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**Investigating Gender-based Language Disorders while learning
the Reading skill among EFL Learners
The case of 3rd year Middle school pupils
“Aisha Um-Al-Mumenin middle school –Tiaret-”**

A dissertation submitted to the Department of English Language as a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Linguistics

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Dedications

First and foremost, I dedicate this work to:

My dear mother who has supported me a lot in my life.

My father without him I would not be who I am.

All my family, My sister Hassina and my brothers, Ali and Mohamed. Who shared the hard moments with me and encouraged me to go further.

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Abdelkader, without them my research would not have been finished.

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Azza



*I dedicate this simple and very modest work to those who gave me life, love, happiness,
encouragement,*

and all their tenderness, my beloved mother and my dear father.

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Abstract

Learners are required to read in order to acquire knowledge, however reading frequency varies from males to females depending on some factors. Many EFL learners face difficulties in front of a printed material and seem to face gender related reading problems in English Language. Therefore, the present study is an investigation to highlight female related reading difficulties compared to males. For this purpose, the case of third year EFL learners at Aisha-Um-Mumenin Middle School -Tiaret- was chosen and a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools were adopted for the data collection. The main results revealed that there are gender related reading difficulties which drive males to perform poorer than females in reading. Thus, it is advised that different reading materials and extensive reading sessions should be allocated to pupils at this level.

Keywords: EFL learners, Extensive reading, Gender, Reading frequency, Reading difficulties.

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Summary

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBA: Competency-based approach

EFL: English as a foreign language

ELLS: English language learners

ELT: English language teaching

ER: Extensive reading

ESL: English as a second language

FFL: First foreign language

FLs: Foreign languages

IR: Intensive reading

L1: First language

L2: Second language

LMD: Licence-Master-Doctorate

LR: Loud reading

RDs: Reading disabilities / difficulties

RS: Reading speed

SFL: Second foreign language

SLA: Second language acquisition

SR: Shared reading

STM: Short-term memory

TR: Timed reading

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General

Introduction

General Introduction

Nowadays, it is necessary to learn foreign languages (FLs), especially the English language that becomes a worldwide language and it is increasingly important for non-English speakers to learn language to be competitive in this information age. Since it is the first foreign language studied and spoken internationally that has crucial role in human life and has become the tool of communication in social and personal activities, it is studied and taught at schools, academic courses and universities in non-native English-speaking countries including Algeria.

In the process of learning English as a second language, teachers and researchers are constantly in pursuit of improving their practices to enhance the English language learning experience by focusing on mastering the four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to achieve a high level of abilities in receiving the target language in its oral or written forms.

Reading is an essential skill among the four language skills as it can improve the overall language proficiency. The ability to read is highly valued for social and academic purposes. Even though some may have reading difficulties in his/her mother tongue, the problems get worse when reading is applied to a second language, as learners might be lagging behind in a number of reading components including accuracy, comprehension and speed. A number of studies on ESL/EFL reading tasks show that learners face some common difficulties and this can vary based on gender (male/female).

- In this respect, the present study identified the following questions:
 - 1) What are the main problems that EFL learners face in their reading process?
 - 2) What are the gender-based factors affecting EFL learners' reading performance?

- 3) What are the techniques to help remedy such problems in class?

In order to answer the research questions above, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- 1) EFL learners may struggle with English language and reading problems including dyslexia (difficulty decoding language), dysgraphia (difficulties related to handwriting, spelling and comprehension) and dyspraxia (a disorder which causes problems with coordination language and speech).
- 2) Females consistently outperform males in reading test, and this related to different aspects: differences in behavioural factors such as attitudes, differences in cognitive abilities or in brain activation during reading.
- 3) The suggestions may include selecting the appropriate texts depending on the learners' level and needs.

A case study is designed in order to test the previous hypotheses and answers the research questions it is included the 3rd EFL learners of Aisha Um Al-Mumenin middle school. Two research instruments will be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from different sources and participants. The set of research instruments comprises classroom observation and teachers' interview. Accordingly, this research work is partitioned into three chapters. The first chapter deals with theoretical background of reading skill, it provides reading skill defined, the reading types, models as well as the teaching strategies and its reading difficulties.

The second chapter aims to shed light on the English language teaching in the Algerian context. It emphasizes the position of reading in the curriculum and brings a description of how reading is taught to the Algerian EFL learners. In fact, the main focus is to investigate what factors EFL learners encounter and how can they differentially effect both male and female.

As for the third chapter it is considered as an essential part of this study. It is the empirical phase of the research as it elucidates the research objectives, instruments, methodology and participants. Further, entails the data collection and analysis, also it gives interpretation of the main results obtained from the teachers' interview and the students' classroom observation.

Chapter One: An Overview of Reading

- 1.1. Introduction**
- 1.2. The Reading Skill**
- 1.3. Reading in a Foreign Language: 2 main approaches**
- 1.4. Reading Models**
- 1.5. Reading Strategies**
- 1.6. Teaching the Reading skill in the EFL classroom**
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- 1.9. Problems students encounter with Reading**
- 1.10. EFL Reading difficulties**
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1.1. Introduction

In many second and foreign language teaching situations, reading receives a special focus. It is considered as one of the English language skills which is essential to be mastered in the educational context and it can be the assessment for learners' general ability, since the ability to read in a foreign language is that learners ever want to acquire.

This chapter starts by introducing the Reading skill including the two main approaches, it also stresses the importance of this skill in foreign language classroom. In addition to that in this chapter there exists a literature review about some difficulties that EFL learners face during the task.

1.2. The Reading Skill

Reading as one aspect of language skills, plays an important role in language teaching. Said to be important because, in addition to teaching, listening, speaking and writing. Reading skills is one very powerful tool for obtaining a wide range of specific information. Therefore, reading is a basic requirement for an advanced society. In education, read a very influential role in student performance.

The definition of Reading is proposed by several experts. According to Rivers (1981, p. 147), reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's which are knowledge of the language. Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text, the words, it is the activity if word recognition, phonemic decoding and text comprehension.

Moreover, reading is a complex and multifaceted skill which could be defined as the ability to process a text through decoding, interpreting and understanding it (Brown, 2004).

Pang, Benbandt and Kamil (2003), they mentioned that:

“Reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension, word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one’s spoken language”. (p. 6)

From all the definitions above, Nunan (1999) said that unlike speaking, reading is not something that every individual learns to do. An enormous amount of time and effort is spent teaching reading in elementary and secondary schools around the world. In fact, it is probably true to say that more time is spent teaching reading than any other skill. For hundred years, being literate has been the mark of educated person.

In general, whenever dealing with Reading one thing has to be stressed is to distinguish reading as a “Process” and a “Comprehension skill” which distinguish it from other language skills, because reading is considered as a twofold process, decoding and comprehension (Gough & Hoover, 1996). Decoding and comprehension are the two halves of Reading for neither decoding in the absence of comprehension nor comprehension in the absence of decoding, leads to any amount of Reading. Literacy reading ability can be found only in the presence of both decoding and comprehension.

Reading is very important and has main role in our life, it can enrich our experience and knowledge. Therefore, reading also something crucial and indispensable. By reading we build vocabulary for the English lesson.

According to (Bahri, 2008) reading without purpose is like sail without a destination. Therefore, the destinations have important meaning in reading than finding the first destination will be achieved in a reading book.

Everyone reads with some kind of purpose mind, generally speaking, the purpose is either to enjoy oneself or to obtain information of some kind. Effective reading means being able to read accurately and efficiently; and to understand as much of the passage as you need in order to achieve your purpose. (Swan & Greenall, 1993).

In line with this review, according to Trigan (2008) the purpose of reading is listed as follows:

a. Reading for understanding

- The readers try to know the experience of someone that he has done.

b. Reading for main idea

- The readers try to know what the topic interest and problem of the story.

c. Reading for Sequence or Organization

- The readers try to know what happens in each part of the story, action, etc.

d. Reading for inference

- The readers try to find out the conclusion from the action or the idea in the text.

e. Reading to Classify

- The readers try to classify some information or actions of the writer in the text or paragraph.

f. Reading to Evaluate

- The readers try to evaluate what the writer has done or what he is trying to explain in his paragraph.

g. Reading to compare or contrast.

From the purpose above, it can be concluded that reading has an important role for readers as an organizing and content study also for a general impression.

1.3. Reading in a Foreign Language

The English reading skill can be divided into two main types / approaches: intensive and extensive reading.

1.3.1. Extensive Reading

Extensive Reading involves longer texts whether being read for pleasure or for a certain purpose, such as developing knowledge or reading skills. Many scholars have long believed that the teaching of reading should encourage students to free themselves from their habits of dissecting and translating sentences (Kelly, 1969). Rather, reading should be an enjoyable task with the focus on meaning (as cited in Kelly, 1969). In line with this view, conceptions of Extensive Reading (ER) have developed and proposed by scholars who share consensus that ER is a reading pedagogy in which language learners are encouraged to freely choose reading materials that much their interests and are within their linguistic competence; to read for pleasure; and to read a great deal (Day & Baruford, 1998; Grabe & Staller, 2002; Ranandya, 2007). In other words, according to Waring (2011), “*Read*” can be interpreted as “Read quickly and Enjoyable with Adequate comprehension, so they need a Dictionary” (p. 3).

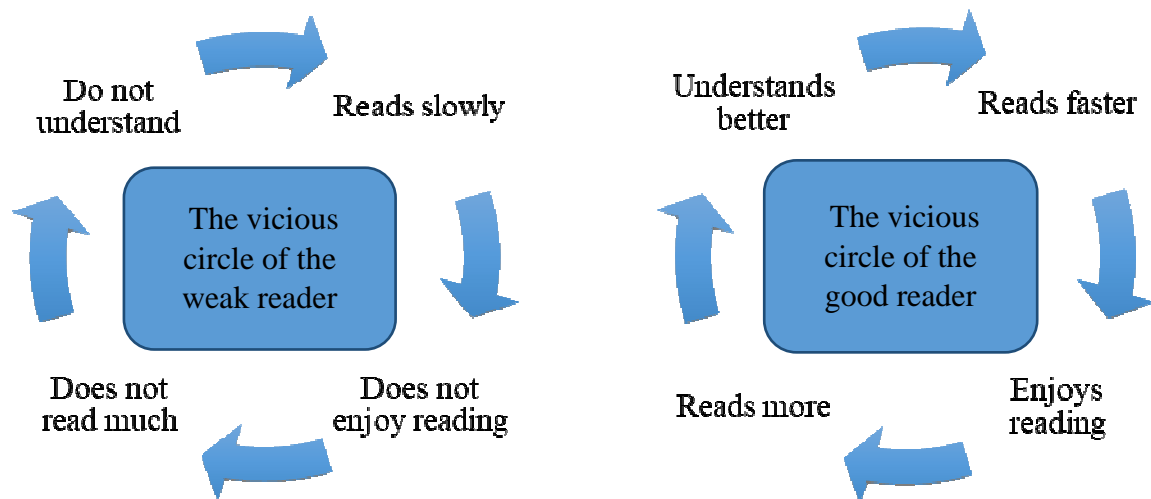


Figure 1.1: "virtuous circle of the good reader" Nuttal, (2000)

1.3.2. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is the most typically used method for teaching reading in foreign language classrooms. This kind of reading occurs when the learner is focused on the language rather than the text, i.e., the learner may be answering comprehension questions, learning new vocabulary, studying grammar and expressions in the text, translating the passage or other tasks that involve him/her in looking “intensively” inside the text. Thus, IR is a classroom-oriented activity in which, as in Brown’s (2007) words:

“Students focus on the linguistic or semantic details... Grammatical forms, discourse markers and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding”. (p. 373).

For Jain & Patel (2008), Intensive Reading (IR) or sometimes called narrow reading involves students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. When this occurs, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and students get many opportunities to understand the meaning of the text. The success of intensive reading on improving reading comprehension is based on the premise that the more familiar the reader is with the text, the more comprehension is promoted. However, forcing students with different levels of reading proficiency, to read the same material makes the reading process seem complex, frustrating and boring, because they will do things, they do not enjoy with texts they do not want to read or they find difficulty in understanding.

Susser and Robb (1990) claimed that, by focusing too much on accuracy is another problematic area of Intensive Reading, because this may lead to anxiety on the part of the learners.

In the same way, emphasizing too much on sentence level, syntax can turn the nominal “reading” class into a “grammar” class, of course, there is nothing wrong with the teaching of grammar. Yet, teaching grammar is not the same as reading. (Susse and Robb, 1990).

1.4. Reading Models

There are major reading models that play a significant role in managing and facilitating the reading comprehension process, as well as assisting readers to better understand a written passage and overcome their reading comprehension difficulties while engaging in the reading process. These models are, the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the interactive model. The three models differ from one another based on their concentration of the method that readers apply in order to obtain meaning from a written message. For instance, the bottom-up model requires readers to decode each word in the text in order to gain meaning.

In contrast, the top-down model emphasizes the role that both reader's background knowledge and previous experience about the given topic play in order to obtain meaning from a text. However, the interactive model looks at the reading process as an activity that requires engaging in two interactions. The first interaction occurs between the written text and the reader's prior experiences about the topic, while the second interaction occurs between different kinds of reading strategies that the reader utilizes (Ahmadi, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Brunning, Shraw, & Ronning, 1999; Eskey, 2005; Grabe, 1991; Grabe, 2004). More explanations of this reading comprehension models follow.

1.4.1. Bottom-up Model

The notion behind the bottom-up model is that readers should gradually start the reading process by decoding every letter, vocabulary word and eventually sentence in order to construct meaning from a written passage. In other words, this model looks at the entire reading process as letter and vocabulary-based. Thus, in order to successfully gain meaning from a text, readers are required to understand and recognize each letter and vocabulary word while reading. Since this model emphasizes the importance of understanding every single word for comprehension, quick

word understanding is an essential requirement for the bottom-up approach (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Van Duzer, 1999).

The bottom-up reading model emphasizes the written printed text. It states that reading is driven by text and that it proceeds from part to whole, i.e., building up a meaning of a text starts from the smallest textual units at the bottom (letters and words) to larger units at the top (phrases and clauses) in the progression stated in the following figure:

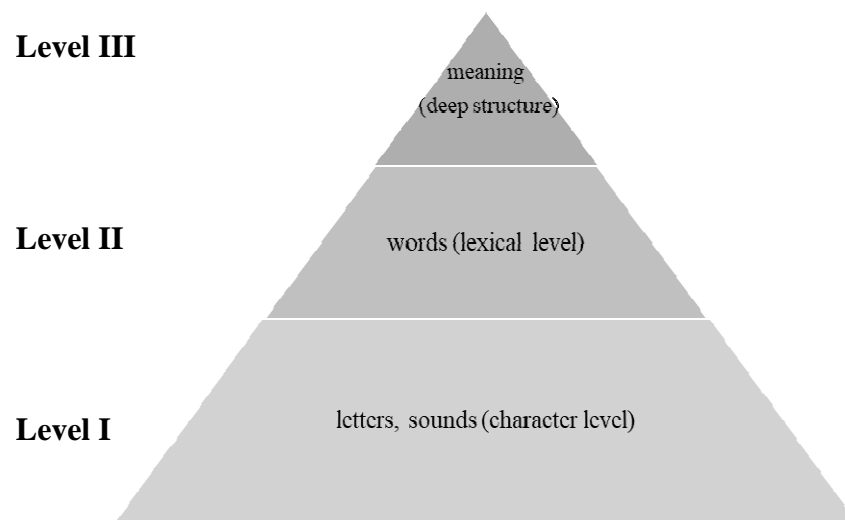


Figure 1.2: Data driven or bottom-up model (Ahmadi et al., 2013)

1.4.2. Top-down Model

In contrast to the bottom-up model, the top-down reading comprehension model engages readers' prior knowledge, experience and expectation about a particular topic in order to obtaining meaning from a written passage. Thus, as described by Eskey (2005), this model considers reading comprehension as a process that begins "*from the brain to text*" (p. 564). In the top-down model, readers are required to start the process of reading comprehension with building particular expectations about the text. These expectations should be built based on a reader's previous knowledge about a particular topic.

After building some expectations, the reader moves to another task in which they draw on their world knowledge in order to decode vocabulary within the text to either prove or modify their pre-established expectations. Therefore, the top-down comprehension model looks at the text itself as meaningless, with the reader gaining meaning by integrating the text into their prior knowledge (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ahmadi, Hairul, & Pourhossein, 2012).

In line with this view, Goodman's psycholinguistic model of reading begun to have an impact on views of second language reading. In this model, the reader is active, he makes predictions adjusts theories when these predictions are wrong, processes information and reconstructs a message encoded by a writer.

This implies that reading is driven by meaning and proceeds as the following figure shows:

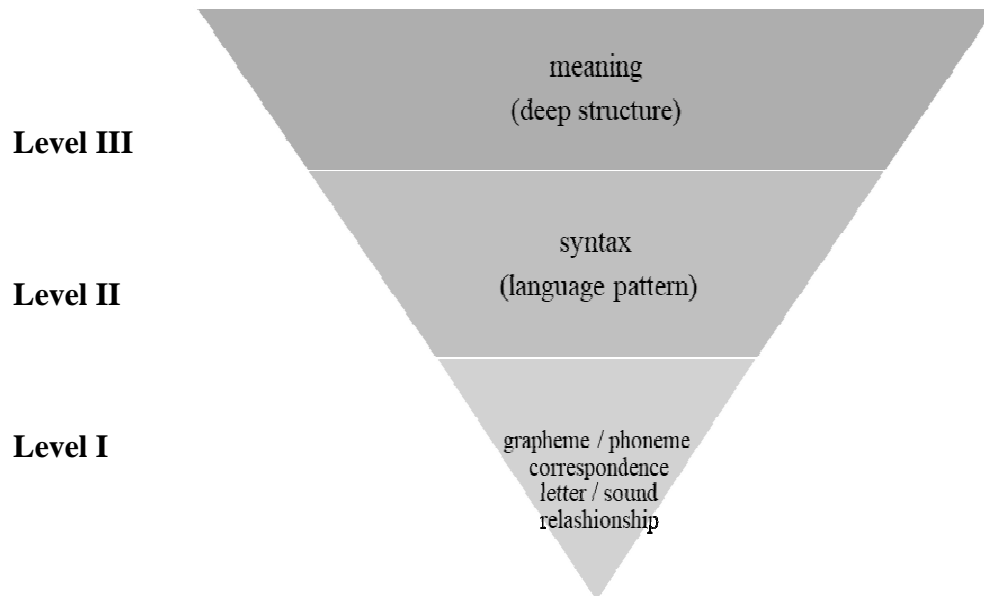


Figure 1.3: Hypothesis Test or Top-down Model.

1.4.3. Interactive Model

Since the interactive model emerged to address weakness and limitations that were found in both the bottom-up and the top-down reading comprehension models, it tends to integrate features of each one. Today, the interactive model is the most widely conclusive model for explaining the process of reading comprehension and confirms the importance of the interaction between a reader and the text (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012). Mainly, the interactive model adapts the notion that neither the bottom-up nor the top-down model can be used in isolation to explain the entire reading comprehension process. Therefore, it called of the creation of an interaction between these two models (Ahmadi, & Gilakjani, 2012; Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Rumelhart, 1977).

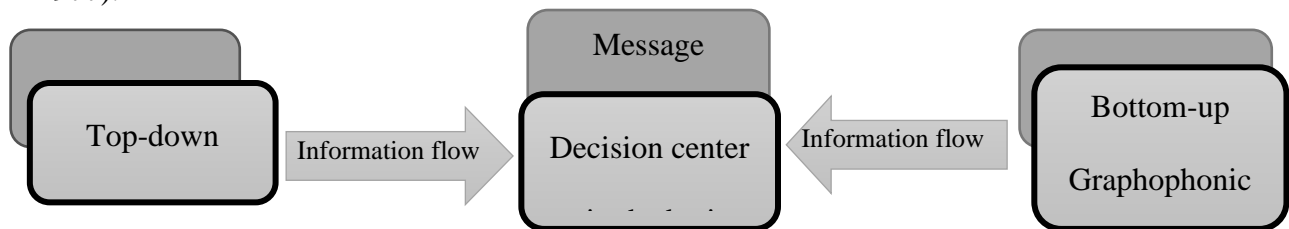


Figure 1.4: Rumelhart's Interactive Model. (Cited in Dechant, 1991, p. 29)

1.5. Reading Strategies

The process of a written text in order to build information and meaning is indeed the overall goal of any reading activity. Yet, it is not an easy skill to master, especially for English as a Foreign Language Learners (EFL). There are numbers of standard strategies that teachers make use of in their daily classroom practices when teaching reading and comprehension.

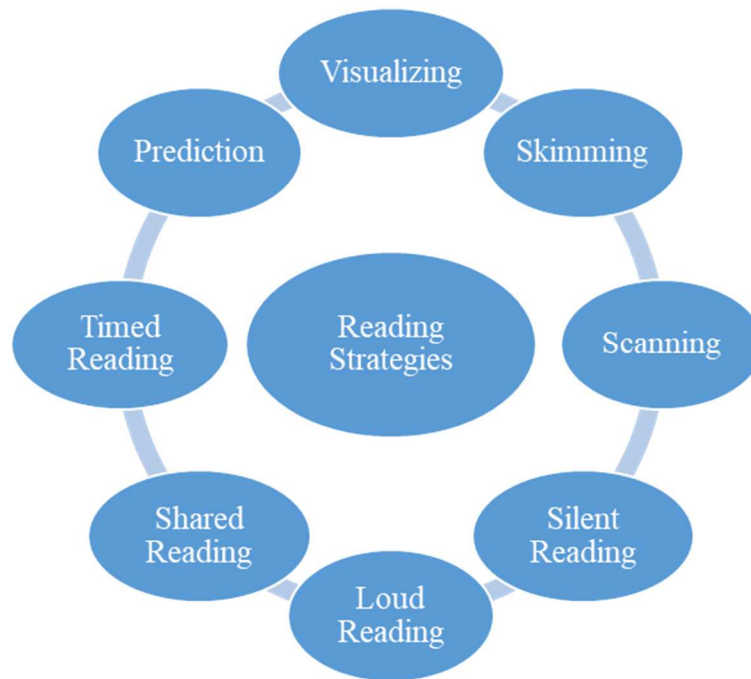


Figure 1.5: Strategies in Teaching/Learning the Reading skill

1.5.1. Predicting Vs Visualizing

Predicting is a technique, which most researchers considered it is as an essential one that must be used by readers in order to achieve comprehension. Smith (1988), is one of these researchers who claimed that “it is the core of comprehension”.

It involves the reading ability to get meaning from a text by relying on same clues in the text; they predict about what is going to happen next.

Making prediction is when the reader uses information from a text for instance titles, pictures, and headings, as well as personal experience to anticipate what she/he is about to read.

A person involved in making a prediction is focused on the text one hand, constantly thinking ahead, refining, revising and verifying his/her prediction. S/he is like a detective always searching for clues to shed light on what he/she is reading. Besides this prediction keeps the student actively engaged in the reading process.

While, visualizing is defined by (Goudvis & Harvet, 2000 as cited in Nelson, 2015) as *“a process of making images in reader’s mind which will be different among the readers.”*

Wolley (2011) saw visualizing as a powerful tool which can help improving reading comprehension. According to Reindds and Miller (2003), in the working memory, there are two ways of information process, verbal and visual. The verbal model comes from spoken words through auditory sensory, while the visual model comes from pictures or printed words through visual sensory memory.

Generally speaking, the visualization is a reading strategy in which the readers create their own images of the text, those images are mostly influenced by their background knowledge.

1.5.2. Skimming Vs. Scanning

Skimming is a strategy of rapidly moving the eyes over the text with the purpose of getting only the main ideas and the general overview of the content. Harmer (2001) stated that Skimming is a technique in looking for a text to get a quick idea of the gist of a text. However, according to Brown (2004), Skimming is the process of rapid coverage of reading matter to determine its gist or main idea.

Furthermore, the reader may use some steps/techniques in applying the skimming strategy. Thus, when implementation Skimming reading strategies, the learner would get the main idea instead of details and they also have to ignore some parts of the text that do not seem useful to collect the information needed.

Whereas, scanning is to read quickly in order to look for a specific information. As Grellet (1986) explained that:

“When scanning, we only try to locate specific information and often we do not even follow the linearity of the passage to do so. We simply let your eyes wander over the text until we find what we are looking for, whether it be a name, a date or a less specific piece of information”.

Grallet (1986, p. 9).

In other words, a reader uses Scanning when she/he already knows what she/he is searching for. Scanning involves moving eyes quickly across the text seeking a specific word or phrase.

1.5.3. Loud Reading Vs Silent Reading

Eddie C. Kennedy (1981) mentioned that there are two kinds of types of reading, reading aloud and silent reading: Silent reading needed by students when they leave school and for reading aloud is necessary because it ensures that process is going on.

Reading is primarily a silent activity. The majority of reading that we do will be done silently. Silent reading is one of reading class performance, it is the way to read without produce any voice.

Alshumaimeri (2011) stated that, *“Silent reading is reading without labial movements or the vibration of vocal cords. The text or other graphic focus are visually perceived and then transformed into meanings and ideas without passing through vocal stage”*. It is believed that silent reading is associated with the idea of reading for comprehension. In other words, silent reading (SR) helps readers concentrate more on understanding the text without paying attention to pronounce every single word; this according to Taguchi, et al., (2016), increases reading fluency.

However, in western cultures oral reading was the primary practice until the nineteenth century. Today, many teachers still believe that oral reading is the best approach for teaching. Loud Reading (LR) is a planned oral reading of a book or print excerpt, usually related to a theme

or a topic of the study. The loud reading can be used to engage the student as a listener while developing background knowledge. There are two reasons why reading is necessary. First, it ensures that the reading process is going on and helps the teacher to improve it, secondly, it gives practice in the manipulation of sounds in speech and pronunciation.

Besides, loud reading is considered as a basic form of classroom organization and disciplines. In loud reading the students are confronted with written sentences which may have not been spoken before. Bloomfield (1942) & Fories (1962) (as cited in Macleod, n. d) highly emphasised that oral reading is important for better speaking ability and also enhances creativity. Similarly, loud reading is a common reading strategy shared y the most of the foreign language learners.

1.5.4. Shared Reading Vs. Timed Reading

Timed Reading (TR; also known paced reading and accelerated reading) -where readers read under some degree of time pressure, it is based on research concerning working memory (Short-term Memory). In a timed reading task, the students read the passages at the normal and comfortable speed, when they finish reading, they calculate their reading speed (RS) by dividing the number of words in the text by the time they have taken to read it (Nuttal, 1985; Champeau de Lopez, 1993; Coman & Heavers, 1998). For instance, if they took four minutes to read a 500-word text, their reading speed would be:

$$\frac{500}{4} = 125 \text{ words per minute}$$

Moreover, Hennigs (1992) stated that shared reading (SR) has more benefits for students than guided reading and loud reading (LR), because in shared reading students are able to see the

prints on the pages. The teacher deliberately draws attention to the print and modals of early reading behaviours such as moving from left to right and word-by-word match.

Shared reading provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to demonstrate the integrated use of cueing systems and strategies for reading that can be applied to unfamiliar reading. It allows the teacher to modal and support students using prediction and confirming skills. Parkes (2000) stated that “*Shared reading is an ideal way to demonstrate how the three language-based sources of information: semantics, syntax and graphophonics work*” (p. 15).

1.6. Teaching the Reading Skill in the EFL classroom

Different studies were done in the field of teaching reading especially in the EFL classroom, it has received much attention as the most effective way to develop language learners’ skills. Text comprehension is the main aim of reading thus, the reading task needs effective readers/students and teachers who know when and how they use the appropriate strategies. Before teaching readers how to read, it is crucial to teach them the reading stages and when to use them.

Psychologically, reading is viewed as an interactive process between language and thought. There are three kinds of activities involved in relation to the reading class activities: Pre-reading, during reading and Post-reading activities, Mukhroji (2011).

1.6.1. The Pre-reading stage

Pre-reading stage is an important stage in which the topic and the type of the text are introduced first. Harmer (2000) clarified this by saying:

“We will not get students to interact properly with spoken and written materials unless we ensure that their desire to read or listen has been awakened. Especially where the subject matter of the texts may not be immediately appealing to them, we have the responsibility to make students interested and to encourage them to tackle the text with positive anticipation”. (p. 188).

The Pre-reading activities are interactional activities carried out before students conduct the real reading activities. In this stage, activation is concerned with the student’s background knowledge and learning activities. The teacher tries to activate schemata related to the topic.

The pre-reading is to tell students about the purpose of reading and prepare them to the content of the text by using some visual aids that help them make some predictions. The aim of this activities is to facilitate the students’ understanding about the reading text.

1.6.2. While-reading stage

Richards (2009) saw that the while-reading stage as *“an integration of top-down processes utilise background knowledge and schema, as well as bottom-up processes that are primarily text or data driven”*. (p. 87), where learners read silently the passage while the teacher plays the role of the monitor.

In this stage, the students start reading the text they are given some questions that they try to think about when reading. Students in while-reading stage use different strategies including skimming, scanning, predicting and guessing form the text.

1.6.3. Post-reading stage

According to Medjehdi (2015) in this phase, the teacher acts as an evaluator where she/he has to look whether the objectives of the reading tasks have been activated or not, taking into account the understanding of the text by the learners and the recognition of the new vocabulary and grammar then the evaluation of the text. In line with this view, after reading the text which is done in while reading stage, it is for readers to discuss their answers of the previous questions and analyse them as well as their teacher. Post reading activities are instructional activities that the students and teachers do after reading take place.

1.7. The Importance of Reading

According to Nunan (2010), “*reading is such a natural part of our everyday life, that we often are unaware of every piece of written material that we process*”.

Over the past decade, research on English language teaching and learning has emphasized the importance of developing the reading skills of language and learners. Many researchers (Haupt, 2015; Horwitz, 2008; Krashen, 2007; Nation, 2008; Singhal, 2001) believe that assisting language learners in the development of their reading skills is a crucial step in leading them to refine and master other language skills. Horwitz (2008) explained the importance of reading in second language acquisition (SLA) by stating:

Reading is fundamental to the development of full second language competence.

Many people develop some listening and speaking abilities in a second language through contacts with target language speakers or television or movies, but reading is necessary to use a language academic purposes or professional purposes. Reading can provide a wide range of language input unavailable to learners in other ways. (p.135).

Generally speaking, reading is an essential part of any second language acquisition, it offers students a wide range of vocabulary and grammar. Besides, reading in L2, listening in L2 seems very important and proficiency of reading in L1 contribute the ability of reading.

1.8. Reading and Text Selection

The selection of topics and materials is up to the teacher, but will depend on the ability of the student and the level they have reached together with availability of material. The choice is vast and may include reading text already prepared material. Similarly with this point, Hofang (2008) pointed out that one of the primary factors with a direct influence on the reading process of language learners is the “*type of text*”, which refers to discourse mode that tends to serve the linguistic and communicative purposes. For the language learners, type of text might prevent them from choosing the appropriate learning strategy that helps them read more fluently. For instance, on one hand some texts require language learners to carefully read though understand the main themes of the texts, on the other hand, other text can be easily understood using fast reading strategies such as Skimming and Scanning.

The authentic materials should anyway be used familiarize the learner with writing that is “*real*” with examples of the language as it is really written for variety of relevant purposes. Moreover, as long as the texts are within the scope of the learners, they will be encouraged by the fact that they can understand them.

1.9. Reading-based problems

It has viewed that many students or readers perceive that reading is “*A passive and boring activity performed constantly in isolation and perhaps associated with skills which they feel they do not possess*”. (Greenwood, 1998, p. 5). For that reason, students especially learners comfort a variety of difficulties while reading. These difficulties comprise in adequate vocabulary, lexical inefficiency, structural poor reading skills and lack schemata. Student’s lack of interest is another major cause of their failure in reading.

All the linguists and experts have expressed this same view that insufficient vocabulary is the main cause of students’ poor reading, while mentioning the causes behind the failure of reading and incapability of fulfilling the demands of required reading are follows:

- Long and complex structure of sentence: it means that the student cannot understand the proper subject-verb relationship in a long or complex sentence.
- Words having multiple meanings: that is to say, the students feel into this problem while reading so that they find one word have several meanings.
- Words having different syntactical functions and varieties of “inflectional endings”, may also causes difficulties for the students in reading a text effectively.

In reading a text, whether as a native speaker or EFL learner, schemata play a crucial role since they are directly related to the meaningful reading and reading speed, but many students cannot associate the language of the text with their knowledge outside the text due to that their “knowledge of the language is incomplete”, this lack creates serious difficulties with some texts (William, 1996). In such situations foreign language (FLRs) have focused more on developing reading skills.

1.10. EFL Reading Difficulties

In the most Algerian situations, students learn English as a second language in an environment with the pre-dominant non-English speaking individuals. According to Schroeder (2005), each year, thousands of students begin to receive some instructions in reading as they join school, although most of those students learn to read with a relative ease, nearly 10% have significant difficulty acquiring proficient reading skills as a result of their reading problems, since proficiency in reading demands mastery over two different components: word recognition and reading comprehension.

Kibby and Hyund (2001) have explained that not all students who cannot read well are disabled readers, just some of them are. While mentioning that:

Reading difficulties nearly occur on a continuum, meaning that there is a great number of students who experience reading difficulties. There are those students who are diagnosed with a learning difficulty. Also, there is an even larger group of students who do not have diagnoses, but who need good reading assistance. Many students make effort and struggle with reading. A study estimated that about 10 million students have difficulties in reading. The good news is that 90 to 95 percent of reading impaired students can overcome their difficulties if they receive good and suitable remediation at early ages. (p. 123).

In view with this, according to Runo (2010), the recent studies show that 80 percent of all EFL learners with learning disabilities experience reading disabilities.

1.11. Conclusion

This theoretical chapter attempts to define the reading skill, shedding light on its different types and models and relying on various scholars' views. It also stresses the importance of text selection in relation to teaching and learning the reading skill, and then it moves to distinct strategies that learners follow in reading texts.

As a matter of fact, reading is the emphasized skill in EFL classes, in most cases, come to class with the idea that students should read, but most of them as well as their teachers do not know how to read appropriately and this is due to the ignorance of the fundamental principles of the reading skill. For this purpose, the next chapter will present a case study which will deal with some difficulties that an EFL learner encountered while performing the reading task.

Chapter Two: EFL Reading Disabilities in the Algerian Middle School

- 2.1. Introduction**
- 2.2. ELT in Algerian**
- 2.3. Objectives of EFL learning and teaching in Algerian Schools**
- 2.4. EFL and Algerian Middle School**
- 2.5. The teaching of the Reading skills**
- 2.6. Reading Difficulties as language problems**
- 2.7. Kind difficulties in Reading**
- 2.8. Gender related Reading disabilities**
- 2.9. Research Methodology**
- 2.10. Context description**
- 2.11. Conclusion**

2.1. Introduction

The second chapter aims at describing the Algerian educational context with reference to the teaching of the reading skill. The Reading skill is chosen on the basis of its importance in learning English as a foreign language. Thus, a description of the English language teaching situation in Algeria is first presented. Then the objectives of the language teaching course in Middle schools. It looks at teaching English as a foreign language within the Algerian school Syllabus, shedding light on the third year English Textbooks, as well as the way Reading is taught.

It is mainly centred towards EFL reading difficulties among gender, providing kind difficulties. The Chapter also entails a detailed description of the various research instruments that have been used to gather information in this investigation. To conclude, the profile of the participants (Teachers/Learners) who took part in this research work is drawn, and even an analysis of their needs is also stressed.

2.2. ELT In Algeria

Nowadays, the necessity to know languages is increasingly recognized as the world joins together in a “globe village”, taking into account the role of English in this global community. English is primary the language of new media, it is spoken by about 1.5billion people and it considered as a means of international communication that has been stressed by many scholars namely Crystal (1988) who stated:

English has become the dominant language of world communication (...). It is the official international language of airports and air traffic control. It is the chief maritime language. It is the language of international business and academic conferences, of diplomacy, of sports. Over two thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Three quarters of world's mail is written in English. Eighty percent of the all information stored in the electronic retrieval systems of the world is stored in English (...). Statistics of this kind are truly impressive and could continue for several paragraphs.

Crystal (1988: 67).

Therefore, needless to say that the emphasise on teaching English is becoming a vital part of education all over the world. In the specific case of Algeria, the Algerian educational system consists of three levels: primary, middle, and secondary education. The first two stages are free and obligatory for all Algerian children; however, secondary education is optional. There are three main languages are taught. Arabic, the mother tongue, it is taught for twelve years from first year of primary school till third year of secondary school. French, the first foreign language (FFL1) studied in the Algerian edified for ten years, from third year of primary school till the third year of secondary school, while English as a second foreign language (SFL2) is introduced at the level of first year middle school (i.e., at the age of 11). It covers seven years, four of which at middle school and three at the secondary school as it is shown in the following table:

	Class level	Age	Weekly time
Middle school	1 st year of English	11-12	3 hours
	2 nd year of English	12-13	3 hours
	3 rd year of English	13-14	3 hours
	4 th year of English	14-15	3 hours
Secondary school	1 st year (5 th year of English)	15-16	4 hours (literary stream) 3 hours (scientific stream)
	2 nd year (6 th year of English)	16-17	5 hours (foreign language) 4 hours (literature and philosophy) 3 hours (experimental sciences) 3 hours (mathematics) 3 hours (economics and management)
	3 rd year (7 th year of English)	17-18	5 hours (foreign language) 4 hours (literature language) 4 hours (literature and philosophy) 3 hours (experimental sciences) 3 hours (mathematics) 3 hours (economics and management)

Table 2.1: ELT in Algeria: levels, age, and weekly time. (3rd year MS textbook).

In 2001, the Ministry of Education announced the Educational Reform and numerous changes have occurred concerning the situation of teaching English, while it is still considered to be the second foreign language in the Algerian Educational system after French. Furthermore, the entire cultural context in Algeria is somehow different from lifestyle in Great Britain or any other English-speaking country, but the teachers of English or textbooks and reading documents

are considered as the only sources that can inform the learner about the way of thinking and living of English-speaking people.

However, English language teaching and learning in Algeria does not stop when pupils get their baccalaureate, it is carried out in universities (higher education) where it is taught in separate sections within the foreign language faculties as a main subject for about three years of the LMD system.

2.3. Objectives of EFL Teaching and Learning in Algerian Schools

In the last Algerian Educational Reform in 2002-2003, there has been a great emphasis on English as a second foreign language, it was affirmed that ELT must take part in the learners' development in all aspects. In addition, it must reinforce the motional values, open-mindedness, tolerance and mutual respect with others. Thus, ELT in Algeria aims at reaching the following objectives.

- Communication Objectives;
- Linguistics Objectives;
- Cultural Objectives;
- Methodological Objectives.

The objectives should be reached through the development of mental abilities and skills which should be catered for by all the subjects included in the curriculum because these skills are the basis for any acquisition of language. The CBA approach drives many of its principals from Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. According Blakemore (2008) states that Bloom's taxonomy is an extremely helpful model for defining one's competences and assessing them. Bloom's taxonomy has six levels as shown in the following figure:

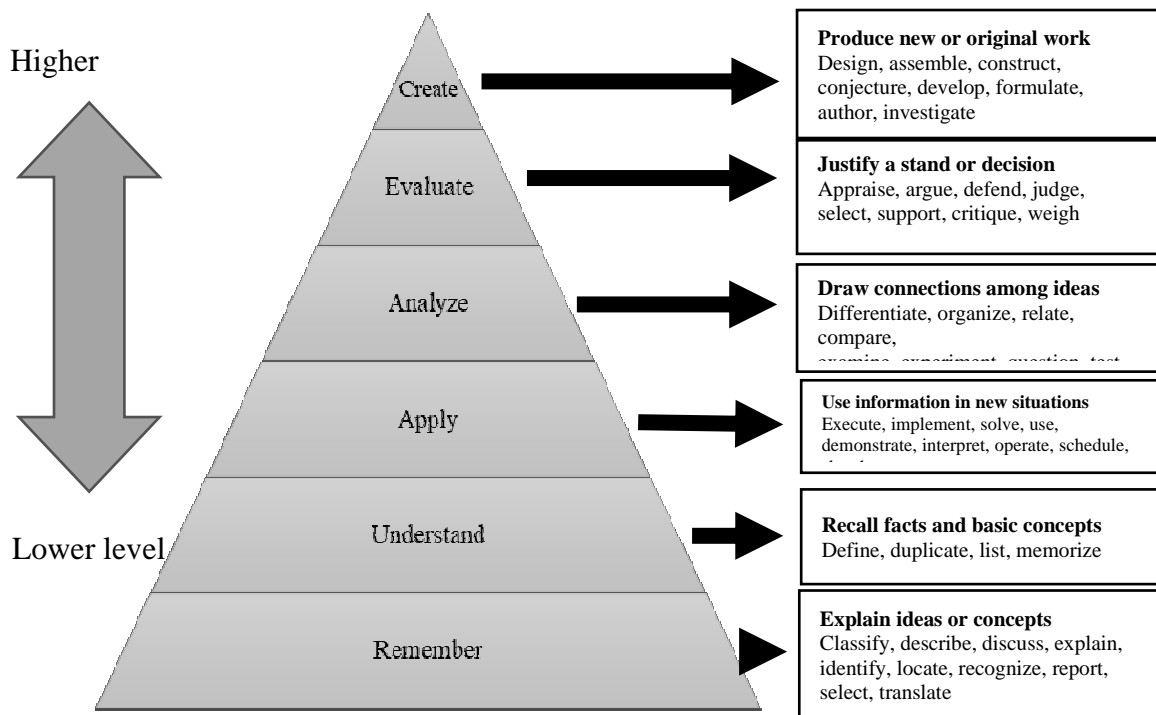


Figure 2.1: Bloom's taxonomy of teaching and learning action verbs (revised 2001).

According to the Ministry of Education, and as stated in syllabuses for English (2004), the general objectives of English language learning and teaching situation in Algeria are:

- To provide the learners with the language necessary to communicate efficiently in a normal social and for working situation both orally and in writing.
- To enable for learners who go on further studies to use the foreign language as a tool or a means acquire extra information about their field of study.
- To enable learners who join the job market to exploit by themselves documents, leaflets and notices related to their job.

Syllabuses for English (2005, p. 6).

In line with this view, in order to achieve these objectives, the Ministry of Education has struggled to reinforce the teaching of English. Thus, whether in Middle or Secondary schools, curricular were enrolled, materials were devoted and textbooks were designed.

2.4. EFL and Algerian Middle School

In the Educational Reform, EFL is given a special status as being the language of globalisation. English is learnt since the learners' first year middle school after being acquainted with French in their primary school education; the country's second language and first foreign language. English is compulsory taught for the four years of middle school, but with a coefficient that is less important than other subjects like mathematics, Arabic, and physics.

As far as, the middle school is concerned since their first year, the learner should study EFL three times a week with a specialised teacher in EFL. They take two tests and one exam each trimester, that is to say three times a year.

2.4.1. Third Year English Textbook

Before dealing with the design of textbooks, it is necessary to offer the definition of textbook and the main role it plays. To begin with, the textbooks are almost universal elements of English language teaching in Algerian schools. Textbooks "*play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning and are considered as the most important factor in the second / foreign language after the teacher*". (Riazi, 2003, p. 52). The textbook represents the guide through which the teacher and learner can follow a logical framework, moreover, it assists the teacher to manage his time. As Sheldon (1988) stated that textbooks "*represent the visible heart of any ELT program*". (p. 237).

Consequently, textbooks are considered as a key component in most language programs, it has been known to be the most popular teaching materials used in foreign language classes.

“My book of English”, is the latest English textbook has been introduced by the Ministry of National Education for the Algerian learners in the school year 2016/2017, it is a textbook designed for third year middle school pupils. Whose authors Lounis Tamrabet, Abdelfatah Chenni, Tayeb Bouazid, Abdelhakim Smara, and Boukri Nabila. The target learners are 14-15 years old, they spent two years learning English. The third year English textbook is designed with the CBA, it includes pictures of deferent cultural backgrounds.

The third year English textbook is also composed of 159 pages, it contains 4 sequences, each

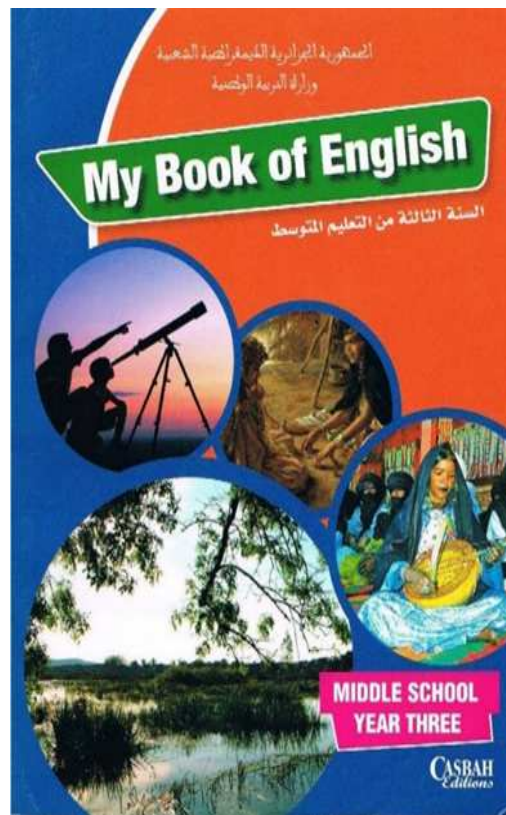


Figure 2.2: "The front cover of my book of English"

sequence is subdivided into ten parts, the table below explained what mentioned above:

Sequences	Titles	Sections
Sequence (1)	Me, My abilities, My interests and my personality	I listen and I do, I pronounce, my grammar tools, I practise, I read and do, I learn to integrate, I think and write, Now I can, I play and enjoy, I read for pleasure
Sequence (2)	Me and My lifestyle	I listen and I do, I pronounce, my grammar tools, I practise, I read and do, I learn to integrate, I think and write, Now I can, I play and enjoy, I read for pleasure
Sequence (3)	Me and the scientific world	I listen and I do, I pronounce, my grammar tools, I practise, I read and do, I learn to integrate, I think and write, Now I can, I play and enjoy, I read for pleasure
Sequence (4)	Me and My environment	I listen and I do, I pronounce, my grammar tools, I practise, I read and do, I learn to integrate, I think and write, Now I can, I play and enjoy, I read for pleasure

Table 2.2: My coursebook presentation

Furthermore, in “my book of English” text book, the sequences presented obtained set of objectives stated at the beginning of the file, it has been divided as follow:

Sections	The objectives
I listen and do I pronounce	Concerns with pronouncing and spelling
I read and do I learn to integrate I think and write	Specify with discovering the language functions
Now I can	Assessing the objectives achieved
I play and enjoy I read for pleasure	Integrate the sociocultural components into the educational context

Table 2.3: The Objectives of Each Section

2.5. The Teaching of the Reading skill

The English language as any other language consists of four skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Learners they receive the language from either the spoken or written texts and decode the meaning. The Reading skill is seen as one of the most important skills.

In the Algerian ELT, students are all native speakers of Arabic and have learnt English as a foreign language for at least seven years. However, the teaching of Reading skill is a challenging and demanding task which is in proves the learner’s capacities.

In addition, the ability to read in English is crucial not only for academic purposes, but also for one’s upward mobility in job market. In an educational environment and more precisely an EFL context, Reading is viewed as the most crucial skill for knowledge acquisition and academic accomplishment. (Dechant, 1991, p. 7).

In most Algerian EFL cases, Teachers try to the suitable strategies and environment to develop student's competencies. In addition, the reading skill teaching tasks place, where the teacher gives short texts, ask the learners to read silently for ten minutes, then he asks to volunteers to read loudly. After that, he tries to define difficult words in order to achieve comprehension and prepare questions to answer. In this phase, the teacher can use various techniques in order to make the Reading activity easier in EFL classes:

- a) Prepare the learner for the context of the text.
- b) Ask questions related to the topic.
- c) Think of some the vocabulary items that will appear in the text.
- d) Using pictures or any visual aid that can help learner to make predictions.

2.6. Reading Difficulties as Language problems

Difficulty is something that complicated to do (Richard 2007, as cited in Wahab 2012). It will be seen from student's mistake or error learning process. In fact, most of EFL learners find difficulties at the of level of Reading and these may result poor performance in Reading test. To begin with, it is necessary to know what difficulty means. As any other language problems, reading difficulties are learning disabilities that can include problems with phonological processing reading fluency or speed, and reading comprehension.

However, the most widely recognized and researched reading disability is associated with difficulty in reading single words, this type of difficulty is concerned with learners with dyslexia, they experience great difficulty in applying the Alphabetic principal to decode single words quickly and efficiently. There are also reading disability which is at the level of poor language comprehension, this disability affects learners who demonstrate difficulty in

formulating main ideas, while the third group are who experience both decoding problems and language comprehension problems.

2.7. Kind Difficulties of Reading

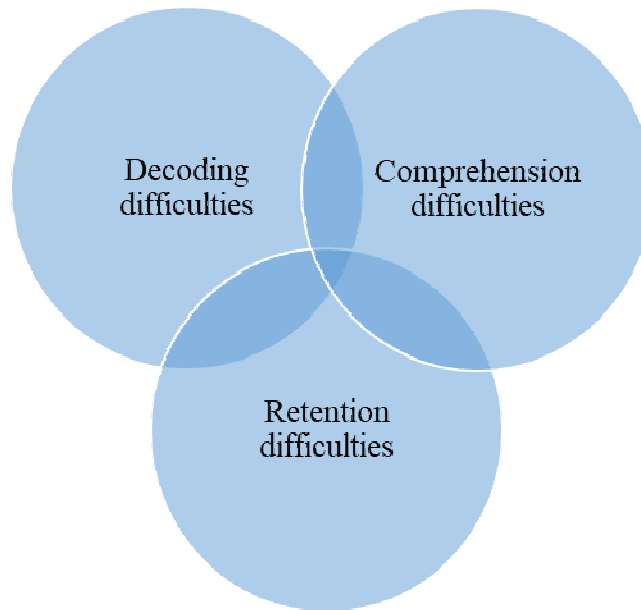


Figure 2.3: Types of Reading Difficulties

In fact, it is necessary to know where and why the Reading process breaks down. Although problems may occur in any area. In the view of many experts, there are three kinds of difficulties with reading which are as it mentioned above.

2.7.1. Decoding Difficulties

It decoding is the process by which a word is broken into individual phonemes and recognized based on these phonemes. For instance, proficient decoders separate the sounds “buh”, “aah” and “guh” in the word “bag”. Simply, the word decoding is the ability to apply your knowledge of letter-sound relationships.

2.7.2. Comprehension Difficulties

Comprehension mostly relies on decoding; learners who struggle to decode find it difficult to understand what has been read. Moreover, reading comprehension is a process in which knowledge of language and knowledge of a topic interact to make complex meaning. It involves decoding, word association and context association. However, learners who leave difficulty with reading difficulty may have trouble identifying important ideas in reading passages. Consequently, a learner with decoding difficulty automatically he will find it difficult to grasp individual words meaning.

2.7.3. Retention Difficulties

Retention based on mastery decoding and comprehending what is written. It depends on high level cognitive skills, including memory and the ability to retrieved related ideas. Students are expected to retain more and more of what they read as they become in higher levels.

2.8. Gender Related Reading Disabilities

At first, it is necessary to represent the topic of gender in ELT field. I consider it relevant to define the term to help the reader contextualize the reason of this study. Gender is something we do as we talk, act, reads and write in ways that constitute us as masculine or feminine within social structures. (Zimmerman and West 1987). In this regard, I will present how gender is related to EFL Teaching and Learning Difficulties, especially the Reading Disabilities. As in any other educational environment, learning languages is very important precisely the English Language. In the specific case of Algeria, pupils reinforce to learn French as a first foreign language, and English as a second foreign language.

In addition, learners are able to acquire the language through mastering the four skills, especially, the reading skill, because it is considered as the core of the language. The majority of EFL learners' disabilities experience Reading disabilities, among all learners who have any sort of disabilities, an amount of them has difficulties inability to learn to read has been called "word blindness", "alexia", or "dyslexia".

Reid et al, (2009) maintain that "dyslexia" is defined as difficulty in the ability to identify printed words and letters in learners who have at least normal average intelligence and who are not impaired by general learning difficulties. Consequently, any disabled student faces a complication of difficulty he cannot read automatically he will not like to read anymore. Overtime, what began as a problem with word recognition becomes a general weakness with spoken and written language.

We as English language Learners (ELLs), we have a further view on discussing the relationship between gender and reading disabilities (RDs) at Middle school(stage2/level3). Gender is one of the variables that affect second language learning, furthermore, it is observed that reading disabilities is higher in males than in females. Females performing better than males in L1 acquisition and L2 learning, they are more motivated to learn the English language, and have positive attitudes towards reading more than males.

2.9. Research Methodology

This section contains the different aspects of research methodology including the statement of the problem.

2.9.1. Statement of the Problem

This extended essay is concerned with difficulties encountered in reading task in the English language by third year middle school pupils. In fact, it has been observed that such learners either males or females cannot read appropriately and fluently, including factors that may cause such difficulties in reading.

2.9.2. Research Instruments

In this work, we choose the appropriate data collection methods. The interview has been used as a research tool, which contains eight questions that are addressed to four middle school EFL teachers. It has been chosen as a research instrument, because it does not take a long time, and it is the best way to collect data in which the respondents / interviewees feel confident and responsible, they answer the questions orally without being controlled of anybody. They give their answers and they have the opportunity to express their ideas according to their previous experience in the domain.

For the sake of obtaining valid information, a classroom observation has been conducted, because it is the best way to observe the learners' low English proficiency level. The data were collected, third year pupils are asked to read the passage then their voices recorded for further analysis.

2.9.2.1. Definition of an Interview

An interview is a direct face-to-face research instrument in the form of verbal set of questions. It is a conversation between an interviewer and the interviewee for gathering information. However, it is a method which permits an exchange of ideas and information. Easwaramoorthy & Zarimpouch (2006) pointed out the interview as "*interviews are an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences and feelings*" (para. 01). Generally, an interview is a qualitative research technique which involves asking open-ended questions to converse with respondents and collect elicited data about a subject.

2.9.2.2. Definition of an Observation

In the field of applied linguistics, observation is recognized as the most direct means of studying people when one is interested in their behaviours. Cohen & Crabtree (2006) defined observation as “*a systematic data collection approach, research use all of their senses to examine people in natural settings or naturally occurring situations*”. (p. 01). However, the observation can be participant or non-participant. Besides, when using a classroom observation as a research tool, the researcher makes no special effort to have a particular role in the setting. Contrarily to this, immersion in the setting permits the observer to hear, to see and to record nearly everything that students and teachers do during a given time. In line with this, the role of the researcher is to sit back and observe how the classroom functions and operates. The purpose of classroom in the context of the present study is not to judge how reading is taught, but rather to describe and investigate how do both male and female struggle while reading in English language differently.

2.10. Context description

This Framework was conducted on Aisha-Um-Almuminin Middle school, it was named after the Prophet Mohamed’s wife Aisha, romanised (Mother of Believers). It is located in Mahdia City exactly in Si-Abdelbaki Street, it was founded in 1984. It has a Teaching principle, twenty-four Classroom Teachers mixed between 17 females and 7 males, and four Specialist peer-time English Teachers (two females/two males). It is a School 457 pupils mixed between 213 females and 244 males.

2.10.1. Teachers’ Profile

The interview was done with four middle school teachers, two females and two males, they are teaching learners between first year to the fourth year, such informants have a Licence

degree in English. Their experience ranges from ten to twenty-five years in the domain of teaching English as a foreign language.

2.10.2. Learners' Profile

The informants who have been observed are eleven third year middle school pupils mixed male and female, belonging to Aisha-Umm-Al-Mumenin middle school. Their age varies between thirteen to fourteen years old; those learners have learned French for six years; being the first foreign language introduced in the third year of primary school, and English as a second foreign language for three years, from the first year of middle school till the third year.

2.11. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter discussed the main aspect of the EFL teaching and learning situation as far as the reading skill is concerned. In this sense, student's reading difficulties, their needs, weaknesses have evoked. How and why the research instruments have been used for this investigation have been revealed too. The next chapter will discuss the field work and data analysis.

Chapter Three: Discussion and Recommendations

- 3.1. Introduction**
- 3.2. Data Collection Analysis**
 - 3.2.1. Teacher's interview**
 - 3.2.2. Learner's classroom Observation**
- 3.3. Discussion of the Findings**
- 3.4. Suggestions and Recommendations**
- 3.5. Discussion of the Main Results**
- 3.6. Conclusion**

3.1. Introduction

The present chapter presents the field work and the analysis of the collected dates. Initially, it attempts to describe the approaches, the adopted strategies, and the data collection methods that are used to investigate the difficulties that EFL learners' reading. It provides the reason behind the selection of each of the data collection methods. Additionally, it presents a full data analysis followed by a general discussion based on the detained results. Then, the main findings are later summarized and presented using tables and figures for the purpose of understanding and analysis.

This chapter is an attempt to answer the research questions. The final findings will be discussed accordingly with the research hypothesis which were formulated in the general introduction. It ends with a conclusion that answers the research questions with some pedagogical recommendations that aim at developing learners' reading ability.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

An interview and classroom observation are two tools used as research instruments for collection data. The observations are the primary research tool used to carry out this study, we thought that the appropriate way for possessing the teacher's daily practices is to observe them in action which mean while teaching. The learners we get recorded their voices are counted and varies between both male and female. However, the observations are meant to have a close view on the Reading practices in EFL classrooms. In addition, the purposes of attitudes towards teaching the Reading skill in English language teaching in the Algerian Middle school in general and their opinions about their weaknesses in that skill. This section will present the data which were collective quantitatively and qualitatively analysis of the two research instruments: classroom observation and teachers interview.

3.2.1. Teachers' interview

This technique was chosen in order to collect information about the teaching / learning process of the receptive skills. Four teachers (two females / two males) were asked to answer six open-ended questions related to their perception of the importance of Reading in EFL Teaching / Learning and to identify the problems encountered by third year EFL pupils while dealing with the reading skill from a teacher's point of view.

- **Question 1:** "How often do you teach reading?".
- This question was asked in order to search for techniques of building reading skills and help EFL learners to develop those skills. Since teaching the reading skill in English classes and across the disciplines is an almost guaranteed way to help students retain the content.
- Generally, the answers to this question express different views towards how often teachers have reading instruction or do reading activities with students weekly. Responses were divided between those three Teachers; Teacher A, Teacher C and Teacher D, who said that they deal with reading task one time per week, whereas, Teacher B said that, "Reading is usually taught once in a sequence, but I like to deal with it in many sessions for about four times in a sequence".
- **Question 2:** "What are the resources you use to teach the reading skill?".
- It was asked to know other ways (if any) to teach the reading skill, if there are any methods or principles that can be aged by teachers when teaching the reading skill. The best resources that might vary slightly based on the grade level of students.
- When asking teachers about what are the most well-known useful techniques they use when teaching the reading skill. Most of the teachers admitted not using any extra-sources, but they

refer to the official textbook, except one teacher (Teacher D) besides the textbook he prefers to use pictures, gestures and worksheets because it is difficult to use data show and other resources due to the lack of materials.

- **Questions 3:** “Do you have specific requirements for the textbook selection?”.
- This question aims to identify to what extent textbook selection is related to be learner’s needs.
- On the whole teachers’ responses there were three different views:
 - As one the respondent says, “I usually choose the subject that makes my pupils enjoy reading.”
 - Another two teachers declared that, “the text selection is always according to the learner’s level and needs”. On the other hand, one teacher explains that, “when I choose the text, I must be relevant to the topic and my objectives”.
- **Question 4:** “Are there pupils in your classes with reading disabilities? (If yes, what kind of disabilities do they face?)”.
- The purpose behind asking this question is to justify if teachers are taking the responsibility towards their learners’ weaknesses, and take it into consideration, noticing if learners are facing problems that may put them in a situation where they cannot deal well in English task. They are asked to mention the most common disabilities that may face.
- Almost anonymously, several explanations were given on why learners find it difficult to perform the reading process. They share the same opinion by saying that there is a relationship between the language and the impact of motivation in the classroom as well as creating interest among learners. Teachers gave their views by mentioning the most common

difficulties encountered by learners, they categorized them into two kinds; those who find difficulty in pronunciation and the limited knowledge of vocabulary.

- **Questions 5:** “Are there specific activities or tasks you rely on to accommodate those disabled pupils on reading?”.
- This later was asked to know types of accommodations that are commonly used to handle students with reading disabilities.
- This question was intended to know what efforts teachers make to improve disabled pupils’ performance.

Responses that given by teachers were divided between Teacher A who comment, “I mostly ask them to practice answering questions task”. On the other hand, other teachers think that tasks of (multiple choices/filling the gap/true-false/yes-no tasks) help students to overcome reading disabilities at the minimal.

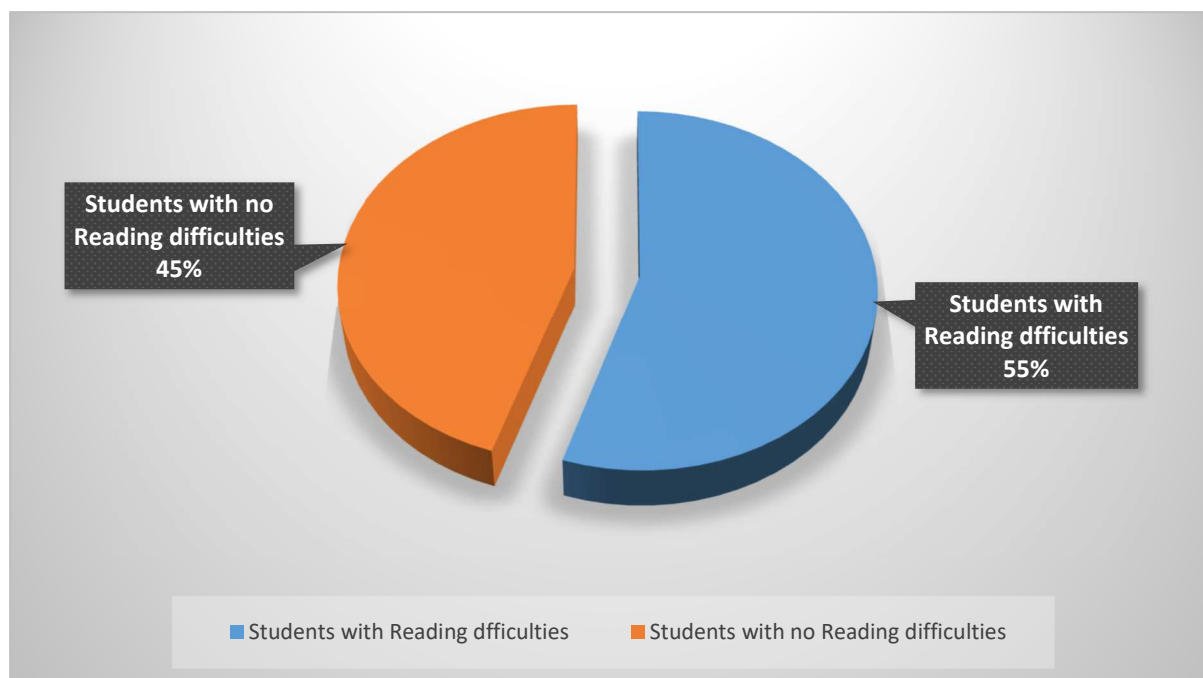
- **Question 6:** “Do you think that the textbook selection for reading task take into consideration pupils on the reading disabilities?”.
- From a previous experience in teaching foreign languages, all teachers were answer this question and justify how textbook is while dealing with disabled learners (readers) in the classroom. To examine how materials influence the reading skill of normal and impaired students.

3.2.2. Learner's Classroom Observation

A classroom observation was the second research tool that used in our study, we have conducted a classroom observation which was the second research tool used in our studies. In data collection, as a form of research instrument an observation gives the opportunity to researcher to collect data through watching, listening and recording, and it displays a representative insight into teacher-student interaction, classroom observation was done on purpose because what teachers think or see is not always what they do in the classroom. For that purpose, we have dealt with third year pupils of Aisha Um-Al-Mumenin Middle school, this study was applied on one group of a classroom consist 40 students which were divided into 2 groups due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic precautions. Each group consist of 20 students. The observation was taking place on March 7th, 2021 with a duration of 45 minutes. Each of the sampled learners was observed accordingly with his availability and willingness to participate in the research. A total of 20 students, we have noticed that only 11 students that their level in English is too weak and they face a lot of problems with reading as they are shown the table shown below:

	Student with reading disabilities	Student with NO reading disabilities	Total
Number of students	11	9	20
Percentage	55%	45%	100%

Table 3.1: Students with Reading difficulties



Pie chart 3.1: Percentages of Reading difficulties in EFL classroom.

The observation took place in a third year EFL classroom of 20 students, we will begin first describing the general atmosphere of the classroom. First, the classroom was such an anxious free environment and the main teaching strategy deployed was the Competency-based Approach. English was just one aspect of their core degree, because they also studied French, History, and literature and other subjects. At the time of the observation, learners were comfortable but we requested to participate during the lesson also. At the beginning learners were asked to take turns reading a piece of discourse regardless to their reading mistakes to extract pupils' difficulties course in English in general, and English text reading difficulties in particular. Rather, our main focus is to identify if there are any significant differences between males and females in reading accuracy, speed and fluency.

In fact, from the observation, reading is not a sign of unintelligence or unwilling to learn, in contrary, reading is the key concept acquire the other skills of any language. In the most

Algerian cases, learners who study English as a second language, since it is a foreign language to them to some extent it is difficult to learn. What has been noticed is that most pupils face problems related either to reading words or poor reading comprehension in addition to a combination of weaknesses in word reading skills and core comprehension areas, and this can vary dramatically among gender. Those struggling readers (SR) may be able to decode but not actually comprehend what they have read, and this may cause because students did not master the basis in earlier grades or teachers not trained well enough of the area of reading instructions.

In the past, the way **pupil** |**pyoo-pul**| (*instead of people* |*pee-pul*|) lived was very different from the way which we live nowadays. In old times people **comenly** (*instead of commonly* |*kó-mun-lee*|) used to live in a simple **dealing** |**dee(-u)-ling**| (*instead of dwelling* |*dwe-ling*|) with less electric machines, most of the household tasks were done by hand, but now there are **watching** |**wó-ching**| (*instead of washing* |*wó-shing*|) machines refrigerators and so many other things.

In the past used to dress up in simple ways, they used to wear Bernaous, Elhayek. Now they have developed trend and stylish clothes. People in the past **consyomed** |**kun'syomd**| (*instead of consumed* |*kun'soomd*|) fresh, natural and healthy food, but today they eat burgers, Shawarmas, and Pizzas.

Ways of **entaitment** (*instead of entertainment* |*en-tur'teyn-munt*) changed a lot, children used to play rag dolls, marbles, hopscotch and today they play video games.

Figure 3.1: Female reading mistakes sample

In the past, the **why** |wI| (*way, /wey/*) people lived was **vary** |veh-ree| (*way, /ve-ree/*) different from the **why** |wI| (*instead of way /wey/*) **in wish** |wish| (*instead of In Which /wich/*) we live nowadays. In old times people...*(pause)* **cominoly** |kú-min-o-lee| (*instead of Commonly, /kó-mun-lee/*) to live in simple **doling** |dówling| (*instead of Dwelling, /dwe-ling/*) with **loss** |lós| **electris** |i'lek-tris| (*instead of less electric /les/ /i'lek-trik/*) machines, most of the household **takst** (**mixing out letters**) (*instead of Tasks*) where done **behind** (**mixing out words**) (*instead of By hand*) but now there are **washing** |wa-shing| (*/wó-shing/*) machines ... *Aaaaa..(stutter), (skipping word “refrigerator”)* and so many other things.

In the past people used to dress up in simple ways, **th-th-they** (*stutter*) Bernous, Elhayek, now they have **deloped** (**developed**) (*taking out syllable*) trend and stylish clothes. People in the past **commend** |ku'mend| (*instead of consumed, /kun'soomd/*) fresh natural and healthy food, but today they eat Burgers, Shawarmas, and Pizzas. Way of *(pause)* **entaiment** (*instead of entertainment /,en-tur'teyn-munt/*) changed a lot, children used to play with rag dolls, **maples** |mey-puls| (*mixing out letters*) (*instead of marbles /maar-bulz/*) and hopscotch and today they play video games.

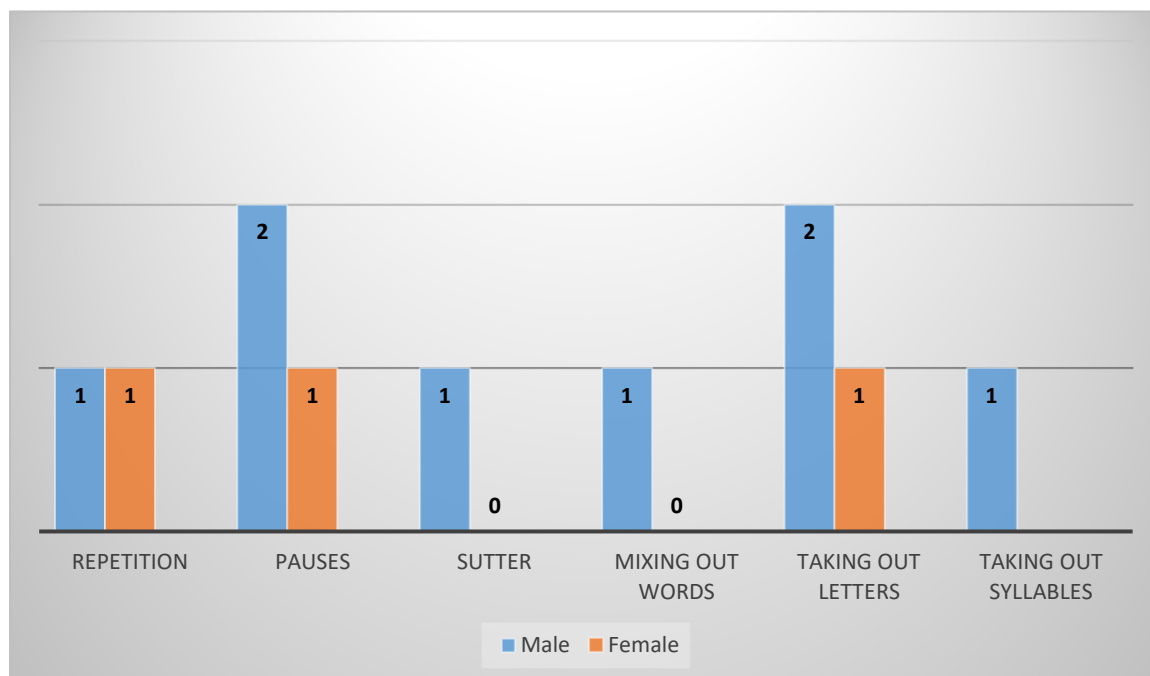
Figure 3.2: Male reading mistakes sample

Every student learns at his / her own pace, when he is having difficulty in a specific subject, such as reading. There are several common reading issues that can hinder their progress in reading skills. As shown in the table below:

Learners are listed anonymously; we will be referred to: Female (*) and Male (+)

Reading difficulties	Gender	
	Male	Female
Repetition	+	*
Pauses	++	*
Stutter	+	/
Mixing out words	+	/
Mixing out letters	++	*
Taking out syllables	+	/

Table 3.2: Types of Reading difficulties



Bare graph 3.2: Gender differences in reading difficulties

3.3. Discussion of the Findings

Teachers' interview was conducted with two main aims:

Firstly, to get deeper insight into teachers' perceptions of the role of teaching English language reading skills. Secondly, to identify gender related reading difficulties from a teachers' views about their students' proficiency level.

The analysis of the responses to the interview provided by teachers of English language at Aisha Um-Al-Mumenin Middle School allowed to draw certain conclusions:

- Most of teachers emphasizing on grammar and vocabulary in their lessons.
- Teachers emphasize on the importance of developing of reading skills and comprehension abilities of their students, because they believe in the same idea which is that "Students with

disabilities are students of all teachers". Besides, those teachers claim that the program is too long so that they have devote a short time for reading.

Finally, teachers gave the main causes behind their students' reading problems and show the responsibility of improving their leaners' reading performance by using an extra-techniques or strategies. In addition to the interview, the major findings of the classroom observation show that most of pupils who have reading difficulties, they can see and hear clearly, but they do it differently in several ways. However, reading difficulties vary between male and female in the way in which:

Female students outperform male students in a range of indicators of academic performance.

There are several possible explanations for these differences in Reading disabilities. Males face more difficulties more than females, because females are considered as the ones who are more open to new linguistic forms in the target language.

3.4. Discussion of the Main Results

The main purpose of this study is to investigate gender related reading difficulties, and discuss the multiple difficulties that may EFL learners face, as well as to select the factors behind these difficulties. Then, seek for solutions to overcome their problems.

Research question one, "What are the main problems that EFL learners face in their reading process". Such learners may face problems with reading in the English language , unfamiliar words and difficulty in pronouncing words.

Research question two, "What are the gender-based factors affecting EFL learners' reading performance? The causes behind reading difficulties may be related to the attitudes towards reading the English language or because the reading skills is really difficult for them.

Research question three, “What are the techniques to help remedy such problems in class? The suggestions aim at encouraging reading outside the classroom (for pleasure) motivating them to develop their skills through reading short stories.

3.5. Suggestions and Recommendations

Our study ends up with some solutions to remedy such reading difficulties, also improve the student's reading skill, they are:

- EFL learners should read a lot because reading is closely related to writing.
- Learners should use the language not demonstrate their knowledge about the language
- Errors are tolerated they are seen as a natural outcome of developing communication because teacher work on fluency.
- Teacher should use of authentic materials in listening and reading because it provides language as it used by native speakers.
- Teacher should ask which strategies have been most successful for them.
- Teacher should provide a rich language environment with exposure to many types of writing materials.
- Teacher must give the learner more time to read passages because they are typically slow readers.
- Teacher should provide alternative materials with high interests and controlled vocabulary.

3.6. Conclusion

The present chapter provides a practical case study that was done qualitatively by using two research tools. In fact, the final findings showed that third year middle school pupils cannot read well, because they face a number of difficulties in reading. In addition, gender related reading difficulties caused mainly to their lack of English learning habit; learners do not often read, especially males are not interested in learning foreign languages at all. That is why the following chapter seeks to provide some solutions in order to enhance the learner's vocabulary knowledge and to lead a better pronunciation while reading.

To conclude, this chapter two main points mentioning: first the interview fulfilling its aim in providing further insights into teacher's views about the situation of reading teaching at the Middle School.

General

Conclusion

General Conclusion

First of all, we cannot imagine a human society without language. Learning a second / foreign language should require learning the language first, then the mastery of the four language skills. By reading in a target language, we build vocabulary for English lessons. It is often considered as a good way to improve learners' proficiency. The main concern of this research work is about gender related reading difficulties in third year EFL classrooms at Middle School level.

The research work was divided into three chapters; the first chapter started by defining the reading skill with reference to its different types, models, and strategies, dealing with the way reading is taught as well as stating the different reading difficulties. However, the second chapter presents the ELT situation in Algeria especially in middle school level by describing the syllabus and textbook as well as stating the major difficulties that may EFL learners face and how it is related to text selection. It also provides the practical part of the present research methodology by explaining the sample population, research instruments in addition to the context description.

The third chapter states the data collection / analysis and discussion of the findings and then propose some solutions and recommendations for the teaching / learning of reading skill.

The findings of the study showed that middle school EFL learners have problems in reading performance at the level of pronunciation and coming across unfamiliar words which prevent them from reading a passage fluently, it also revealed that text selection and reading materials have an impact on the learner's reading achievement.

Some limitations were raised during the accomplishment of this research work and due to the coronavirus pandemic, this made data collection difficult and in order to obtain a valid data, a classroom observation instrument was chosen. Finally, it is important to make an investigation on the importance of extensive reading in enhancing learner's reading level.

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APPENDICES

Teacher's Interview

Question 1: “How often do you teach reading?”.

Question 2: “What are the resources you use to teach the reading skill?”.

Questions 3: “Do you have specific requirements for the textbook selection?”.

Question 4: “Are there pupils in your classes with reading disabilities? (If yes, what kind of disabilities do they face?)”.

Questions 5: “Are there specific activities or tasks you rely on to accommodate those disabled pupils on reading?”.

Question 6: “Do you think that the textbook selection for reading task take into consideration pupils on the reading disabilities?”.

Sample text of the classroom observation**Past vs present lifestyle**

In the past, the way people lived was very different from the way in which we live nowadays. In old times people commonly used to live simple dwelling with less electric machines, most of the household tasks were done by hand. But now there washing machines, refrigerators and so many other things.

In the past people used to dress up in simple ways. They used to wear Bernous, Elhayek. Now they have developed trend and stylish clothes.

People in the past consumed fresh, natural, and healthy food, but today, they eat Burger, Shawarma, Pizza.

Ways of entertainment changed a lot. Children used to play with rag dolls, marbles hopscotch, and today they video games.

Adopted from: 3MS Book

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن فروق صعوبات القراءة بين الذكور والاناث لدى طلبة الصف الثالث متوسط بمؤسسة عائشة ام المؤمنين -تيارت. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على المنهج الكمي والنوعي. النتائج أثبتت أن عسر القراءة عند الاولاد أكثر من البنات لأسباب نفسية و فيزيولوجية وذهنية.

Summary

This study aims to reveal the differences in reading difficulties between males and females among third-year intermediate students at the Aisha Umm Al-Momineen Middle School Tiaret. This study was based on the quantitative and qualitative approach. The results proved that males have more reading difficulties than females due to psychological, physiological and mental reasons.

Résumé

La présente étude vise à révéler les différences dans les difficultés de lecture entre les mâles et les femelles parmi les élèves de troisième année du moyen à l'école intermédiaire Aicha Um-Al-Momenin - Tiaret. Cette étude a été basée sur l'approche quantitative et qualitative. Les résultats obtenus ont prouvé que les males ont plus de difficultés de lecture que les femelles pour des raisons psychologiques, physiologiques et mentales.