A Review of Factors Affecting Students' English Reading Comprehension

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The study aims to synthesize existing research on students' English reading comprehension to identify common challenges, evaluate instructional strategies, and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving reading proficiency.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A systematic review of qualitative studies was conducted, focusing on key factors influencing reading comprehension, including vocabulary knowledge, inferential reasoning, metacognitive awareness, and learner motivation.

Findings: The review indicates that students commonly struggle with inferencing, critical thinking, and unfamiliar vocabulary. Second-language learners face additional linguistic and cognitive barriers. The literature highlights that explicit instruction, scaffolding, and the use of digital tools have a positive impact on reading comprehension outcomes.

Research Limitations: The study relies solely on qualitative research, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The review is also constrained by the availability and scope of existing studies on reading comprehension.

Managerial Implications: The findings emphasize the need for educators and curriculum designers to adopt diverse, interactive, and evidence-based reading strategies tailored to students' linguistic and cognitive needs. The results support policy decisions aimed at strengthening reading instruction practices.

Originality/Value: This review consolidates insights from multiple qualitative studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting English reading comprehension and offers practical guidance for enhancing instructional approaches.

Introduction

Reading comprehension serves as a foundational academic skill that strongly influences students' learning outcomes and future educational success. Nevertheless, many learners, particularly those studying English as a foreign language (EFL), encounter persistent difficulties in this area. As noted by Hezam et. al., (2022) EFL students frequently struggle with limited vocabulary and inadequate word-recognition skills, both of which hinder their ability to grasp textual meaning. These linguistic challenges underscore the need for pedagogical interventions that support vocabulary development and strengthen students' overall reading proficiency. The insights presented by Hezam et. al., (2022) affirm that vocabulary deficits pose a substantial barrier to comprehension and highlight the importance of adopting effective instructional strategies and targeted language support.

In addition to linguistic issues, cognitive factors exert a significant influence on reading comprehension. Lestari et. al., (2017) observe that many EFL learners have difficulty drawing inferences and identifying central ideas, abilities essential for understanding a text beyond its surface meaning. These difficulties indicate gaps in learners' strategic reading skills and critical-thinking capacities, suggesting the necessity of instructional practices that explicitly cultivate such competencies. Furthermore, limitations in working memory and inefficient cognitive processing can further impede comprehension by restricting learners' ability to integrate new information with prior knowledge. When students are unable to interpret implicit messages or recognize textual patterns, they may struggle to construct coherent mental representations of the material they read. To address these cognitive constraints, educators are encouraged to implement explicit strategy instruction, such as summarizing, predicting, and evaluating texts – along with interactive learning activities, scaffolded questioning, and metacognitive training. Such approaches can enhance students' analytical abilities and promote greater reading autonomy, ultimately supporting improved academic performance.

Affective elements, including motivation and personal interest, also play a crucial role in students' reading comprehension. Nguyen (2021) reports that limited background knowledge, pressure from time constraints, and inappropriate strategy use often contribute to learners' reading difficulties. These findings point to the need for learning environents that actively foster motivation and engagement. Students with low motivation may find it challenging to interact meaningfully with demanding texts, which can lead to reduced comprehension and poorer retention. Nguyen (2021) also highlights the influence of external factors, such as restricted time for reading tasks, which can impede the effective application of reading strategies. Providing learners with structured guidance, adequate time to process information, and opportunities to connect new material with existing knowledge can help alleviate these challenges and support stronger literacy development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this comprehensive review study is to systematically synthesize existing research concerning English reading comprehension challenges and effective instructional approaches for students. This investigation aims to clearly delineate the primary cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors that constitute major obstacles for students in comprehending English texts. Furthermore, the review will meticulously examine the empirical evidence regarding the influential roles of background knowledge, reading strategies, and motivation in determining a student's reading comprehension performance. Finally, the study will culminate in an assessment of current research on interventions and teaching methodologies proven to be effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills, providing a valuable synthesis for educators and researchers.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main cognitive, linguistic, and affective difficulties that students face when trying to understand English texts?

2. In what specific ways do students' background knowledge, reading strategies, and levels of motivation affect their ability to comprehend what they read in English?

3. Based on prior research, which instructional strategies and intervention programs have been shown to be effective in improving students' English reading comprehension skills?

Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review design to critically examine existing scholarship regarding challenges in English reading comprehension among students. By synthesizing data from previous research, this approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors contributing to reading difficulties. The specific procedural framework for this study is detailed below.

Data Collection

The data collection strategy involved a comprehensive search of credible academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and JSTOR. To ensure the currency and relevance of the findings, the search was restricted to peer-reviewed journals and academic texts published within the last 10-15 years. The selection process prioritized literature specifically addressing reading comprehension deficits in student populations, with particular emphasis on learners acquiring English as a first or second language. This systematic approach aims to identify key patterns, contributing variables, and potential pedagogical solutions rooted in empirical evidence.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the validity and scope of the review.

Inclusion: Selected studies were required to provide empirical evidence; qualitative or quantitative analysis of the cognitive, linguistic, or affective determinants of reading comprehension.

Exclusion: Research focusing on reading comprehension in native English-speaking adults (non-students) or studies lacking a specific focus on student academic challenges were excluded to maintain the research's targeted scope.

These criteria ensure that the synthesized insights specifically address the academic needs of students navigating English reading comprehension.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis framework. This method facilitated the categorization of comprehension challenges and remediation strategies based on recurring patterns identified across the literature. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of distinct interventions proposed by previous scholars. By juxtaposing the outcomes of various strategies, this study highlights the most effective evidence-based methods for mitigating reading difficulties.

Ethical Considerations

As this study relies exclusively on the analysis of secondary data from previously published public domain sources, it does not involve direct interaction with human subjects and is therefore exempt from institutional review board (IRB) oversight. However, academic integrity is strictly maintained. All sources, ideas, and findings derived from existing literature are rigorously cited and acknowledged in accordance with standard referencing protocols to prevent plagiarism and ensure the proper attribution of intellectual property.

Review of Related Literature

This section reviews existing literature drawn from authentic academic journals and books relevant to the current study. The review is thematically organized into three primary domains: Linguistic Barriers, Cognitive Barriers, and Affective Factors.

The present study draws on prior research documented in reputable academic publications. The review is organized thematically and centers on linguistic barriers affecting reading comprehension.

Linguistic Barriers

Linguistic barriers in reading emerge when learners encounter challenges related to vocabulary, grammatical structures, and sentence organization features that may differ from their first language or exceed their proficiency level. Such obstacles restrict readers' ability to grasp essential ideas and concepts within a text. Difficulties may be compounded by unfamiliar idioms, cultural references, and complex syntactic constructions, all of which can contribute to misunderstandings and reduce engagement with written materials.

In a study of Saudi EFL learners, Alqurashi (2024) investigated reading proficiency alongside linguistic and non-linguistic constraints. The findings underscore vocabulary knowledge as the strongest

predictor of reading performance. Limited lexical resources were shown to hinder comprehension substantially, while reading anxiety – particularly among female students – further inhibited understanding. Alqurashi's analysis suggests that both cognitive factors, such as vocabulary breadth, and affective elements, such as anxiety, must be addressed simultaneously. Consequently, the study recommends pedagogical interventions that focus on expanding learners' vocabulary while also mitigating anxiety through supportive instructional practices.

Similarly, Hezam et al., (2022) explored reading comprehension challenges among participants in an intensive English program, noting that restricted vocabulary and inadequate word-recognition skills were major linguistic impediments. Their results indicate that male and female learners encounter comparable difficulties, implying that such challenges stem from general linguistic limitations rather than gender differences. The study therefore emphasizes the need for structured support,particularly vocabulary-building initiatives and fluency trainingto help learners overcome these barriers.

In a related investigation, Kasim & Raisha (2017) examined both linguistic and non-linguistic influences on EFL reading comprehension. Their results revealed that unfamiliar vocabulary constituted the most significant challenge, with 81 percent of participants identifying it as the chief barrier to understanding texts. This substantial proportion highlights the central role of lexical competence in the comprehension process. Their findings correspond with broader theoretical perspectives, such as P. Nation (2001) assertion that insufficient vocabulary limits readers' capacity to infer meaning and interpret contextual cues. Although Kasim and Raisha acknowledge non-linguistic variablessuch as motivation and prior knowledge, their work reinforces the primacy of vocabulary development as a foundation for effective reading."

A broader perspective on reading strategies is offered by Song et. al., (2020), who reviewed research on the approaches used by learners of English as an additional language. Their analysis shows that these learners employ a range of strategies and adjust them in accordance with the specific goals of reading tasks. More sophisticated strategies tend to be activated when tasks require higher levels of precision or problem-solving, indicating a degree of metacognitive engagement. The authors call for further research on strategy use among K-12 EAL learners, emphasizing the need to deepen understanding of how younger students process and comprehend texts.

The role of linguistic features in text readability is further explored by Barrot (2013), who investigated the impact of lexical and syntactic complexity on ESL comprehension. The study revealed that vocabulary difficulty has a stronger effect on comprehension than syntactic arrangement. While syntactic knowledge remains relevant, Barrot's findings demonstrate that unfamiliar or complex vocabulary presents a more substantial obstacle to understanding. The study thus supports curricular approaches that prioritize vocabulary enrichment as an essential component of ESL reading instruction.

Cognitive Barriers

Cognitive barriers in English reading comprehension encompass a range of mental constraints that interfere with a reader's capacity to extract and retain meaning from texts. These barriers frequently arise when the cognitive demands of a reading task surpass the reader's available mental resources. For example, limitations in working memory often impede a reader's ability to simultaneously store and manipulate linguistic information, which is essential for integrating ideas across sentences or larger discourse units. When the linguistic load of the text becomes too demanding, comprehension tends to deteriorate. Vocabulary knowledge represents another major cognitive determinant of reading success; readers with insufficient lexical familiarity often struggle to decode terms, infer contextual meanings, or connect new words to existing mental representations, thereby slowing comprehension processes. Syntactic complexity can further intensify cognitive strain, as highly embedded or grammatically intricate structures require substantial processing effort. Prior knowledge also plays a decisive role: readers depend on previously acquired information to interpret new content, and when background knowledge is lacking, comprehension may falter. These challenges are often amplified among individuals learning English as a second language,

who must simultaneously contend with linguistic unfamiliarity and increased cognitive load. Recognizing these cognitive barriers is essential for designing effective strategies to strengthen learners' reading comprehension abilities.

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive load theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the mental demands associated with reading comprehension. Sweller et. al., (2011) explains that cognitive load refers to the amount of mental effort required to process and understand information. When a text imposes demands that exceed a reader's cognitive capacity, comprehension is compromised. In the context of English reading, tasks that overtax working memory obstruct the integration of newly encountered information with prior knowledge. Sweller et. al., (2011) emphasizes the importance of structuring instructional materials in ways that minimize unnecessary cognitive burden, a recommendation that is particularly relevant for learners navigating English as an additional language.

Working Memory and Its Impact

The concept of working memory, first articulated by Baddeley & Hitch (2000), offers critical insight into the cognitive processes involved in reading. Their model describes working memory as a multi-component system responsible for temporarily storing and manipulating information during complex cognitive activities, including reading. While engaging with English texts, readers rely on working memory to manage linguistic structures such as unfamiliar vocabulary or syntactically complex sentences. When working memory capacity is limited, readers may find it difficult to retain essential details long enough to form coherent interpretations, resulting in weakened comprehension. Enhancing working memory through targeted cognitive exercises has therefore been suggested as one possible means of improving English reading performance.

The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary breadth substantially influences readers' ability to understand written English. K. Nation (2019) notes that a strong lexical foundation is essential for meaningful engagement with texts. Readers who lack sufficient vocabulary encounter difficulty decoding new words, interpreting figurative language, or making contextual inferences.

These challenges become more pronounced when dealing with idiomatic constructions, multi-word expressions, or technical terminology. A more expansive and diverse vocabulary facilitates quicker recognition of words and more efficient construction of meaning, ultimately promoting stronger comprehension and retention.

Syntactic Complexity and Cognitive Overload

Syntactic complexity also contributes significantly to cognitive strain during reading. LaBerge & Samuels (1974) argue that intricate syntactic patterns place substantial demands on the reader's cognitive system, often resulting in overload. English structures such as nested subordinate clauses, passive voice constructions, or extended noun phrases can challenge readers, particularly those with limited proficiency. When cognitive resources are consumed by the effort required to decipher structure, fewer resources remain available for interpreting meaning, leading to slow or incomplete comprehension.

Influence of Prior Knowledge and Schema Theory

Schema theory provides additional insight into how readers negotiate new information. Anderson (2017) posits that readers rely on existing mental frameworks, or schemata, to interpret and organize incoming information. During English reading, individuals draw upon prior knowledge to make sense of unfamiliar content. However, comprehension difficulties often arise when readers lack sufficient background knowledge about a topic or when the text contains culturally specific references outside their experiences. In such cases, the absence of a relevant schema may impede the construction of meaning.

Cognitive Barriers and Word Recognition

Difficulties in word recognition form another critical cognitive barrier that can hinder fluent reading. When readers labor to decode individual words, a disproportionate amount of their cognitive capacity is expended on basic processing tasks, leaving insufficient resources for comprehending broader ideas or arguments. P. Nation (2001) emphasizes that the ultimate goal of reading is to grasp the writer's intended meaning, a process that

experienced readers perform seamlessly despite its underlying complexity. In contrast, poor word recognition can significantly slow reading and obstruct comprehension, particularly among learners with restricted vocabularies. These observations highlight the importance of systematic vocabulary instruction to mitigate cognitive barriers linked to word-level processing.

Working Memory Limitations

The limitations of working memory constitute an additional impediment to effective reading comprehension. Readers must retain segments of text while integrating them with accumulated knowledge and drawing inferences, but once working memory is overwhelmed, the ability to construct coherent interpretations declines. Cowan et. al., (2020) describe working memory as a system that bridges memory and attention by maintaining a small set of activated long-term memories along with the few items currently in the focus of attention. Their research indicates that individuals with reduced working memory capacity encounter significant difficulties when processing dense or conceptually demanding texts, particularly when extended integration of ideas is required. These findings underscore the need for instructional approaches that support working memory functions, especially for learners experiencing cognitive constraints.

Affective Factors

Affective factors such as anxiety, limited motivation, and unfavourable attitudes toward reading have been widely recognised as major constraints on English reading comprehension. Anxiety, in particular, can interfere with readers' ability to process and interpret texts, creating cognitive barriers that interrupt comprehension. Drawing on their investigation, (Song et. al., 2020) observed that skilled readers tended to regulate their reading more effectively by detecting and resolving comprehension problems, whereas less skilled readers concentrated primarily on word recognition and surface-level meaning. Although second-language readers occasionally employed meta-cognitive strategies, they often found problem-solving difficult. English-as-an-additional-language readers demonstrated more visible strategic behaviour but also encountered greater challenges, while monolingual readers managed comprehension breakdowns with more ease. High levels of anxiety can therefore diminish learners' concentration and retention, often arising from fear of error or previous negative learning experiences. Establishing supportive classroom practices has been highlighted as an important way to mitigate anxiety and strengthen overall comprehension.

A lack of motivation represents another key obstacle to effective reading in English. Motivation has long been regarded as a foundational component of successful reading development, and scholars consistently underscore its complexity and influence. As Dornyei (2001) notes, motivation encompasses multiple theoretical models, reflecting its dynamic and multifaceted nature. Creating an inviting and stimulating learning environment is essential for fostering motivation and improving reading performance. Gambrell (1996), for example, advocates for instructional approaches that encourage learners to select their own reading materials and allocate substantial time to reading activities. The use of diverse genres can further enrich learners' engagement and enjoyment. When motivation is low, learners are less inclined to invest effort in interpreting and evaluating texts, which in turn weakens comprehension. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational supports have been identified as central to promoting active reading, and incorporating meaningful content along with appropriately challenging tasks can significantly enhance learners' comprehension outcomes.

Negative attitudes toward reading also pose a substantial barrier to learners' success. As (Anigbogu, 2006) highlights, although reading is fundamental for academic development and everyday functioning, many university students exhibit indifference toward it, often diverted by entertainment and social commitments that detract from their academic priorities. Learners who view reading as burdensome or unrewarding are less likely to engage deeply with texts, resulting in limited comprehension. Such attitudes frequently originate from earlier difficulties with reading or insufficient exposure to positive reading experiences. Anigbogu's work emphasises the importance of cultivating favourable attitudes by introducing approaches that promote enjoyment and personal relevance. By nurturing positive perceptions of reading and encouraging meaningful connections with texts, educators can help learners achieve higher levels of comprehension.

Findings

The reviewed literature consistently identifies linguistic constraints as key impediments to reading comprehension among learners of English as a foreign or second language, with vocabulary knowledge repeatedly highlighted as the most decisive component. In their respective studies, Alqurashi (2024), Hezam et. al., (2022), and Kasim & Raisha (2017) all indicate that insufficient vocabulary markedly restricts learners' ability to construct meaning from texts. Kasim & Raisha (2017) report that 81 percent of their participants attributed their primary reading difficulty to unfamiliar lexical items, while Hezam et. al., (2022) further note that challenges in word recognition intensify these comprehension barriers. Complementing these findings, demonstrates that the complexity of vocabulary exerts a stronger influence on text readability than syntactic features, underscoring the centrality of lexical development in improving EFL reading competence. Collectively, these studies point to the need for vocabulary enhancement as a core focus of reading instruction.

In addition to vocabulary limitations, several linguistic and affective factors contribute to the complexity of reading in a second language. Alqurashi (2024) observes that reading anxiety, particularly among female learnersfunctions as a substantial obstacle, suggesting that anxiety-reduction techniques should accompany vocabulary-focused instruction. Further insight is provided by Song et al., (2020), who examine the strategy use of English-as-an-additional-language readers and highlight the significance of meta-cognitive awareness in fostering comprehension. Their work implies that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can support learners in managing complex texts more effectively. Taken together, these studies advocate for an integrated pedagogical approach that attends to both cognitive and emotional dimensions of the reading process.

Cognitive barriers represent another significant dimension of comprehension difficulty, stemming from constraints in working memory, lexical knowledge, and syntactic processing. Foundational research by Baddeley & Hitch (2000) shows that limited working memory capacity impedes learners' ability to store and manipulate information from complex sentence structures, thereby disrupting comprehension. Complementing this, P. Nation (2001) argues that restricted vocabulary knowledge inhibits efficient word recognition and meaning construction, slowing reading and diminishing understanding. Sweller et. al., (2011) cognitive load theory further illustrates how excessive mental demands can overwhelm learners, particularly those reading in an additional languagehindering their ability to integrate new information with existing knowledge. Schema theory, as proposed by Anderson (2017), likewise emphasizes that inadequate background knowledge can prevent readers from making sense of unfamiliar content. These insights collectively suggest the value of interventions such as vocabulary enrichment, working-memory support, and the use of structured reading materials to alleviate cognitive strain and enhance comprehension.

Affective dimensions,including anxiety, motivational deficits, and negative orientations toward readingintensify these cognitive challenges. As shown by Song et. al., (2020) language anxiety can disrupt concentration and impede the application of problem-solving strategies essential for comprehension. Motivation is also identified as a pivotal factor. Dornyei (2001) and Gambrell (1996) both contend that engaging, learner-centred reading activities can significantly strengthen comprehension outcomes. Negative attitudes toward reading, often shaped by previous academic setbacks or competing social interests, further diminish learners' capacity to engage meaningfully with texts (Anigbogu, 2006). These findings reinforce the importance of pedagogical practices that cultivate motivation, reduce anxiety, and encourage constructive reading habits, thereby supporting improved comprehension and broader academic achievement.

Discussion

The literature reviewed consistently points to linguistic barriers as a central challenge in the reading comprehension of EFL and ESL learners, with vocabulary knowledge identified as the most decisive element. Studies by Alqurashi (2024), Hezam et. al., (2022), and Kasim & Raisha (2017) demonstrate that insufficient vocabulary significantly restricts learners' ability to interpret texts. In particular, Kasim & Raisha (2017) note that 81 percent of students reported unfamiliar vocabulary as their primary obstacle, while Hezam et. al.,

(2022) highlight the compounding effect of word-recognition difficulties. Barrot (2013) adds that vocabulary complexity has a greater influence on text readability than syntactic structure, reinforcing the importance of lexical mastery in second-language reading. These findings indicate that vocabulary enhancement should remain a central focus of EFL reading instruction. Nonetheless, linguistic challenges encompass more than vocabulary alone, suggesting that effective teaching must also attend to syntactic awareness, discourse organization, and contextualized language exposure to promote fuller reading proficiency.

In addition to linguistic issues, cognitive and psychological dimensions play a substantial role in shaping learners' comprehension abilities. Sweller et. al., (2011) cognitive load theory explains that comprehension typically declines when textual demands exceed learners' processing capacities – a situation frequently encountered by second-language readers grappling with unfamiliar lexicon and complex grammatical structures. Working-memory constraints further complicate the reading process; as (Baddeley & Hitch, 2000) argue, readers with reduced working-memory capacity struggle to retain and integrate information across a text. Schema theory, as presented by (Anderson, 2017), similarly emphasizes that insufficient background knowledge impedes learners' ability to make inferences and construct meaning. These perspectives indicate that effective instructional interventions must extend beyond vocabulary building to include techniques that strengthen working-memory processing and deliberately activate relevant prior knowledge. Without such support, EFL learners may continue to face comprehension challenges despite improved linguistic skills.

Affective influences – such as anxiety, low motivation, and negative attitudes – add another dimension to the barriers confronting second-language readers. Alqurashi (2024) identifies reading anxiety as a particularly significant impediment, especially among female learners, and underscores the importance of pedagogical practices aimed at reducing stress and building confidence. Motivation likewise plays a pivotal role in successful reading, with (Dornyei, 2001) and (Gambrell, 1996) showing that participatory, learner-centred activities can stimulate greater engagement and lead to improved comprehension. Negative perceptions of

reading, often derived from earlier academic struggles or external distractions, further diminish learners' willingness to engage deeply with texts (Anigbogu, 2006). Together, these findings point to the need for comprehensive instructional strategies that cultivate supportive and engaging learning environments, address emotional barriers, and foster positive reading dispositions. Integrating linguistic, cognitive, and affective considerations can therefore lead to more effective interventions for strengthening reading comprehension among second-language learners.

Conclusion

Overall, the literature reveals that reading comprehension difficulties in EFL and ESL contexts arise from an interplay of linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors. Vocabulary knowledge emerges as the most influential linguistic component, with limited word recognition and lexical complexity posing substantial obstacles to understanding. At the same time, cognitive limitations,particularly constrained working memory and high cognitive loadimpair learners' ability to process complex texts and connect new information to existing knowledge. Affective elements, including anxiety, diminished motivation, and unfavourable attitudes toward reading, further undermine learners' engagement with texts. These insights call for a multifaceted pedagogical approach that extends beyond vocabulary instruction to encompass cognitive-support strategies, motivation-enhancing practices, and the creation of positive reading environments. Addressing these interrelated challenges comprehensively can lead to more meaningful gains in reading comprehension and broader academic achievement for learners of English as a second or foreign language.

Implications

This study has got implications as follows:

Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction in EFL Curricula

The literature indicates that limited vocabulary constitutes the most substantial linguistic barrier to reading comprehension, as shown in studies by (Alqurashi, 2024), (Hezam et. al., 2022), and (Kasim & Raisha, 2017). In light of this, EFL curricula should place stronger emphasis on systematic and explicit vocabulary instruction. Approaches such as contextualized

vocabulary learning, the use of word maps, and instruction grounded in morphological analysis can support learners in inferring meaning and decoding unfamiliar terms more effectively. Complementing these strategies with extensive reading initiatives and technology-enhanced tools can provide learners with sustained exposure to varied lexical items in meaningful contexts, thereby reducing difficulties associated with word recognition and enhancing overall comprehension.

Cognitive Support Strategies for Reading Comprehension

Research grounded in cognitive load theory (Sweller et. al., 2011) and working memory models (Baddeley & Hitch, 2000) demonstrates that cognitive constraints significantly hinder comprehension, particularly when learners encounter complex texts. Instructional design should therefore incorporate scaffolding strategies intended to ease cognitive demands. Dividing lengthy or dense texts into manageable units, integrating visual organizers, and introducing essential concepts before reading can support learners in processing information more efficiently. Furthermore, techniques aimed at strengthening working memory, such as chunking, targeted practice in summarization, and repeated retrieval activitiesmay enhance learners' capacity to retain and integrate new knowledge, leading to more effective comprehension.

Addressing Affective Barriers to Foster Reading Engagement Findings by (Alqurashi, 2024), (Dornyei, 2001), (Gambrell, 1996), and (Anigbogu, 2006) illustrate that reading anxiety, diminished motivation, and negative attitudes can substantially impede learners' engagement and comprehension. These insights underscore the importance of cultivating psychologically supportive and learner-centred reading environments. Allowing students to select reading materials, incorporating collaborative learning structures, and integrating game-based elements can contribute to higher levels of motivation and sustained interest in reading tasks. Additionally, practices aimed at reducing anxiety, such as structured group discussions, guided reading sessions, and peer-supported activities can help

learners build confidence and develop more positive reading habits. Collectively, these approaches highlight the value of attending to affective as well as linguistic and cognitive dimensions in efforts to enhance reading comprehension among EFL learners.

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