



**Factors Contributing to Reading
Comprehension Difficulties among Saudi
Elementary School Students from the
Teachers' Perspectives**

Alhanouf Ibrahim Aljaloud

Faculty member at the university of Hail.
College of Education-Department of English language

العوامل المسببة لصعوبات الفهم القرائي باللغة الإنجليزية لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية بالمملكة العربية السعودية من وجهة نظر المعلمين

الهنوف إبراهيم الجلعود.

عضو هيئة تدريس في جامعة حائل

كلية التربية - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية.

البريد الإلكتروني: ah.alglood@uoh.edu.sa

المستخلص:

تناولت هذه الدراسة العوامل المسببة لصعوبات الفهم القرائي لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية بالمملكة العربية السعودية، حيث تُدرّس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية، هدفت الدراسة إلى تحديد العوامل التي تسبب هذه الصعوبات واقتراح استراتيجيات لتحسين قدرات المتعلمين، ولقد اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية متعددة الأساليب، حيث جمعت بين الاستبانات الكمية والمقابلات النوعية لتقديم تحليل شامل، كما شملت الدراسة ٢٣ مشاركاً، منهم ٢٠ معلماً أكملوا الاستبيان، و٣ شاركوا في مقابلات معمقة، وتم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبانات مقيدة وبروتوكولات مقابلات شبه مقيدة، وأظهرت النتائج عدداً من العوامل الرئيسية التي تعيق الفهم القرائي، منها الحواجز اللغوية مثل ضعف المفردات، وصعوبات القواعد النحوية، وتحديات الوعي الصوتي، كما شكلت الفروق الثقافية بين اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية عائقاً أمام الفهم الفعال، بالإضافة إلى أوجه القصور في المناهج الدراسية، مثل الأهداف غير الواضحة والتدرج التعليمي غير المناسب، وأوصت الدراسة بمراجعة المناهج الدراسية للغة الإنجليزية واعتماد أساليب تدريس نشطة، مثل القراءة التفاعلية والأنشطة المستهدفة لتنمية المفردات، لتعزيز مهارات الفهم القرائي لدى المتعلمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفهم القرائي، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، صعوبات القراءة، وجهات نظر المعلمين، تعديل المناهج الدراسية.



Factors Contributing to Reading Comprehension Difficulties among Saudi Elementary School Students from the Teachers' Perspectives

Alhanouf Ibrahim Aljaloud

Faculty member at the university of Hail.

College of Education-Department of English language

Email: ah.algloud@uoh.edu.sa

ABSTRACT:

This study explored the factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties among young learners in Saudi elementary schools where English is taught as a second language. The research aimed to identify factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties and recommend strategies to improve learners' abilities. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis. The study involved 23 participants, with 20 teachers completing the survey and 3 participating in in-depth interviews. Data were collected using a structured survey and semi-structured interview protocols. The findings highlighted several key factors impeding reading comprehension, including linguistic barriers such as limited vocabulary, difficulties with grammar, and challenges in phonemic awareness. Additionally, cultural differences between Arabic and English created obstacles for effective comprehension, while curriculum deficiencies - such as unclear objectives and steep learning gradients - further exacerbated the issue. The study recommended revising the English curriculum and adopting active teaching methods, such as interactive reading and targeted vocabulary activities, to enhance learners' comprehension skills.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, EFL Learners, Reading Difficulties, Teachers' Perspectives, Curriculum Adaptation.

Introduction:

Reading comprehension skills for young learners are very crucial as they empower them to be able to extract meaning from written textbooks or other sources (Altin & Saracaloğlu, 2018; González, 2017). These skills are core to the learner's academic achievement and, as such, should be nurtured to help the students attain desirable academic performance. Additionally, it is critical to cultivate strong reading comprehension skills at an early age for learners to lay a solid foundation for academic excellence (González, 2017; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). So, regardless of language or culture, developing reading comprehension skills is crucial, especially in countries like Saudi Arabia, where schools are helping learners develop reading comprehension skills in both their native language and in some foreign languages, and one widely-used foreign language studied as a second language in Saudi Arabia is English.

As a result, building language proficiency for non-native speakers would empower the learners to better navigate the interconnected world—and when learners are proficient in the English language, they are empowered to share and obtain ideas across the globe (Nuriska, 2021). The extent of reading comprehension problems in children is aptly captured by Spencer & Wagner (2018), who report that students in the fourth graders (approximately 31%) and eight graders (about 24%) their reading comprehension ratings that were below the threshold and that these pupils would have difficulties with more intricate tasks that extends beyond the text itself (for example, equating and contrasting concepts or making inferences past the text) (pp. 366-367).

Without such a deep understanding, the students in Saudi primary schools struggle to decode the English language and subsequently find it hard to connect it to their existing knowledge. Additionally, achieving a deep understanding of context beyond just the vocabulary is crucial, given that translating individual words hinders the fluid comprehension of the texts, thereby limiting the students' understanding of texts written in English.

Objectives and Significance of the Research

This research aims to unveil an understanding of the challenges or factors that hinder effective reading comprehension abilities for English learners in the Saudi schools and then build strategies to



overcome such challenges and improve the reading comprehension ability for the learners.

Within the Saudi context, it is vital to understand the factors and challenges that hinder efficient reading comprehension ability in young learners, as this would lay a foundation for developing strategies aimed at enhancing the reading comprehension skills for students of English. This research endeavors to shed light on these challenges from the instructors' perspective and their experience guiding the students in developing reading comprehension skills for the English language. By examining the teachers' perspectives and experiences, this research seeks to uncover the underlying factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties and identify effective instructional strategies that can enhance reading comprehension skills among primary school pupils in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research are intended to extend beyond just the classroom setting, but to impact policies and curriculum as it relates to coaching English as a second language in the Saudi elementary schools.

Research Questions

This research had two overarching research questions that guided the research into understanding the challenges of reading comprehension among young learners in Saudi primary schools and to help develop strategies aimed at improving the reading comprehension skills for English learners in primary schools.

1. What factors make reading comprehension difficult for English learners in Saudi primary schools from the teachers' perspective?
2. What strategies might help teachers improve reading comprehension ability for the learners' of English language in Saudi primary schools?

Literature Review

The coaching of English in Saudi schools has generated differing opinions and is a topic that has provoked debates in Saudi society. Elyas (2008), states that the use of English to teach in Saudi schools began in 1970 when it was implemented as a required course in the seventh grade of the intermediate stage. In other words, the student spends three years studying the English language in the intermediate stage and three years in the secondary stage. Since then, the standing of the English language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has changed through time and is now widely employed in fields like

technology, sciences, and business. As a result, the Ministry of Education declared that English as a foreign language should be taught in Saudi elementary schools (Elyas, 2008).

Al-shahrani (2016, p. 45) avers that before the addition of the fourth level in 2012, English language was taught in grades 5, 6, and 7 in 2003. Elyas (2008) demonstrates that since the Saudi Ministry of Education published the new strategy for teaching a second language, there has been a significant change in how the instruction of English is implemented in Saudi schools. English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools, and some higher education sectors now require it as a prerequisite (Al-qahtani and Alsager, 2022).

English language implementation policy/Curricula in Saudi schools

In terms of the Saudi educational policy, Al-rashidi and Phan (2015) report that elementary school students received two 45-minute sessions a week of teaching in the English language, while students in middle and high school attended four 45-minute sessions per week. In designing the English language curricula, the Ministry of Education ensured it is consistent with Saudi societal customs, beliefs, and values. According to Al-Otaibi (2004), three textbooks were used for the English language course: a student's book, a workbook for pupils, and a teacher's manual. The aforementioned books are for vocabulary, grammar, and the four language skills (listening, talking, reading, and writing). Nevertheless, most schools lack language resources like language labs and recording devices, and they might not work well if available; or the teachers may not know how to utilise them, and a general lack of support prevails (Al-Mutairi, 2008).

As stated earlier, the Saudi Ministry of Education had broad objectives for coaching English in schools, and the main goal among these objectives is to provide students with the four fundamental language skills (reading, speaking writing, and listening). The second and third objectives are for learners to acquire the language skills required for various occupations and real-world scenarios. The fourth objective is to increase students' understanding of the significance of learning English as a language of international communication (Al-Zayid, 2012).

According to Cline et al. (2006), reading is deciphering and understanding written text. Deciphering needs interpreting the symbols of writing systems (including braille) into the articulated words they embody, while understanding is based on the objective for reading, the background, the kind of text, and the readers' methods and knowledge.



It is worth mentioning that reading is an interactive process because it requires readers to develop a variety of sub-skills, such as knowledge of the original language and grammatical proficiency (Grabe, 1991). Additionally, reading is about understanding the text's literal meaning and recognising its fundamental ideas (Lunzer and Gardener, 1979). Likewise, a description by the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) as cited in Frankel et al. (2022), stresses that reading comprehension transpires when there is an interaction between the reader, the text, the activity, and the broader sociocultural setting. Reading comprehension is the use of a skill that progressed for other purposes (listening or oral comprehension) to a new sort of input (text) (Kirby, 2007). Also, it is the aptitude to read, process and understand the meaning of text (Rambuyon and Susada, 2022, p. 1776).

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theoretical frameworks that underpins the reading process. However, this particular research is grounded on the Schema theory, which deals with the idea that readers can understand a text based on their previous knowledge, and is contingent on the fact that comprehension of the text relies on the relations between the text and the reader's contextual knowledge (Rumelhart, 1980). Additionally, the reader must be able to effectively understand the context, which includes understanding the text, sentences, and words more than the linguistics and having the aptitude to link the diverse parts of the text with his/her previous knowledge (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1988).

Al Salmi (2011) highlights three different kinds of schema, all of which are really linked to reading comprehension. They are linguistic schemata, formal schemata, and content schemata. A linguistic schema refers to the reader's linguistic skills regarding grammar, expressions, and vocabulary critical to understanding content. It operates on the basis that knowledge is essential for understanding text, and a learner lacking linguistic schema cannot decode or understand a text.

According to Al Salmi (2011), "formal schemata are organizational form and the rhetorical structure of written text." It involves knowing different types of texts and genres and that varying types of texts employ text organization, linguistic structure, vocabulary, grammar, and degree of formality in a different way. A content schema is a reader's ability to become familiar with a subject,

as well as the cultural background and prior knowledge of the subject. It finds application in understanding the information in the texts in fiction, poems, essays, newspaper articles, academic articles, etc. Content schemata allude to the contextual knowledge of a text or subject the text discusses and consist of topic familiarity, cultural knowledge, and prior experience with a field. It operates on the grounds that a reader's knowledge of a topic directly impacts their understanding and is more likely to draw information from the text speedily and easily (pp. 702-703).

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for EFL learners because academic success is reliant on the student's skill to read and completely comprehend written texts (Al-Zahrani et al. (2021). Consequently, it is essential to investigate the challenges hindering students' advancement in reading comprehension within the educational context of Saudi Arabia based on their teachers' views.

A study by Qrquez and Rashid (2017) explores reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners at the University of Jordan. Using questionnaires, the researchers sampled 200 students from the institution. The researchers identified challenges encountered by the EFL students in their reading comprehension as vague words, unfamiliar vocabulary, and inadequate time to cognitively process the text.

Likewise, a mixed-method research by Hassan and Dweik (2021) examine the difficulties faced by ninth grade Jordanian students' English reading comprehension and the factors responsible for these challenges. They sampled 70 EFL students and 7 English language instructors and collected data from them using a questionnaire. They reported that major issues facing learners were vocabulary, homonyms and homographs, plus their failure to identify information about the text. Also, they identified factors adversely impacting reading comprehension to be linked to the English language, the reading comprehension text, syllabus (comprising coaching practices and materials), and resources accessible to the learners. While the research context is similar to this research in some ways, there are still significant differences in terms of contexts and the research sample.

Equally, Al-Qahtani (2016b) examines why Saudi EFL readers' demonstrate poor reading abilities by sampling 90 Saudi EFL middle-school learners, eight EFL teachers, and six supervisors in a public school in Jeddah using questionnaires. The outcomes from the



research show that the students lacked the required reading habits and skills in L1 (mother language, Arabic) and L2 (target language, English). The report from the research identifies some difficulties as poor teaching skills and instructor training programs, poor contact with the English language, reading aloud given priority over comprehension, lack of motivation, unfamiliar and inappropriate reading subjects, poor reading skills training for learners, poor vocabulary, and poor involvement of parents. The research gaps in this study are that it could have explored the reasons elementary school students have poor reading abilities based on the instructors' account and to extend the same investigation to young learners as well.

Besides, Hezam et al. (2022) investigate the challenges and problems of reading comprehension experienced by EFL learners. Using close-ended questionnaires to collect data from the participants, the researchers sampled 301 first-year students of the University of Bisha, who were non-English significant students from different disciplines. Results from the study identify insufficient vocabulary knowledge as a leading source of reading difficulties for both male and female students. A vital gap in the study is that it is difficult generalising the outcome to other universities and educational levels because the research was limited to only first-year University students.

Lastly, Khan et al. (2020) examine the reading challenges facing EFL learners at elementary schools in Saudi Arabia. It was a mixed method study that used post and pretest checks and interviews to gather data from 290 male elementary school students, 9 EFL teachers, and 3 supervisors. The outcome shows that aside from a lack of motivation to read English study materials, other leading reasons for the student's poor reading abilities were poor vocabulary, weak grammar, wrong spellings, slow reading speed, and incorrect pronunciation. Predominantly, the researchers identified poor vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, wrong spellings, slow reading pace and flawed grammar as negatively impacting the reading comprehension of a significant number of the students sampled. Crucially, the instructors and supervisors identify minimal exposure to the target language and students' preference for communicating in Arabic than in English as principal challenges impacting reading comprehension.

In trying to improve reading comprehension among EFL learners in elementary school, there are several strategies that can be

employed. In Saudi Arabian schools, most second language teachers are restricted to teaching only certain forms of reading. A study by Alshumaimeri (2011) that aims to discover the impact of several reading styles on Saudi students' comprehension of English as a second language sampled 145 male students in the tenth grade, and the assigned task was to read three paragraphs using various reading strategies (non-verbal pronunciation, silent, oral). The findings revealed a substantial difference between internal pronunciation, oral and silent reading, and indicating that oral reading considerably affect students' performance.

Gonzalez (2017) describes an action research project that intends to activate and put into practice an extended reading plan called the 'interactive reading approach.' This is in an attempt to define the reading comprehension processes of the sixth-stage pupils in primary schools in Bogotá. The sample consisted of 20 students comprising 10 boys, and 10 girls, over the course of more than six months in 2012.

The outcomes were encouraging because they showed that interactive reading model's associated activities helped the students comprehend the stories they were reading. According to Phichiensathien (2021), interactive reading is an efficient intervention for coaching reading courses through three techniques: the bottom-up, the top-down, and reader and text interaction approaches. In the bottom-up method, students employ word recognition, letter identification, semantic knowledge, syntactic structure, and generic units of a textual structure in reading courses, while the top-down method allow students to understand the text via their cognition. Lastly, the reader and text interaction approaches is an active procedure where the student can manipulate word-based knowledge and cognitive skill, and the key approach is to involve the learner in comprehending the text (p. 304).

In addition, Altin and Saracaloğlu (2018) examine the impact of reading comprehension instruction enhanced with cultural materials on seventh graders' vocabulary knowledge and approaches to English language classes by sampling two classes in a Turkish school. After acquiring and processing data from the participants, the results show that reading comprehension enhanced with cultural materials improves vocabulary knowledge and positively influences outlook toward English classes (p. 12). The study's outcome parallels Bui and Fagan (2013) research, who investigated enhancing the reading



comprehension performance of fifth-grade students from traditionally and linguistically varied backgrounds via the Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy (IRCS) mediation. The outcome of their study reinforces the culturally responsive teaching concept that supports linking the school's instruction and learning setting with the pupils' individual and cultural experience (p. 66).

The above findings are almost similar to the outcome of Tavakoli et al.'s (2013) research into how nativisation affects Iranian EFL students' inference and precise understanding of a short story. The researchers sampled 60 middle level EFL students from an English language institute in Iran using instruments like reading comprehension tests, attitude questionnaires, and interviews to collect data from them. They report that since meaning exists as the dynamic relations between the readers' cognition and the text, nativisation places them in a familiar context where they attempt to progress. Also, they found that nativisation enhances comprehension and can be utilised by material designers to deliver more familiar cultural content (p. 1594).

Again, based on the outcome of his research, Al-Qahtani (2016b) recommends several strategies to stem the effect of poor reading abilities of Saudi EFL learners. First, is promoting reading in the students' L1 and TLs to make them want to read. Second, is implementing intensive reading program that clearly teaches learners' critical reading skills in both the L1 and TLs. Third, is to highlight the significance of pre-service and in-service instructors' training in reading skills drills. Fourth, is to give learners intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that leads to reading comprehension gains. Last, is to ensure active parental participation in students' education (p. 12).

In the same way, Ashraf (2023, pp. 9-10) examines reading comprehension challenges facing Saudi EFL students and recommends several approaches to tackle the issues identified in his study. They include introducing the English alphabet and alphabet sounds from the commencement of primary-level education, using modernised and effective approaches to teach vocabulary, and ensuring that the medium of teaching EFL in classes should be English only. Also, learners should be exposed to English everyday, and choosing teaching materials that interest students' must be a priority. In addition, students must not memorise reading comprehension answers and must be trained sufficiently to deal with reading comprehension issues.

Besides, to manage anxiety, the learning atmosphere must be friendly, and students must cultivate the habit of reading both in English and Arabic, and English must not be seen as another subject they need to pass only.

Methodology

Research Design

The research's main aim is to discover the factors that make reading comprehension challenging for Saudi students in primary schools from the tutors' viewpoint. Additionally, it attempted to identify some strategies used by teachers to improve Saudi students' performance in English reading comprehension. In order to achieve that goal, the current research adopts the mixed methods design to collect and analyse data. The use of mixed methods, which combined quantitative and qualitative methods in a single investigation, complements one another and fully answers the research problem (Greene et al., 1989). Moreover, employing the mixed methods strategy in the research may add knowledge and insight, which may not be obtainable in a single-method exploration. Additionally, another benefit of mixed-method research is the increased likelihood of results generalisation (Migiro and Magangi, 2011).

Data Collection Methods

The research's data were gathered from English teachers in several Saudi primary schools. The research employed two instruments: a questionnaire and semi-interviews. The justification for utilising two instruments is that it strengthens the research's conclusions by reducing one instrument's limitations with the other tool. In other words, they are complementary to each other.

The interview aims to discover "What strategies might help teachers improve reading comprehension?" A series of interviews was conducted with three female English teachers in two primary schools and were performed face-to-face between 30-40 minutes, using both audio recording and researcher's notes to ensure accuracy of information collected for this research.

The semi-structured interview method was chosen because it is a very effective data collection technique along with its low costs, and it is the best way to address the second research question, which considers an accurate response in examining the teachers' strategies in imparting English language proficiency and leads to the development of a relationship between the teaching strategy and student performance in reading comprehension ability. Similarly, Denscombe



(2021) contends that the interview approach is appropriate for complicated problems that demand an understanding of how events occur, their interrelationship, and the forces that affect them. Moreover, another advantage of interviews is that the researcher can ask follow-up questions to elicit further information (Buckler and Walliman (2016). While the researcher takes a lot of time and effort to prepare, encode, and then analyse the data, Denscombe (2021) argues that a major disadvantage of interviews is that it is time-consuming since the text is open.

Research Participants

The sample for this research was drawn from English teachers in the Hail region of Saudi Arabia. All the respondents were 25 years of age and above, with only two out of the 23 respondents having less than 5 years of experience on the job. The current research used mixed methods research to analyse the data. The sample in the semi-structured interviews was performed on 3 English teachers from two female schools. However, the questionnaire was conducted on 20 teachers in several female schools in the same region and sent to them via the designed Google form link (see Appendix A). Teachers were sampled because they best reveal the factors that make reading comprehension difficult from their perspectives. In addition, they might find some strategies to improve reading comprehension in primary schools.

For data acquisition, the sampling strategies used tools like interviews and questionnaires, which followed a purposive method. The justifications for using this sampling strategy in this research is reliant on the postulation that given a research's goal, some participants are indispensable because of their differing and significant opinions regarding the notions and problems in question, and, hence, their inclusion in the sample (Campbell, 2020). In addition, Thomas (2022, pp. 4-5) argues that it allows researchers to institute extensive interpretations based on their sampling, gives examiners a larger pool of nonprobability sampling opportunities to select from, saves time and expenses when acquiring data, and gives researchers feasible information on any critical issue they are investigating.

Compared to probability sampling method that limits researcher biases, a similar drawback in the subjective purposive sampling method is prevalent, and it is critical to inhibit it. The bias usually occurs due to ill-judged decisions that are not dependent on

evident standards, or notional context, or some established principles (Sharma, 2017).

The current research was able to control the shortcomings in the sample size and adopted sampling strategies by ensuring representativeness in the sample and monitoring moderating factors that endanger external validity. Furthermore, the research improves the valuation of external validity and knowledge use via correct reporting of results, creating programmes of research with other scholars with similar investigation skills, enabling meta-analysis of studies, and forming research partnerships with scholars and policymakers to deal with pertinent issues in an appropriate fashion (Ferguson, 2004).

Data Analysis

Research data are “a set of value on one or more observational units” and come as facts, observations, images, recordings, measurements, etc. (Baral, 2017). Khandkar (2009) found that open coding includes labelling and relying on traits and dimensions to define and develop categories. It is applied to some of the methods used to analyse qualitative data. Coding, in its most simplest form, is the procedure for detecting pieces of meaning in a data and tagging them with a code (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019).

For this research, the researcher adopted a deductive coding analysis for its effectiveness in making the process simpler and more focused, especially for beginner academics. In addition, the technique ensures the coding highlights the essential issues in the current literature, and it usually deals with theory testing or refinement (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, p. 13). In order to analyse the data and encode it, the researcher adopts the meticulous guide to thematic analysis as espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006). It requires the investigator to become familiar with the data, generate the code, search for themes, examine themes, name themes, and define themes before producing the report (pp. 86-93). Where some aspect concentrate on information related to research questions and others on several fieldwork-related details, the researcher could delete some data during coding (Saldaña, 2016). For this research, the researcher used the proprietary data processing software, NVivo, and a sample of the qualitative coding result can be seen in Appendix E.

Semi-interviews

The semi-interviews were created to address the second research problem and employed to understand strategies that might



help teachers improve reading comprehension for Saudi learners (see appendix B).

Questionnaire

According to Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993), a questionnaire can be used to learn more about a sizable community characteristics, pursuits, and opinions. The questionnaire was created to address the first of the research questions. This instrument was designed to elicit the best responses on Saudi teachers' "perspectives on the factors that make reading comprehension difficult in Saudi primary schools."

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions arranged in open-ended and closed-ended format and a Likert scale. According to Denscombe (2021), having a variety questions in the questionnaire has two advantages. First, it inhibits the respondent from feeling bored. Secondly, it prevents the participant from randomly choosing the answer. It is designed using Google form, and then applied to the Saudi primary schools under examination.

The data acquired from the administration of the questionnaire survey were analysed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, and the process involved tabulating data and calculating percentages and frequencies. The researcher selected SPSS software because it offered the prospect of assisting with quick data analysis in various formats

Validity and reliability

Validity is linked to the accuracy of the outcome of a research, as well as whether the data explain the phenomenon and whether it is represented in the data (Buckler and Walliman, 2016). According to Ary et al. (2002), validity refers to how far theories and evidence are used to guarantee that data are interpreted correctly. According to Shadish et al. (2002), there are four key categories of validity: internal, constructive, external, and statistical conclusion validity. However, along with the ones mentioned, there are other types of validity, and they are content, consistent, convergent, and discriminant validity (Cohen et al., 2018).

Conversely, reliability is the degree to which the data ensuing from a test are the outcome of attributes of those being evaluated (Rudner and Schafer, 2001). If certain variables stayed the same, would the outcomes be the same (Buckler and Walliman, 2016)? Fitzner (2007) highlights that there are four kinds of reliability: test-

retest reliability, Interterm and internal consistency, reliability Interrater, and Intrarater reliability.

Al-Ababneh (2020) avers that triangulation methodology is a multi-technique research employing more than one method for gathering information so as to improve confidence in the outcomes. Denzin (1970) identified forms of triangulation as time triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, and theoretical and methodological triangulation.

This research employed a questionnaire and interview to show the extent methodological triangulation could potentially strengthen the research's reliability and validity. Moreover, the most familiar form of triangulation is methodological, and researchers frequently combine qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research. Cohen et al. (2018) found that methodological triangulation has two approaches, using either different procedures in one research, or the same methodology in different contexts. Therefore, this research's validity and reliability were ensured using the two techniques.

Based on the current research, the technique used to gather and analyse data, such as an interview, can make qualitative research more reliable. According to Silverman (1993), the interviewer must: have a grasp of the question the same way for every interviewee, ensure that they are properly trained, have reliability in coding, and be focused on using closed questions.

Results

The survey questionnaire was administered first, and then the interviews followed. The research had 20 participants for the quantitative surveys and another three for the interviews. All the 23 participants for this research were female, and Tables 1 below presents some demographic and characteristics information of the respondents for this research.

Table 1

Teachers' demographic information

Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	More than 15 years
Number of teachers	5	7	3	11
Ages of respondents	25-35	36-45	46-55	More than 55 years
Number of Teachers	8	10	1	Nil

Research Question 1: What factors make reading comprehension difficult for English learners in Saudi primary schools from the teachers' perspective?

The first research question sought to identify the factors that limited the reading comprehension abilities for the English learners in Saudi primary schools from their teachers' perspective. The answers to this first research questions are derived from the qualitative analysis of interviews and the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire survey sent to the research participants. From the qualitative analysis (thematic analysis), three themes were linked to the first research question, namely; Challenges of Linguistic elements, Curriculum Inadequacies, and Ineffective Teaching and Learning Methods.

Theme 1: Challenges of Linguistic Elements

The first theme, "Challenges of Linguistic Elements," delves into the difficulties that learners face concerning various linguistic elements such as grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, and parts of speech. The teachers identified several specific challenges within this theme. One prominent difficulty highlighted by the teachers is phonetic difficulties. Teacher 1 mentioned that students struggle with correct pronunciation and understanding of words due to differences between written characters and their spoken counterparts. Similarly, Teacher 3 emphasized the issue of long and complex words that pose challenges in pronunciation and understanding.

"The way some letters are written differs from their pronunciation, and this is known in the science of language phonetics. The presence of such confusion may constitute a dilemma for learners when reading the written text. The student does not have sufficient knowledge of phonetics." – Teacher 1

Grammar difficulties were also noted as a significant obstacle. Teacher 1 expressed that students encounter challenges in using grammar effectively, including issues with sentence structure and assimilating grammar rules:

"Most of them have trouble understanding and assimilating the rules."

However, one of the teachers, teacher 3, pointed out that the difficulty with grammar tend to diminish as the learners make progress to higher grade levels, saying that:

“Students in the higher grades have a better understanding than the lower grades, as their understanding of the rule (Grammar) method makes it easier for them to write coherent sentences.”

Additionally, teacher 1 pointed out difficulties with parts of speech, indicating that students face general problems in this area.

The learners also confront vocabulary difficulties for their reading comprehension in the English language. Teacher 1 mentioned that some students struggle with remembering vocabulary, while Teacher 2 stated that students face challenges in analyzing new words and pronouncing their phonetic units, but added that with practice and repetition, the learners could overcome the difficulties with vocabularies.

“Yes, the difficulty of linking the letter and its sound ... the difficulty of analyzing new words ... the difficulty of pronouncing the phonetic units of the word ... the difficulty of distinguishing visual words. However, vocabulary depends on the extent to which the student uses this vocabulary that he has acquired, through repetition and writing it becomes more effective and more useful to him.” – Teacher 2

Additionally, the dissimilarity between the learners' mother language (Arabic) and English language posed an obstacle and limitation to their ability with regards to English language reading comprehension. Teacher 1 highlighted this linguistic bridge, where differences in language structures and cultural nuances hinder the students' reading comprehension ability, saying that:

“I think, there is difficulty because of the difference in the language of the learner between the mother tongue (Arabic) and the English language as a foreign language, which affects the student's ability to read.”

Such differences may lead to confusion and impact the learners' overall understanding of the English language.

Theme 2: Curriculum Inadequacies

The second theme, "Curriculum Inadequacies," explores the gaps in the curriculum that affect students' reading comprehension abilities. One identified inadequacy is the lack of clear objectives in the current curriculum. Teacher 1 stated that the curriculum lacks clear objectives and content aligned with these objectives. This lack of clarity can impact both teachers and students in effectively navigating the learning process. Additionally, the teachers noted a poor linking of teaching methods to content within the curriculum. Teacher 1

highlighted that the curriculum does not sufficiently connect the teaching methods with the teaching materials and content. This lack of alignment may result in a disconnect between what is being taught and how it is being taught, hindering students' reading comprehension. In teacher 1's own words:

"I think, the curricula lack clear objectives, content commensurate with those objectives, gradient level of difficulty, and linking teaching methods to content."

Another issue is the gradient level difficulty in the curriculum. Teachers across interviews stated that the teaching methods outlined in the curriculum gradually became more challenging, potentially causing difficulties for both students and teachers. The lack of a well-structured progression of difficulty within the curriculum can hinder students' ability to comprehend English texts effectively.

"I think, the curricula lack clear objectives, content commensurate with those objectives, gradient level of difficulty, and linking teaching methods to content." – Teacher 1

"Lack of gradation in the curricula in terms of difficulty and ease. Second graders learn the curriculum very close to third-graders. And so on. The lack of content to learn letters and give them their right in terms of learning sound, form, writing, sufficiently, but only include them during the curriculum with the rules it contains, new words, etc." – Teacher 2

These findings indicate that the curriculum in Saudi primary schools faces inadequacies and gaps in terms of clear objectives, gradient level difficulty, and the alignment between teaching methods and content materials recommended by the current curriculum. These shortcomings posed by the current curriculum can impact students' ability to engage with and comprehend English texts effectively.

Theme 3: Ineffective Teaching and Learning Methods

The third theme, "Ineffective Teaching and Learning Methods," examines the teaching and learning approaches that restrict students' reading comprehension abilities. Although this theme had limited coverage in the interviews, one significant issue emerged, that, passive learning as an ineffective method for the English learners to develop reading comprehension ability. Teacher 1 highlighted that relying solely on students receiving information passively is inadequate, saying that:

“Passive learning, which depends on students receiving information, alone is not enough...”

This suggests that a lack of active engagement and participation in the learning process may hinder students' ability to comprehend English texts effectively.

Although this theme had limited coverage, as only one participant pointed it out as a challenge to reading comprehension ability, it raises concerns about the need for more interactive and engaging teaching and learning methods to enhance reading comprehension among English learners (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1988; González, 2017; Phichiensathien, 2021). Further exploration and research in this area could provide valuable insights into effective instructional strategies.

For instance, ineffective teaching and learning methods like the reliance on passive learning may hinder students' reading comprehension abilities. There is an emphasis on the importance of employing active learning approaches that promote student engagement and participation in the learning process.

Quantitative Results under Research Question One

A quantitative analysis was also conducted on the questionnaire data. The quantitative research showed that grammar, vocabulary, and parts of speech difficulties limited the learners' abilities to read and comprehend in the English language. However, the results showed that the participants had a neutral stance on whether linguistic differences were a factor limiting the reading comprehension ability for the English learners in Saudi primary schools.

Particularly, 45% of the teacher participants agreed that reading comprehension was indeed limited by the difficulties in grammar with another 20% of the participants strongly agreeing to that view. However at total of 30% of the participants at least disagreed with the view that grammar challenges limited reading comprehension, where 20% strongly Dias agreed and 10% only disagreed.

For the vocabulary difficulties, 40% of the participants agreed that the reading comprehension abilities of the English learners in Saudi primary schools was limited by the vocabulary difficulties that the learners faced (Qrquez & Rashid, 2017), with another 15% strongly agreeing to the view. Therefore, it can be noted that a total of 55% of the participants approved of the assumption that vocabulary difficulties limited reading comprehension. A total of 40% of the participants showed a disagreement with the view that difficulties in the

vocabularies made reading boring, thereby limiting reading comprehension. The remaining 5% remained neutral to this view.

About 40% of the participants also agreed that difficulties in the parts of speech limited the learners' ability to read and comprehend effectively in the English language. This was followed by another 20% of the participants who strongly agreed to the view that difficulties in the parts of speech were a factor that limited the reading comprehension ability of the learners, and about 15% of the participants indicated being neutral on the view. The remaining 25% at least indicated a disagreement with the assumption that difficulties in the parts of speech made it hard for reading.

While linguistic difference problems were identified in the thematic analysis as an issue that did limit reading comprehension ability for the learners, the quantitative results suggest it is only a mild factor since the participants held a neutral stance on that view, with 30% saying they had neutral views as to whether difference between the learners' mother tongue and the English language could pose a threat to their reading and comprehension ability, while the number of those who at least agreed or disagreed was equal at 35%.

Research Question 2: What strategies might help teachers improve reading comprehension?

The second research question asked for the strategies to limit or overcome the factors hindering reading comprehension for the English learners so as to improve their English reading comprehension abilities. The participants covered a range of strategies that were broadly categorized into two themes: (theme 4) Improving syllabus and curriculum, and (theme 5) Pedagogical Innovative Teaching and Learning Approaches.

Theme 4: Improving Syllabus and Curriculum

The first set of strategies were covered under the fourth theme, "Improving Syllabus and Curriculum," which listed and focused on strategies to enhance the syllabus and curriculum, thereby improving reading comprehension among learners. Two distinct strategies were listed under this fourth theme, namely having clear objectives, and balancing the difficulties in curriculum by grade level of the learners.

Teacher 1 identified that having clear objectives in the curriculum was crucial for enhancing students' thinking and problem-solving abilities, suggesting that by providing clear objectives that

stimulate students' curiosity and enthusiasm for reading, teachers can create an environment conducive to comprehension development.

“The curriculum should have objectives that enhance the student's thinking and his ability to solve problems in an environment that provides various and interesting educational means for the learner, so as to arouse the student's desire and enthusiasm for reading.” – Teacher 1

Balancing the difficulty by grade levels was another strategy suggested to prevent early graders from feeling overwhelmed with the content. Both teacher 2 and teacher 3 argue that by gradually introducing and selecting age-appropriate vocabulary and topics, teachers can ensure that students feel comfortable and confident in their reading abilities.

“There should be a gradual selection of words for students from first to sixth grade in the new curricula. There are words that are difficult to pronounce and difficult to write for first-grade students. Should be topics chosen that touch children's lives. So that it is accepted and used with ease.” — Teacher 2

Therefore, theme 4 highlights that modifying the current curriculum or syllabus by making the objectives more clear and balancing the learner's difficulty level gradually per grade level would be helpful in improving the learner's ability to effectively read and comprehend in the English language.

Theme 5: Pedagogical Innovative Teaching and Learning Approaches

Another set of strategies to improve the reading comprehension ability was around the pedagogical approach that the teachers employed in their teaching methods or the learners' learning approaches. These sets of strategies were classified into the fifth theme, "Pedagogical Innovative Teaching and Learning Approaches," which explored strategies that incorporate pedagogical innovation to improve reading comprehension. This theme had extensive coverage in the interviews, indicating its importance in addressing reading comprehension challenges.

The teachers suggested active learning methods as a key strategy to foster reading comprehension skills for English learners in Saudi primary schools. Encouraging students to participate actively in the learning process through cooperative learning, problem-solving activities, brainstorming, and simulation learning can enhance their ability to comprehend English texts. These interactive approaches

create an atmosphere of enthusiasm, interaction, and fun, contributing to a positive learning experience.

“Active learning allows students to learn and participate in the learning process through cooperation in determining what is right and wrong in reading, and the student gets help from his colleagues in directing him so that the student depends on himself and his colleagues in evaluation, and this is done by allowing students to self-manage, and here is spreading an atmosphere of safety, reassurance and fun And have fun while learning ... Passive learning, which depends on students receiving information, alone is not enough, so the student must be encouraged to practice developing his language skills by watching English-language programs via the Internet, where he can watch them repeatedly and write down words, watch movies and write new words, review what he learned in class Reading short stories and newspapers.” — Teacher 1

The integration of extra-curricular activities for the English language was also suggested as a motivating factor to improve reading comprehension for the Saudi primary schools' English learners. By giving opportunities for learners to participate in language-related events outside the schoolroom, such as theatrical work or field trips, their motivation to learn and develop essential skills can be enhanced.

“Paying attention and using time in extra-curricular activities of the English language, as they are no less important than classroom activities in increasing students' motivation to learn and build their basic skills, such as simple theatrical work or field trips to one of the landmarks of the lesson. Successful activity is what stimulates all the student's senses and contributes to students' acquisition of educational skills, behavioral, and emotional.” – Teacher 1

The diversity of teaching methods was highlighted as a valuable approach to improving reading comprehension for the learners of the English language. Employing a variety of strategies, such as visual presentations, songs, dialogue, and interactive exercises, caters to different learning preferences and stimulates students' senses, contributing to their acquisition of educational skills.

The evidence from the teacher participants suggests that incorporating pedagogical innovative teaching and learning approaches, including active learning methods, extra-curricular activities, and diverse teaching strategies, can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension abilities. By fostering an engaging

and interactive learning environment, teachers can create opportunities for students to develop their language skills and improve their overall comprehension.

Quantitative Results for Research Question Two

Based on the participants' responses, the quantitative results from questionnaires gave highlights on the strategies that could help improve the learners' reading comprehension abilities. The results presented three strategies which were in line with the results from the qualitative (thematic) analysis. These three strategies were; Extra-Curricular Activities and Engaging Activities, Active Learning Methods or Learners Engagements, and improving the current syllabus. About 65% of the participants, a majority, collectively agreed that having engaging activities and extra-curricular activities like the reading comprehension activities would be beneficial in improving the learners' abilities in reading and comprehending in the English language.

Additionally, a majority of the participants (60%) collectively agreed that active learning like the student-centered reading sessions would be a way to remedy the reading comprehension ability for the English learners in Saudi primary schools. About 10% stayed neutral with the remaining 30% of the participants collectively disagreeing with this view.

Additionally, a majority of the participants (55%) collectively agreed that improving the current curriculum and syllabus would be a solution towards improving the reading comprehension ability for the English learners in Saudi primary schools. About 15% remained neutral, with the remaining 30% of the participants collectively disagreeing with this view.

Discussion

From the results presented, the reading comprehension ability of English learners was hindered and limited by factors like difficulties with linguistic elements (grammar, vocabulary, phonetic, and linguistic bridge), inadequacies in the curriculum (lack of clear objectives, gradient level difficulty, and poor alignment between teaching methods and contents), and ineffective teaching and learning methods like passive learning. Based on these highlighted challenges, the resulting strategies to help improve the reading comprehension ability or proficiency for the English learners in Saudi primary schools, which included improving the syllabus and curriculum (by having clear objectives, and balancing difficulties by grade level) and

by adopting a more pedagogical innovative teaching and learning methods. The discussions on these findings are presented below by the respective research questions that they answer.

RQ1: What factors make reading comprehension difficult for English learners in Saudi Primary Schools from the teachers' perspective?

The leading set of factors that influenced the reading comprehension ability of English learners in Saudi primary schools was the difficulties faced on the various linguistic elements like grammar, vocabulary, phonetic, and language variations. The learners exhibited a difficulty in grammar as they could not understand the rules of grammar for the English language. This finding was consistent with the findings of other studies which highlighted that one of the challenges faced by English learners was the difficulty with grammar (Khan et al., 2020). Khan et al. (2020) points out that learners with grammar challenges have low reading and comprehension ability.

Another linguistic element where the learners faced difficulties was with the vocabulary in the English language (. This current research reports that the difficulty that the students faced in the English vocabularies was responsible for limited reading and comprehension ability that they showed. The importance of competency in vocabulary was attributed to the learners' ability to effectively read and comprehend texts in the English language (Hezam et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2020). In fact, Hezam et al. (2022) argued that when considering the linguistic elements and how they impact the learners' ability to read and comprehend the English language, vocabulary was more influential than grammar and language structure.

A different challenge related to the linguistic elements was the language or linguistic bridge that the learners had to pass to connect between their native language and the English language that they were learning. This is a challenge with the language variation, because some of the learners lacked a background knowledge as English is not their native language, which then hinders their ability to effectively read and comprehend the English language (González, 2017; Hezam et al., 2022). González (2017) attributed the difficulty brought by the language variations to the lack of a cultural context for which the students could relate the English language to their own native language.

Also, difficulties with language phonemic awareness were raised as a significant challenge that limited the learners' ability to effectively read and comprehend the English language. This finding was also similar to the outcomes of other studies that showed that the difficulty in spelling and pronunciation of the English words, or syllables was a challenge to their ability to read and comprehend the English language texts (Khan et al., 2020).

The second factor was identified as inadequacies in the syllabus and curriculum with regards to teaching and learning the English language. Particularly, the research found that the current syllabus and curriculum lacks clear objectives that could help define how the English language is taught in the Saudi primary schools. Al-Seghayer (2014) also pointed out that the ability of the English learners to effectively read and comprehend was hindered and limited by a flawed curriculum, which the research suggested needed to be reformed. Additionally, the learning slope was steep and posed a burden to the learners. This gradient level difficulty, as identified by the research, limited the ability of the learners to learn the concepts and building blocks of the English language. Other studies have also attributed the limited reading and comprehension ability of learners to such difficulty, which poses a demotivation and overwhelms the learners (Hezam et al., 2022).

The third and last factor identified was the ineffective teaching and learning methods that were currently incorporated in the Saudi primary schools. Specifically, the research highlighted that passive learning in most of the Saudi primary schools was ineffective to improving the learners' reading and comprehension abilities. Other studies too have pointed that to improve the reading and comprehension ability of the learners, the teachers have to move from ineffective teaching methods to more effective and engaging teaching methods (AL-Qahtani, 2016b; Hezam et al., 2022).

For instance, Hezam et al. (2022) recommended that teachers should embrace a students' centered pedagogy and methods to improve the reading and comprehension ability for the Saudi EFL learners. Additionally, AL-Qahtani (2016) argues that teachers should implement creativity activities for the Saudi EFL learners to improve their motivation and engagement. Therefore, these studies acknowledge the impact of having ineffective teaching methods and how they limit the reading and comprehension capabilities of the English learners in the Saudi primary schools.



RQ2: What strategies might help improve reading comprehension?

This current research outlined two broad ways to help improve the learners reading and comprehension ability for the English language. The first was to improve and modify the current curriculum and syllabus. The results had pointed that the curriculum and syllabus is currently flawed with a lack of clear objectives and a very steep learning slope for the English learners in Saudi primary school. Given the flaws in the learning curriculum and syllabus, the research participants had suggested incorporating clear objectives to define the learning for the English language.

The research also pointed to having a curriculum that facilitates balanced learning difficulties (instead of a steep-learning difficulty) for each respective grade level, where the learning challenges or difficulties are manageable for learners in their respective grade levels. An introspective research by Al-Seghayer (2014) found that challenges arising from the curriculum needed to be resolved to help improve the Saudi English learners' ability to effectively read and comprehend the English language. Particularly, the research recommended adapting the elements of the curriculum to match the different English proficiency levels for the English learners in Saudi schools. According to the research by Al-Seghayer (2014), other areas of the curriculum that should be improved were having adequate teaching resources, time allocation for English learning, and having a curriculum that facilitates skill building during the training of EFL teachers. It is worthy to note that 10 years after Al-Seghayer's research, the problem is still prevalent.

Moreover, the teachers should embrace more pedagogically innovative teaching and learning methods. Particularly the research pointed that active learning methods, like cooperative learning, problem-solving activities, brainstorming, and simulation learning, would help in improving the learners reading and comprehension ability as compared to the current ineffective teaching and learning methods identified as passive learning.

By active learning, the research points out that the learning would be more interesting and engaging for the English learners, which is consistent with other studies calling for a more interesting approach to teaching that does not bore the learners and keep them unmotivated (Hezam et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2020). Due to their

ability to foster an engaging and interactive learning environment, forms of active learning like cooperative learning, problem-solving, brainstorming, and simulation learning are suggested by the research results for the English learners in Saudi primary schools.

To stimulate the engagement, other related studies have suggested using “cognitive and metacognitive” methods, which could be beneficial to the English learner by improving their reading and comprehension ability (Alenizi & Alanazi, 2016; González, 2017; Hezam et al., 2022). These cognitive and metacognitive methods include the use of memory aids, thinking aloud, and other programs that stimulate critical thinking among the learners (Alenizi & Alanazi, 2016). Hezam et al. (2022) adds that having a more learner-centered approach to teaching the English learners would be beneficial at improving their reading and comprehension abilities. The learner-centered approach to teaching would help the learners relate the teachings to their personal or even cultural experiences, which improves engagement and, in turn, improves the English learners’ ability to effectively read and comprehend the English texts or contents that they are taught (Bui & Fagan, 2013). González (2017) suggested that as regards improving the learners reading and comprehension abilities, complimenting the English texts with images would be beneficial than the passive learning. Such methods, he argue, would be effective in improve the learners’ abilities in reading and comprehending the English language.

While this research did not identify the ways to help improve the difficulties with the linguistic challenges like vocabulary and grammar challenges, the literature review related to the difficulties in linguistic elements identified in this research did outlines some possible strategies to overcome this challenges. For instance, when it comes to addressing the vocabulary challenges, the research by Khan et al. (2020) suggested using technology in the learning environment to help improve learners’ proficiency in the English vocabulary, which would then improve their reading and comprehension abilities. Additionally, some studies suggested a nativisation of the English language contents provided for learning (Tavakoli et al., 2013), as that would be effective in solving the lack of cultural context that hindered the reading and comprehension ability for the learners (González, 2017). Other studies too have pointed to the importance of having the English texts that the learners read to be linked to their cultural



background to what they could relate to, as that would improve their reading and comprehension abilities (Bui & Fagan, 2013).

In addition, when it came to strategies to improve the grammar for the English learners, Bui and Fagan (2013) suggested “Story Grammar Instruction and Story Maps” as a strategy that could help the learners overcome the challenges they faced with English grammar. This strategy would incorporate a visual representation tool that would improve the students’ engagement, thereby improving their reading and comprehension abilities (Bui & Fagan, 2013). Equally, Al Salmi (2011) advocates that instructors can apply knowledge from the schema principle to the classroom by using pre-reading activities and narrow reading to enhance students reading comprehension.

Conclusion

The first research question is “What factors make reading comprehension difficult for English learners in Saudi Primary Schools from the teachers’ perspective?” This research unveiled a number of factors that hindered the reading comprehension abilities of young English learners in Saudi primary schools. The factors that were found to limit reading comprehension abilities in the students were linguistic elements, inadequacies in the syllabus and curriculum, and ineffective teaching and learning methods.

Challenges with the linguistic elements emerges as a foundational factor, and involved grammar difficulties, problems with vocabulary, phonetics, and the hurdles due to the difference in linguistic rules between the learners native Arabic language and the English language that they are learning as a second language. Through this research, it was found that the grammar difficulties impeded the learners’ grasp of the rules of the foreign English language, thereby limiting their reading comprehension ability.

Additionally, the challenges with the language vocabulary did limit the learners’ reading and comprehension abilities, as they could not recognize certain vocabularies that they had not been exposed to before. Phonemic challenges also hindered proper pronunciation and spelling, undermining the learners' capacity to comprehend English language texts. The variation between the native Arabic language and the foreign English language was also a hurdle to the students in Saudi primary schools, and posed as a hindrance to their reading comprehension abilities. This variation in language created a void in cultural context and inhibited an effective connection to English text.

The research also pointed out to the inadequacies within the syllabus and curriculum, which presented a challenge to the reading comprehension abilities for the young English learners in the Saudi primary schools. Particularly, the research highlighted a lack of clear objectives in the curriculum as it relates to the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Additionally, the curriculum did not mitigate the steep learning slope that the young learners had to undertake to develop an understanding of the English language. This steep learning slope was a demotivating factor for the learners, and hindered an effective development of the foundational language concepts in the foreign English language.

The other critical factor that contributed to the reading comprehension difficulties in the learners was the ineffective teaching and learning methods. Passive learning was identified as a significant hindrance to learners' reading comprehension abilities. Recommendations from various studies underscored the importance of transitioning to student-centered pedagogies, active and innovative approaches to foster engagement, motivation, and comprehension.

The second question that the research seeks to address is "What strategies might help improve reading comprehension?" This investigation uncovered strategies aimed at bolstering the reading comprehension abilities of students learning English in Saudi primary schools. The research's participants proposed two overarching approaches: curriculum and syllabus enhancement and pedagogically innovative teaching and learning methods.

The research recommended having clear curriculum objectives, which would help in providing a roadmap for English language learning. Equally significant was the call for a balanced difficulty gradient within the curriculum, catering to each grade level's learning capacity, such that the learners would not be overwhelmed and become less motivated to learn the English language. The second strategy was centered on pedagogically innovative teaching and learning methods. Active learning methodologies such as cooperative learning, problem-solving activities, brainstorming, and simulation learning, emerged in this research as transformative approaches to elevate reading comprehension abilities. These methodologies have the potential for improving engagement, interactivity, and critical thinking, a stark contrast to the passive learning methods that impeded learners' progress.

Limitations of the Research

This research has provided insights into the inhibiting factors and challenges that limit the effective development of reading comprehension abilities among learners of English in Saudi primary school. The research has also achieved its objective in developing recommendations for the ways to nurture reading comprehension skills in the young learners. However, these findings have to be interpreted in the light of some limitations to this research.

First, the research's focus was limited to the perspectives of teachers. While the teachers offered valuable viewpoints and insights on the challenges faced by students, the exclusion of learners' perspectives and input from parents or guardians might have led to a narrow view of the whole phenomenon. Students' experiences, motivations, and feelings could offer unique insights that might not be fully captured through teacher interviews alone. Furthermore, the sole reliance on teacher perspectives might introduce some bias. Teachers might be more attuned to certain challenges and strategies, potentially overlooking or underestimating other aspects that students might find significant.

Second, the research's geographical scope was confined to Saudi Arabia. Given that educational systems, cultural contexts, and language learning environments vary globally, it is important to relate the findings of this research with the importance that it was designed solely for young learners in Saudi Arabia and as such may not apply to some countries. Therefore, the challenges identified and strategies recommended in this research might have context-specific nuances that limit their transferability to other regions or countries.

Additionally, the mixed-method technique employed for this research offered comprehensive insights by combining quantitative and qualitative data, but it also presented challenges in terms of data integration and ensuring a balanced representation of both data types (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova et al., 2006; Lall, 2021; Timans et al., 2019). The research's sample size and selection might also influence the generalisability of the findings, as the research had only 23 participants all of whom were female.

References

- Al-Ababneh, M. M. (2020). Linking ontology, epistemology and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8(1), 75-91.
- Alenzi, M. A. K., & Alanazi, M. S. (2016). The effectiveness of metacognitive teaching strategies to enhance elementary school pupils' reading skills in the northern border areas of Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(4), 213-226.
- Al-Mutairi, N. H. (2008). The influence of educational and sociocultural factors on the learning styles and strategies of female students in Saudi Arabia (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Leicester, Leicester, UK.
- Al-Otaibi, G. (2004). *Language learning strategy use among Saudi EFL students and its relationship to language proficiency level, gender and motivation* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, US.
- Al-Qahtani, A. A. (2016). Do Saudi EFL Teachers Promote Creativity in Their Classrooms? *English Language Teaching*, 9(4), 11. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n4p11>
- AL-Qahtani, A. A. (2016). Why Do Saudi EFL Readers Exhibit Poor Reading Abilities? *English Language and Literature Studies*, 6(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v6n1p1>
- Al-Qahtani, A. N., & Nasser Alsager, H. (2022). Saudi Parents and Teachers' Attitudes towards the New Implementation of English from Grade One in Primary Schools: A Qualitative Descriptive Study. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(5)
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2014). The four most common constraints affecting English teaching in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 4(5), 17.
- Al-Shahrani, M. (2016). A brief historical perspective of English in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 26, 43-47.
- Al-Shumaimeri, Y. (2011). The effects of reading method on the comprehension performance of Saudi EFL students. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(1), 185-195.
- Altin, M., & Saracaloğlu, A. S. (2018). Effect of reading comprehension instruction enriched with cultural materials on

-
- English learning. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), 1475589. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1475589>
- Al-Zahrani, S. A., Rashid, S. M., Fung, Y. M., & Jalaluddin, I. (2021). Reading Comprehension Difficulties: A Case Study on Saudi High School EFL Learners. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(6).
- Al-Zayid, A. (2012). The role of motivation in the L2 acquisition of English by Saudi Students: A dynamic perspective (Unpublished master's thesis). Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, US.
- Ashraf, T. A. (2023). Reading Comprehension Challenges Confronted by Saudi EFL Learners. *Language in India*, 23(2).
- Baral, U. N. (2017). 'Research Data' in Social Science Methods. *Journal of Political Science*, 17, 82-104.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Buckler, S., & Walliman, N. S. R. (2016). Your dissertation in education. SAGE Publications, Limited.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., ... & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652-661.
- Carrel, P.L. & Eisterhold, J.C. (1988). Schema theory and ESL Reading Pedagogy. In Patricia L. Carrel, et al. (Eds.). *Interactive Approaches to Language Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cline, F., Johnstone, C., & King, T. (2006). Focus Group Reactions to Three Definitions of Reading (As Originally Developed in Support of NARAP Goal 1). *National Accessible Reading Assessment Projects*.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). Research methods in education. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. SAGE publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970) *The Research Act in Sociology: Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. London: Butterworth.
- Denscombe, M. (2021). *The good research guide : Research methods for small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill Education. Created from reading on 2023-01-29 13:44:39.

- Elyas, T. (2008). The attitude and the impact of the American English as a global language within the Saudi education system. *Novitas-Royal*, 2(1), 28-48.
- Enon, J. C. (1998). Educational research, statistics and measurement. Kampala: Makerere University Press.
- Ferguson, L. (2004). External validity, generalizability, and knowledge utilization. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 36(1), 16-22.
- Fitzner, K. (2007). Reliability and validity a quick review. *The Diabetes Educator*, 33(5), 775-780.
- Frankel, Katherine, Becker, Bryce, Rowe, Marjorie, & Pearson, David. (2022). (PDF) From "What is Reading?" to What is Literacy? ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002205741619600303>
- González, Á. M. G. (2017). Reading comprehension in English as a foreign language setting: Teaching strategies for sixth graders based on the interactive model of reading. *Revista Folios*, (45), 159-175.
- Grabe, W. (1991). Current developments in second language reading research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25/3, 375-406.
- Greene, JC, Caracelli VJ, Graham WF (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed – method evaluation designs. *Educ. Eval. Policy Anal.*, 11: 255 – 274.
- Hassan, I. J., & Dweik, B. S. (2021). Factors and challenges in English reading comprehension among young Arab EFL Learners. *Academic Research International*, 12(1), 18-30.
- Hezam, T. A., Ali, J. K. M., Imtiaz, S., Saifi, M. A., & Rezaul Islam, M. (2022). Challenges and Problems of Reading Comprehension Experienced by EFL Learners. *Journal of English Studies in Arabia Felix*, 1(2), 11–21. <https://doi.org/10.56540/jesaf.v1i2.28>
- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design: From Theory to Practice. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260>
- Khan, R. M. I., Shahbaz, M., Kumar, T., & Khan, I. (2020). Investigating Reading Challenges Faced by EFL Learners at Elementary Level. *Register Journal*, 13(2), 277–292. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i2.277-292>
- Khandkar, S. H. (2009). Open coding. University of Calgary, 23, 2009.



- Kintsch, W. (1998). *Comprehension: A paradigm for cognition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirby, J. R. (2007). Reading comprehension: Its nature and development. *Encyclopedia of language and literacy development*, (August), 1-8.
- Lall, D. (2021). Mixed-methods research: Why, when and how to use. *Indian Journal of Continuing Nursing Education*, 22(2), 143. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijcn.ijcn_107_21
- Linneberg, M. S., & Korsgaard, S. (2019). Coding qualitative data: A synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative research journal*, 19(3), 259-270.
- Lunzer, E., & Gardner, K. (1979). The effective use of reading.
- Migiro, S. O., & Magangi, B. A. (2011). Mixed methods: A review of literature and the future of the new research paradigm. *African journal of business management*, 5(10), 3757-3764.
- Nuriska, S. (2021, November 15). Learning English as a Second Language.
- Phichiensathien, P. (2021, February). Interactive Reading to Second Language Reading Ability. In *6th UPI International Conference on TVET 2020 (TVET 2020)* (pp. 303-308). Atlantis Press.
- Pinsonneault, A., & Kraemer, K. (1993). Survey research methodology in management information systems: an assessment. *Journal of management information systems*, 10(2), 75-105.
- Qrgez, M., & Ab Rashid, R. (2017). Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners: The case of first and second year students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume*, 8.
- Rambuyon, E. C., & Susada, B. L. (2022). FACTORS AFFECTING READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH OF GRADE 4 PUPILS IN OWABANGON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
- Rumelhart, D.E. (1980). Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition. In Rand J. Spiro, et al.(eds.) *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Rudner, L. M., & Schafer, W. D. (2001). Reliability. ERIC Digest.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London, UK: SAGE.

- Shadish, W. R. (2002). Revisiting field experimentation: field notes for the future. *Psychological methods*, 7(1), 3.
- Sharma, G. (2017). Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International journal of applied research*, 3(7), 749-752.
- Silverman, D. (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Spencer, M., & Wagner, R. K. (2018). The comprehension problems of children with poor reading comprehension despite adequate decoding: A meta-analysis. *Review of educational research*, 88(3), 366-400.
- Tavakoli, M., Shirinbakhsh, S., & Rezazadeh, M. (2013). Effect of cultural adaptation on EFL reading comprehension: The role of narrative nativization and foreign language attitude. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 21(11), 1587-1596.
- Thomas, F. B. (2022). The Role of Purposive Sampling Technique as a Tool for Informal Choices in a Social Sciences in Research Methods.
- Timans, R., Wouters, P., & Heilbron, J. (2019). Mixed methods research: What it is and what it could be. *Theory and Society*, 48(2), 193–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-019-09345-5>
- Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection.
- Wellington, J., 2000, *Educational research: contemporary issues and practical approaches*, London Continuum