developing students' communicative competence. Actually, the teachers of speaking can introduce texts in different forms, ask the students to read, and raise discussions about the text. The different texts' topics increase learners' abilities to discuss and comment on different matters. Besides, texts in the form of plays and dialogues provide valuable speaking practice as they put the students in different communicative situations.

Moreover, the teaching of grammar through texts can be a useful strategy that put the syntactic rules in real use. Actually, grammar cannot be taught without including it in context. Certainly, the use of texts offers an opportunity for teachers to focus and work on a specific grammatical structure. For example, the teacher of grammar can ask the learners to read the text and underline the prepositions in order to build up the lecture. Indeed, students' grammatical knowledge can be well developed through the use of texts as they learn and practice the rules in different contexts.

Furthermore, the data about the extensive reading illustrate that the majority of the students do not read extensively because of various factors. In fact, motivation is considered as an essential factor to extensive reading. Actually, lack of language knowledge including vocabulary shortage, grammar deficiency, and comprehension strategies lead automatically to demotivation. Besides, students are not demanded and encouraged by their teachers to read. Really, first year students need to be pushed, guided, and monitored in order to help them select the appropriate material for free reading. According to the results, teachers advise but do not oblige their learners to read. In this respect, students' unwillingness to reading is the result of the absence of an academic extensive reading program in their learning curriculum. Therefore, we advise for this kind of program within the reading module with separated scores in order to

instill reading habits because extensive reading is a key element to the development of the general language proficiency.

More importantly, both teachers and learners believe that extensive reading has abundant language learning benefits. In fact, students are exposed to infinite linguistic and cultural concepts of the target language including grammar structures, vocabularies, idioms, expressions, and proverbs. Certainly, vocabulary can be considered as an important gain of extensive reading as learners go through a variety of topics and contexts which provide a continuous exposure to unlimited number of words.

Besides, extensive reading develops students' reading proficiency as they can improve their cognitive thinking, decoding skills, and comprehension abilities. Also, they can practice and develop their reading skills such as guessing and evaluating as they read in different domains. Still, they can develop critical attitudes in different matters as they become resistant rather submissive readers. As a result, they become more proficient in setting their reading purposes and selecting their reading materials. Indeed, they acquire a background knowledge that can help them not only in their language learning but also in their personal lives. Extensive reading leads learners to develop literacy in different domains.

Actually, ER provides learners with infinite ideas that can inspire them to write about different topics at higher levels. Surely, they can can acquire ready-made expressions, figurative language, vocabulary, and writing mechanism which can be reflected in their writings. In fact, when reading, students learn across the use of grammar, cohesion and coherence, texts forms, punctuation, and spelling. Therefore, one can say that reading is truly an inspiration for writing. Teachers can make use of ER to develop the writing skill by asking learners to read, document their reading, and write essays and summaries about what they have read. The use of portfolios is an effective tool to know about students' extensive reading and to assess their achievements.

Moreover, students can improve their communicative competence as they build up linguistic, cultural, conceptual, and world knowledge that allows them to discuss various matters. Actually, the students can be asked to read about different subjects and discuss them in the classroom. In this way, they can develop different language styles including scientific, narrative, argumentative, sport, political, historical, media, and literary sorts.

Essentially, the findings of this study meet our hypotheses and provide sufficient answers to our research questions. Concerning the obstacles and difficulties that cause reading deficits, the results meet our research hypothesis which indicates that the lack of language knowledge, guidance, and motivation are the most important factors that lead to poor reading achievement.

Further, the results of this research answer our research questions about the language learning benefits of both intensive and extensive reading. In fact, they consents our hypothesis which denotes that reading can play significant roles in improving students' language proficiency. Therefore, a successful reading instruction should involve both effective classroom reading and extensive reading programs. In fact, our hypothesis is endorsed by the fact that EFL learners and teachers assent the idea of integrating such an ER program in the learning syllabus. Indeed, the results match our research questions about the language learning gains of the reading and consent our hypothesis which indicates that the reading offers multiple opportunities of the language use and practice.

Besides, the findings provide answers to the research questions concerning how intensive reading can be used as a teaching technique to teach and improve the language skills. These results prove our hypothesis which suggests the effectiveness of this strategy in developing students' language proficiency involving listening, communication, writing, vocabulary, grammar. In fact,

multiple reading tasks and activities can be used according to the purpose of the instructor. This evidence prove our hypothesis which states that intensive reading is a useful technique that can be used by teachers of the language skills.

In sum, the participants gave different views concerning reading and its effectiveness in developing their language proficiency; including writing, communication, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. Many of them suggested different strategies in order to give reading more importance in their learning programme. Some of them proposed the introduction of a module for extensive reading with specialised teachers as they believe that reading should be taught by teachers who are specialised in reading. Others focused on the role of reading in the development of language skills and mentioned its language learning benefits . A number of students proposed that teachers of reading should play greater roles in pushing and motivating autonomous reading by asking their learners to read interesting books and bringing their summaries as homework. Motivation was emphasised by a great number of participants as they consider it as an essential factor to reading. In this respect, students showed their need for their teachers' help and guidance. Some teachers viewed that for learners to be good writers and good communicators, they should be good readers. This estimation is considered as the best idea as it reveals accurately the importance of reading in improving the language proficiency.

In this study, the researcher tried to display the very important roles of reading in the development of language proficiency. In fact, this research attempted to reveal the links between reading and language skills and tended to illustrate the tasks and the activities that can be used for the development of each skill. Further, the research focused on the reading instruction in the ELT departments and explored the obstacles and the difficulties that confront both EFL teachers and learners. Still, the study provided some recommendations for adequate reading instruction and showed how classroom and extensive reading can enhance language learning.

The results reveal that first year EFL students face a variety of difficulties which could hamper their reading and lead to poor achievements. The main obstacles are the lack of motivation and the lack of language knowledge including slow decoding of scripts, comprehension problems, topic unfamiliarity, insufficient vocabulary storage, and diminutive syntactic knowledge. Besides, some struggling learners devote much of their time to decoding and face major problems in monitoring their comprehension. These findings are convenient with our hypothesis that confirms that the lack of motivation and language competence are major obstacles that cause reading failure.

Therefore, the reading instruction should include effective techniques and plans in order to overcome students' weaknesses and obstacles. In fact, we recommend that a sound reading instruction should be based on two main brands: classroom reading and extensive reading. As for the classroom instruction, teachers should deal with the reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, inferring, predicting, monitoring, annotation, and evaluating. For this reason, explicit strategy instruction can be given to learners where they can understand which strategy they use and why and how it can be applied.

Moreover, teachers need to carefully select their reading material in order to responds to students' interests and increase their motivation. They should use simple authentic materials that help improve students' reading fluency and help them learn and practice the reading skills. Still, useful classroom reading activities should be included in any course. The focus in the classroom instruction should be on the improvement of comprehension abilities including the lower and the higher decoding skills, vocabulary emphasis, skill and strategy practice, and fluency building. Further, students should learn how to assess the content and to detect the author's attitudes and reasons. In other words, teaching critical reading is an important part of the reading instruction.

More importantly, setting extensive reading programmes is necessary for a successful reading instruction. In fact, this type of reading is seen as fundamental language skill where students read a variety of topics according to their needs and interests. Indeed, they can develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to their learning. The findings of this research reveal that such a plan is important for first year EFL students in order to provide them with a continuous language exposure. Actually, extensive reading is the most effective means to enhance language proficiency. It provides opportunities to foster autonomous reading, practice strategies learnt in the classroom, enhance reading speed and fluency, and experience authentic material. In other words, it improves overall reading by engaging learners in self-motivated reading process, building up thinking skills, and leading to independence and resourcefulness. Furthermore, extensive reading develops writing abilities, widens vocabulary knowledge, improving speaking abilities, activates students' deductive learning, and deepens learners' understanding of grammatical rules in different contexts.

Therefore, ELT departments should include an extensive reading programme within the reading module in order to engage EFL students in continuous reading. This can happen through setting clear plans and mechanism that makes students good readers. Certainly, motivation is the most important element that leads to successful reading.

As for the use of reading as a means to develop the language skills, the findings argue that a reading-based instruction can be useful for improving proficiency in speaking, writing, and even listening. According to teachers' answers, texts are useful in the classroom for teaching all skills. For example, reading aloud can be useful for improving listening, summarising is effective to develop writing, inferring is important to gain unfamiliar vocabulary, and debating content is useful to boost speaking. These results confirm our pre-set hypothesis that say that classroom reading can be used for teaching language skills through the use of multiple activities.

In addition, the findings show that literary reading materials are recommended for extensive reading as they comprise the real language literacy. Obviously, literature meets the linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and cultural objectives of foreign language teaching. Actually, literature offers valuable authentic material, rich language settings, and cultural knowledge. It enhances learners' language knowledge as it affords evidence of extensive and refined vocabulary usage and abundant syntax. Moreover, literary works are highly motivating instruments in the reading instruction as they install reading habits in learners and raise their interests. In fact, they often deal with fundamental human subjects and go beyond the cultural dissimilarities. Further, they develop language awareness, encourage interaction, boost discussion, and educate and strengthen student's personality. Indeed, they touch learners' feelings, experience, hopes, and dreams.

In sum, one can say that reading is essential for the improvement of the general language proficiency. Indeed, it offers copious opportunities for learners to go across a variety of language structures, styles, culture, and skills. Actually, reading is a valuable source of foreign language learning. In the classroom, it can be used to teach and develop all language skills by using skill-bound reading activities. In non-classroom contexts, extensive or free reading seems to be the most efficient means to guarantee the learning continuity. Truly, it provides contextualised grammar and vocabulary, develops writing and reading proficiency, and enhances communicative abilities. Including this programme in the reading instruction at university level would certainly increase students' motivation and helps them to shift from the learning to read to the reading to learn framework. Besides, they get the the chance to cater to their different needs and to respond to their individual interests. Indeed, students learn how to assume responsibility for their own leaning.

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Assessment of Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study attempts to shed light on the concept of assessment as an essential pedagogical practice for the improvement of the teaching-learning process. Particularly, it stresses the strategies and the techniques that should be used in assessing reading comprehension with reference to EFL classrooms. It describes the kinds of tasks that actually reveal students' reading comprehension abilities and needs. Moreover, this paper aims to illustrate the types and the advantages of assessment for both teachers and learners. More importantly, this study tries to bring equitable evidence of how reading comprehension can be adequately assessed. The findings showed that assessment of reading comprehension is central to English language teaching as it provides teachers with essential information about students' weaknesses, needs, obstacles, and deficits. Thus, teachers can implement the appropriate techniques and use the assessment results to amend their classroom instruction and enhance the learning abilities.

Keywords

assessment, reading comprehension, EFL classrooms.

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1. Introduction

Assessment is viewed as one of the vital pedagogical practices to both teaching and learning. It entails a sum of instruments and techniques which are used in classrooms and help teachers accurately define their learners' needs and competencies. In other words, it is a pedagogical and instructive activity needed to gather information about learners so as to properly identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Broadly speaking, assessment offers opportunities for teachers to pinpoint their teaching goals and to know the extent to which the expected goals are attained. Essentially, it renders the teaching-learning process more effective and reliable as teachers can adjust their instruction and link it to the assessment results and student's needs. In other words, assessment is an essential component of classroom instruction that is designed to detect students' weaknesses and demands in any learning subject. Accordingly, teachers can make the right decisions and provide constructive feedback to their learners.

More importantly, classroom assessment should entail effective techniques and tools that vary according to the teaching subjects and grades. Certainly, it needs to relate to the previously offered courses because it should aim to maximize and enhance students' skills and abilities. Actually, it is aimed to reveal what students have grasped and what they still need to learn.

As for the assessment of reading comprehension, it involves several methods and procedures that are intended to display how adequately leaners are able to read, comprehend, interpret, and analyze different types of texts. In this respect, specific reading comprehension activities can be introduced in the EFL classrooms in order to know how well students are able to build a sound text's understanding. Certainly, reading comprehension assessment should be based on rational criteria and useful measures.

2. Assessment Defined

Assessment is seen as the practice of detecting and defining the students' knowledge, understandings, abilities, and skills. It is a classroom activity used to stimulate learning by collecting data and offering constructive feedback (Black &William, 1998). In other words, assessment is the process of knowing about how students are progressing in their learning to make the right decision in designing and

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planning classroom instruction. In this sense, it is defined by Palomba and Banta as follows:

> *Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning and development.*

(Palomba and Banta , 1999 : 4)

Definitely, collecting data about students, analysing evidence, and refining instruction are assessment stages by which teachers can increase the learning outcomes.

Generally speaking, assessment is considered as a task which consists of a set of activities that teachers and learners carry out to get information that can be used diagnostically to correct both teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). According to Carr and Harris (2001:35): **"Assessment is an integral part of instruction...effective classroom assessment is relevant to immediate learning."**

Certainly, classroom assessment is connected to teaching and learning for it heightens the quality of instruction and raises the students 'attainments. In practice, assessment depends on different means to make the students truly reveal what they have acquired and what they still need to develop. This can be done through gathering information through tests and exercises, providing useful feedback, setting sound classroom activities, and weaving the instruction according to students' needs. The following figure describes the process of assessment:

Figure 1. Classroom Assessment Cycle (Susan et al, 2005: 3)

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This cycle shapes the classroom assessment procedure which focuses on enhancing students' performance. It denotes that assessment comprises four key steps: clarifying the learning objectives, gathering information in a variety of ways, scrutinizing assessment data, and adjusting instruction. Indeed, teachers should use the evidence to monitor progress, increase performance, and improve instruction.

Besides, assessment involves the process of evaluating, marking, and grading students' performance. It is viewed as a method of collecting, synthesising, and interpreting information in order to diagnose students' problems, to judge their academic performance, to plan classroom instruction, and to respond to students' needs (Airasian, 1994). In brief, assessment is defined as being diagnostic, formative, and summative. These three components are used together to help both teachers and learners determine what should be done to enhance the teaching input and the learning outcomes.

3. Assessment VS Evaluation

Assessment is a classroom activity conducted to gain information and to offer a valuable feedback so as to improve teachers' instruction and students' learning achievements. It includes learners' response which helps the instructor know about their learning needs and abilities.

In contrast, evaluation is understood as a process of using tests' techniques and other measures to judge the students' attainments for the purpose of grading, ranking, and reporting. In other words, it is a summative activity which occurs through exams or quizzes at the end of a term or a year and ends up with ranks and marks.

4. Types of Assessment

Assessment can be conducted for different purposes. In fact, there are three main types of assessment which occur in different times, at different levels, and in different forms to accomplish multiple purposes.

4.1. Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment is the process of diagnosing learners' strengths and weaknesses in the very beginning of a foreign language course. It greatly facilitates teachers' task to tailor instructions, meet the

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learners needs, and helps them plan classroom activities appropriate for their level.

Certainly, teachers use this type of assessment to reveal students' abilities in a particular skill or a programme. It identifies for both teachers and learners the needs and demands that should be met in any area of knowledge. The strengths lead to a formal consideration and should be explored in addressing the weaknesses.

Generally, diagnostic assessment occurs when learners move to a new learning programme. It happens at the beginning of a course or a programme in order to develop plans and make links so as to prepare the next steps. It is, in another sense, a holistic process during which a picture should be built up about the individual's achievements, interests, skills, and wants. This evidence can be translated to teaching practices and used for planning the courses that best suit the learners. Moreover, it helps teachers to identify the goals and to choose the techniques and the strategies that enable them to reach these goals.

Additionally, diagnostic assessment deeply looks at the specific needs of learners as the diagnostic feedback needs to be descriptive and interpretable so that it can help learners take actions to close the gap between their current competency level and their desired learning goals (Black & William 1998).

In short, diagnostic assessment is an educational strategy used by teachers to determine the learning and the instructional goals. It paves the way to a continuous formative assessment.

4.2. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment can be referred to as continuous, interactive, and dynamic. It occurs and should be carried out in ways that help learners make a real progress in their learning. It is also an ongoing generative process which is designed to support learning. Therefore, this process includes several strategies such as sharing the learning goals and the assessment criteria with learners.

The distinguishing characteristic of formative assessment is that its evidence is used by both teachers and learners (Black 1995). This means that it aims at knowing about how learners are progressing and where they are having troubles. It also helps teachers to make the necessary instructional adjustments so as to offer more opportunities to practice.

Formative assessment involves designing goals, providing instruction, measuring outcomes, and giving useful feedback. Actually, it includes the process of appraising, judging, or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve students' competence (Gipps, 1994).

That is to say, formative assessment is a process which requires skilful teachers who can better elicit and interpret information for the interest of their learners to improve both the teaching and learning strategies. It is characterised by its progressive nature as it can happen at any period of time. It, also, can be planned or unplanned, proactive or reactive, formal or informal. As for informal assessment, it is a way of collecting information about learners' performance in normal classroom conditions. This can be done without establishing test conditions as it is done over a period of time. In contrast, formal assessment is carried out through tests which are used to find out about the learners' suitability to follow a course of a study and to know how learners are progressing in order to identify problem areas. Through tests teachers can know how much learners have learned during the course or during the academic year.

A common misconception is held by teachers and learners alike, is that a test is something which is done at learners rather than something which is done by them and for them. In fact, formal testing should be seen as a complement to other forms of assessment. In brief, formative assessment brings the assessor and the learner together in a process of continual reflection by making clear judgements about the learning gains.

4.3. Summative Assessment

While formative assessment is for learning, summative assessment is of learning. It provides evidence of what learners got at the end of a specific term of learning. Furthermore, it marks the important stages of learners' development and should be formally recorded in the form of scores and marks. More importantly, it should be planned in advance so that learners can have enough time to prepare themselves and gain confidence in whatever area they are assessed in or about. In addition to this, it is generally used to discover what a learner has achieved during the program of the study. It is carried out at or towards the end of the course for the sake of knowing if learners have acquired

the target skill as it gives an overall picture of learners' performance. The following table illustrates the difference between formative and summative assessment:

Table 1. Some Distinguishing Features of Formative and Summative Assessment.

Formative assessment	Summative assessment
-is prepared and carried out by the class teacher as a routine part of teaching and learning. -is specifically related to has been taught ,i.e. content is in harmony with what has been taught. -the information from the assessment is used diagnostically; it is focused on the individual learner's specific strengths and weaknesses, needs, etc.	-is not necessarily prepared and carried out by the class teacher. -does not essentially relate immediately to what has been taught. -The judgement about a learner's performance is likely to feed into record-keeping and be used for administrative purposes , e.g. checking standards and targets. -is frequently externally imposed, e.g. by in institution or a ministry of education.

Actually, formative assessment is related directly to students' learning progress as it aims at providing constructive feedback according to their weakness and needs. However, summative assessment is concerned with the measurement of the final achievements and levels.

In the form of tests or exams, summative assessment aims at raising the standards of learning as it indicates the extent of success and the points of failure. It is carried out at the end of a period of instruction so that to make clear judgements about where learners are successful and where they are not in any area of knowledge. In short, the most powerful evidence of learners' progress is provided when teachers combine data from pre-tests and post-tests and provide a summative assessment.

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5. Reading Comprehension Defined

Reading comprehension is not only a process of decoding texts and building a particular understanding. It can be viewed as a process which involves skills and strategies by which the reader reconstruct equitably the message encoded by the author. Grabe describes reading as:

> *An active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e.g. guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc).*

(Grabe, 1991:377)

That is to say that reading comprehension is a blend of identification and construal skills. In fact, it is an interactive process between the reader and the text which lead to a specific comprehension. In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text in order to appropriately elicit the meaning and the ideas entailed in this text.

According to Urquhart and Weir (1998: 22): **«Reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print».** This means that the message conveyed by the text is decoded and interpreted through the vocabulary items, the grammatical points, and the rhetorical structure of the text. Besides, Anderson (1991) views reading as an dynamic fluent process which involves the reader and the reading materials in building meaning.

In addition, reading can be viewed as a receptive skill in understanding the words in a written form. It is believed that understanding the purpose of someone is not only in spoken form but also in reading. Reading is the next step in writing because through it learners can understand what someone wants to talk something. According to Nunan (1991:70): **"Reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text, in this case most particularly with the reader's knowledge of content of the text".** That is to say that comprehension does not relate only on the text content, but also on the reader's own literacy and experience. According to Hedge (2000), in order to make sense, learners need to combine the following types of knowledge:

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- Syntactic knowledge: knowing the functions of verbs, nouns, articles, modals, etc.
- Morphological knowledge: knowing about words formations including prefixes, suffixes, morphemes, etc.
- Genre knowledge: knowing about texts' types and genres such as scientific and literary genres.
- General world knowledge: this includes background knowledge, topic knowledge, and sociocultural knowledge about the reading topic.

More importantly, comprehension is the ultimate aim of reading. It contains a number of cognitive processes that help students make sense of what they read. Indeed, they need to decode words, relate sentences, and use their background knowledge so that they can achieve an appropriate text comprehension.

6. Research Aims

Assessing reading comprehension skills is an integral part of the English language instruction. Therefore, this paper tries to show and explain how reading comprehension can be successfully assessed and to display the methods and the means that can be used in this kind of assessment. Moreover, this research aims to detect the main difficulties and the obstacles that hamper students' text comprehension.

7. Research Methodology

In this study, two broad approaches of research were used: qualitative research method and quantitative research method .As for the qualitative research method, it is favored by many researchers and has been adopted in the field of human sciences .It is an approach which is based on making enquiries ,exploration, and discovery. As McDonough (1997:53) stated: **"Qualitative research usually gathers observations, interviews, field data records, questionnaires, transcripts, and so on"**. Actually, the results, in this approach, address and illuminate the "why" and try to find answers and solutions.

With respect to the quantitative research method, it is an approach which is preferred by the fundamental sciences. In fact, it involves the construction of hypotheses that can be measured by

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gathering evidence and evaluating it in an experimental way. It is based on statistical analyses of large volume of information.

This research was conducted in the form of case study. The main research instruments in this study have been questionnaires. One of these questionnaires was designed to elicit the views of thirty students from Bouguirat Secondary School. The students' questionnaire entails questions that sought to gather data about learners' attitudes, beliefs, and needs. The focus of the students' questionnaire is to achieve an overview and to find out a clear data about the assessment of reading comprehension skills.

The second questionnaire was devoted to ten EFL teachers from different secondary schools. This questionnaire entails questions that aimed to collect teachers' opinions, worries, and proposals about the assessment of reading comprehension.

8. Sample Population

The informants are considered as the most important elements of any research work. According to Gardner (1974), population is a group of individuals who share common characteristics. Polit (2001) defines population as an aggregation of cases that meet specific criteria. In this study, the researcher involved two groups of participants; EFL teachers and secondary school students.

The first group of informants entails 10 EFL teachers from different secondary schools. Seven of them are females and three are males. Most of them have taught English for more than five years. The second group of informants involves thirty students from Bouguirat Secondary School. Twenty of them are females and ten are males. Their age is between 18 and 20. They were randomly selected in order to make the research more reliable and objective.

9. Main Results Interpretation

The results revealed that the majority of learners are aware about the importance of assessment in improving their reading comprehension as they argue that it helps them discover their real abilities. Some of them feel the stress whenever they are assessed. In this respect, the fact that tests or exams cause fear to learners cannot be considered as a severe problem but as a natural case. As a solution, teachers can prepare learners for assessment in order to help them overcome their fear and

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hesitation. Moreover, they can create a suitable atmosphere by guiding and advising their learners. In this regard, it is necessary to avoid the assessment tools that disturb learners and do not lead them to demonstrate their true abilities. Therefore, it is useful to ask them about their preferable assessment means. The students showed their preferences of the continuous classroom activities as useful assessment tools. This is due to the fact that this strategy does not impose test conditions and help students learn without fear or stress.

Undoubtedly, introducing simple classroom activities is an effective strategy that helps both teachers and learners know the causes of failure and the way to success without giving marks or rankings. In fact, through these activities, teachers can modify and improve their instruction according to the assessment results and learners' needs. Furthermore, although they are considered as evaluation tools, tests and exams are essential ingredients to any assessment procedure because they lead learners to consider the importance of learning and increase their seriousness to be committed to achieve better results. In addition, assessing learners through tests and exams make them stand at their levels and motivate them to go beyond these levels by making more efforts to reach higher ones.

Still, in assessing reading comprehension, most of the teachers use multiple test techniques in order to have a clear view about their learners' capacities. In this respect, multiple choice questions, gaps filling, comprehension questions, and writing summaries are the mostly used activities.

Actually, the application of multiple strategies in the continuous assessment offer to both teachers and learners the essential information about the level of comprehension that learners are able to reach and help them to discover the weaknesses, the difficulties, and the obstacles of learners. In this concern, many of the informants mention several types of reading comprehension difficulties that are frequently faced by the students. The main obstacle that causes reading failure, according to EFL teachers, is that learners do not possess enough and adequate vocabulary knowledge that helps them achieve a good text understanding.

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10. Summary of the Main Results

This study revealed that assessment of reading comprehension is a vital teaching activity which can be conducted for the benefit of both teachers and learners. Certainly, it involves a number of methods and strategies that impulse students to disclose their learning skills to their teachers. Besides, it makes learners aware about their weaknesses and strengths and helps them to seek the solutions to improve their reading comprehension skills.

According to the results, assessment of reading comprehension can be conducted in the form of tests, projects, and daily classroom activities. Indeed, the construction of simple and well-organized tests which entail various tasks and activities is important for this type of assessment in order to address students' texts comprehension. According to the responses, most teachers use activities that include multiple-choice questions, filling the gap exercises, and reading comprehension questions.

Moreover, this research shows that assessment has many advantages. Actually, it informs teachers about the learning capacities of their learners and helps them to offer valuable instruction to meet their needs. Besides, it helps students to discover their competencies and leads them to seek useful ways to improve their own learning.

Finally, it is worthy to note that learners and EFL teachers gave important proposals and views concerning the process of assessment and put their recommendations about the role of assessment in enhancing the whole teaching-learning process.

11. Recommendations for Assessing Reading Comprehension

In order to assess reading comprehension, teachers should use several methods and no single technique can truly measure students' reading skills. A reading comprehension test may subsume activities such as: gap filling, short questions, multiple choice questions, true or false questions, and yes-no questions.

The advantages of using short-answer questions based on a reading passage in testing reading comprehension is that the answers should be sought and expressed by the learner rather than being offered. This can ease the testing at higher order skills, such as interpretation and evaluation, and gives the assessor the opportunity to assume reasonably

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that the learner truly put the answer for no reason other than he has actually comprehended the text .

The main goal of reading comprehension tests is, according to (Weir, 2005), to measure reading mastery without stressing grammar or spelling. However, in assessing reading, failure to take errors in language use into consideration may lead to the perception that spelling, grammar, and punctuation are not essential to language learning. Therefore, reading comprehension assessment should target not only students' comprehension of a text but also the factors that facilitate or impede this comprehension .

In order to actually check students' comprehension of texts, various types of questions should be used. In fact, approaches to the evaluation of reading comprehension have tried to introduce interactive activities and tasks .The use of questions is an integral part of these activities and well-designed questions would help learners better interact with the text to build up meaning. Indeed, a combination of comprehension activities helps learners respond to various types of comprehension. There are numerous methods and forms of reading comprehension tasks that can be used in assessing students' comprehension and stimulating their understanding of a text. These techniques may take formal or informal forms. Sally and Katie (2008) state some of these tasks:

11.1. Yes-No Questions

These are questions that should be answered with either yes or no. However, teachers are recommended to follow up these questions by other types of questions to make sure that students have understood the text as Yes/No questions can be answered correctly by chance.

11.2. True or False questions

This is another type of a reading test that is familiar to most learners .It consists of a text accompanied by a series of statements. Learners need to decide and mention whether the given statements are true or false according to the text.

This kind of reading comprehension questions provides learners with a set of sentences or statements. For answering these questions, learners are required to read the text and discover the true and the false statements without giving answers in a complex written response .They

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are good activities for memory of literal details in the text but they are limited in assessing specific comprehension skills such as making inferences and meanings. More importantly, teachers should not rely exclusively on them because, like *Yes/No* questions, learners can give right answers by chance without knowing why these answers are correct.

True or False questions need to be carefully designed because the false answers should target the potential misunderstandings of a text. Besides, the false answers that sound obviously incorrect do not help teachers assess learners' comprehension because learners do not need to understand the text to recognize them as incorrect.

11.3. Matching

This type is likely to be less familiar to learners, but increasingly common. They are used by many assessors. Some of reading comprehension tests designers may include more than one matching task in their tests.

For doing a matching task, learners need to choose from a list of prompts. These prompts may be statements, headings, or question completion .For instance, learners can be asked to match a description to the appropriate paragraph, or to match words and phrases to their meanings.

11.4. WH questions

Wh questions are questions that begin with *Wh* such as: "where", "why", "who", "when", and "how". These questions are useful in providing learners with literal understanding of a text and help them recognize information in the text and make evaluations and personal predictions.

11.5. Open -Ended Questions

These questions are used in standardised assessments .They are useful in assessing the component skills of comprehension such as the ability of learners to make inferences from the text .In fact, learners are asked different questions for the reason of testing their memory and their comprehension of the text .However, it is important to mention that this form of assessment may have some weaknesses because learners have to formulate verbal or written responses which may underestimate their comprehension because of their language deficits .

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11.6. Multiple-Choice Questions

This type of the reading task is the most familiar to learners. It is composed of a text which can be of any type accompanied by one or more multiple choice items. These choices may be in the form of statements, a question with answers, or incomplete statements with a choice of phrases or words .Generally, there are three or four options and only one of them is the right one .It is important to have statements corresponding to specific paragraphs or sections of the text, but there may be statements that assess comprehension of the whole text .

Developing a good multiple-choice question needs a careful consideration. In fact, a question with four choices works best for learners with low proficiency in the target language, and one of the four choices should sound the right and the desired answer. Literal comprehension can be checked more effectively by the use of multiple-choice questions. Besides, they can also be used for prediction and evaluation. However, these questions need to be followed by other activities to make learners explain their choices.

Generally, this type of questions may have one correct answer when it targets the literal comprehension. Actually, a multiple-choice format with "*wh*" question is easier than no-choice "*wh*" question because it pushes learners to check the text to know if any of the choices are discussed.

11.7. Gapped Texts

This kind of reading comprehension test includes texts or diagrams from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs are deleted .These *filling the gaps* tasks can also be used in testing grammar and vocabulary.

In some tasks, learners have to decide what should fill in the gap, while in some others, they are given a series of alternatives for choice .Where words, sentences, or paragraphs are removed, there is an item among the given alternatives that is odd to the text.

Gapped texts offer a task that can be used in testing or assessing learners' reading skills. It can be applied to all types of texts and can be included in lower-level exams and for learners with low-level performance.

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11.8. Proofreading

This kind of tasks includes deliberate errors or mistakes of different types in the text provided. Despite the fact the proofreading activities make part of grammar and vocabulary tests, they can also be used in reading comprehension assessments .In fact, the texts can be of any type and, in most cases, is formed of numbered lines .Some lines may involve an extra, or a misspelt word, or an error of punctuation, while the other lines are correct .At this level, learners need to read the text, mark the correct lines, remove the extra words, and correct the spelling and punctuation errors.

12. Conclusion

Assessment is aimed to maximize and improve the teaching-learning process by providing copious opportunities for learners to discover their weaknesses and to raise their learning standards. This can be reached by linking assessment results to classroom instruction and by providing constructive activities that truly conform to learners' needs.

This study attempted to explore the importance of assessment in EFL classrooms. Actually, it aimed at bringing some details about the process of assessment and specifically focused on reading comprehension as an essential skill in English language teaching. In fact, it showed that teachers need to assess this skill accurately and adequately in order to get a clear view about their learners' needs. Therefore, the assessment practices should depend on clear criteria so as to indicate and inform perfectly both teachers and learners about their achievements.

As far as reading comprehension is concerned, there is an increasing demand for thoughtful and adequate assessment plans that include appropriate methods and useful tools that determine the learners' needs and help them understand the expectations of their learning. In other words, this kind of assessment should be considered as a comprehensive approach that is tailored to the objectives of the classroom instruction.

Indeed, reading comprehension is a complex process that gathers several inseparable skills which require sufficient time so as to be perfectly taught and assessed.

Acknowledgment

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions. This questionnaire aims at gathering information about your views concerning the reading comprehension assessment. It, also, aims to give you the opportunity to show your wants and preferences.

.Full Name: …………………………………………
.Age: ......……………………………………......…
.Year: …………………………………….............
.School: ……………………………...........…...

1. How long have you been learning English?

07years ☐   08 years ☐   09 years ☐   more ☐

2.Do you think that reading is an important skill?
Yes ☐
No ☐
Why?

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………..

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3. How do you find the reading material in class?

good ☐   Interesting ☐   complicated ☐

4. Do you think assessment is essential to your learning?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Why?

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

5. How do you feel when you are assessed?

At ease ☐   annoyed ☐   Stressed ☐
Why?

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

6. How do you want to be assessed?

Tests and exams ☐   Homework ☐ Continuous classroom activities ☐
Projects ☐
Please justify your answer:

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

7. Does assessment develop your reading comprehension skills?

Yes ☐   No ☐   I do not know ☐
Justify:

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

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8.What kind of tasks do your teachers use in assessing your reading
comprehension?

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9. Please, state your opinion about the assessment of reading
comprehension in the classroom.

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APPENDIX 2

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions related to the assessment of your learners 'reading comprehension skills. You are also requested to give your proposals and suggestions about the approaches and the strategies which are used to assess reading.

Full Name: ....
Gender: ....

1. How long have you been teaching English?
   ☐ Years

3. What are the advantages of assessment?

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

4. What kind of assessment tools do you prefer?
A-Tests ☐

        B-Classroom activities
        ☐
        C-Project
        ☐
        D- Multiple tools
        ☐
        E-Portfolios
        ☐

5. What test techniques do you apply to assess reading comprehension?

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A-Multiple choice questions
☐

B-Filling the gaps activities
☐

C-Asking the learners to write summaries
☐

D-Asking the learners to explain and discuss the main idea
☐

E-Focusing on the reading comprehension questions
☐

F-Focusing on words' meanings
☐

6. When you assess reading comprehension, what kind of difficulties and
obstacles do your learners generally meet?

A-Lack of motivation in class   ☐
B-Lack of the reading fluency   ☐
C-Lack of vocabulary and comprehension   ☐

Others:...
....

7. Do you use the assessment results in designing your courses?
Yes ☐   Sometimes ☐   Never ☐
Please, justify your answer:
....
....
....
....

8. As a teacher of English, what techniques do you suggest for assessing
the reading comprehension skill?
....
....
....
....

Thank you so much for your help.

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Biodata

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