

The Contribution of Vocabulary in Developing EFL Reading Comprehension A Case Study of Secondary Schools, Khartoum North Locality, Khartoum State

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Abstract

Reading is a very complicated process where the brain is activated through noting a word, decoding it and identifying the related meaning. This study aims to enhance secondary school students learning proficiency, investigate the problems of reading facing secondary schools students, identify the problems in reading comprehension, vocabulary and sentence structure. After analyzing the data, the study has received the following results: EFL learners show problems of cohesion, limited word knowledge is the main shortcoming in the EFL learners, reading comprehension is preferably done as home works. The study recommends that Teachers should be well qualified in developing their students in reading comprehension, teachers should give their students additional activities in reading comprehension, teachers should divide the students into groups in order to develop their reading comprehension abilities.

Keywords: comprehension, cognitive, identifying, interaction, bottom-up, top-down

1. INTRODUCTION

Students require knowledge of English to communicate with foreigners and gather information from textbooks, journals, newspapers, and internet which mostly come from the English-speaking countries. English is used as a tool for accessing information. Reading is a very complicated process where the brain is activated through noting a word, decoding it and identifying the related meaning. Therefore, language educators e.g. Sofia (2006) Smart School (2005) indicates that teaching reading serves several purposes: keep abreast of the style of writing and new vocabulary; a mean for mental development and enlighten one's mind; stimulate the muscles of the eyes; involve greater levels of concentration and add to the conversational skills; enhance the knowledge acquired consistently and can open many fields and aspects; help the reader to decipher new words and phrases that come across in every day conversations; help people to stay in touch with contemporary writers and make them sensitive to the global issues; be a basic tool in academic success which can develop a person's creativity to create a picture in his / her mind; cultivate the individual thinking skills to think about characters and events in the passage or the story; increase the ability to understand concepts and ideas. So, it develops critical thinking and helps students to think and make good decisions; develop more fluency in language and communication; develop positive values in the students; improve the learner's ability.

2. Literature Review

Comprehension is the essence of reading and the active process of constructing meaning from text (Durkin, 1993). Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text (Van den Broek and Espin, 2012). Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inference, and motivation. Comprehension also requires effective use of strategic processes, such as meta-cognition and comprehension monitoring. As readers mature in their comprehension skills, they are able to progress efficiently from the stage of learning to read to the ultimate goal of reading to learn (Yovanoff, et.al, 2005).

2.1 Reading Research Historical Background

Both reading research and practice have undergone numerous changes in the last 30 years, and especially after the 1980's, first and second language research have resulted in many new insights for reading instruction. It has become a challenging task to make a synthesis of an array of research and instructional literature in ESL/EFL academic reading, foreign language reading, and second language reading in the public school. Our understanding of reading, both in terms of theory and practice, has changed considerably in the last three decades. These transitions and changes, both in theory and in practice, are best documented in Silberstein (1987). As Silberstein notes, in the 1960s, reading was seen as a tool for the reinforcement of oral language instruction. Under the influence of Audio-lingual

methodology, most efforts to “teach” reading were based on the use of reading to study grammar and vocabulary, or to practice pronunciation skills (Silberstein, 1987). This view of reading was later challenged by the evolving views of reading theory.

Through the early to mid-1970s, a number of researchers and teacher trainers argued for the greater importance of reading (e.g., Eskey, 1973; Saville, 1973). By the mid- to late 1970s, many researchers began to argue for a theory of reading based on work by Goodman (1967, 1985) and Smith (1971, 1979, 1982). The research and persuasive arguments of Goodman and Smith have come to be known as “the psycholinguistic model of reading.” Goodman’s research led him to claim that reading is not primarily a process of picking up information from the page in a letter-by-letter, word-by-word manner. Rather, he argued that reading is a selective process. Since it did not seem likely that fluent readers had the time to look at all the words on a page and still read at a rapid rate, it made sense that good readers used knowledge they brought to the reading and then read by predicting information, sampling the text, and confirming the prediction (Grabe, 1991). Smith agreed with Goodman’s arguments that reading was an imprecise, hypothesis-driven process. He further argued that sampling was effective because of the extensive redundancy built into natural language as well as the abilities of readers to make the necessary inferences from their background knowledge.

In fact, for Smith (and others), the reader contributed more than did the visual symbols on the page. Two attempts to apply this theory into ESL contexts have been extremely influential on ESL reading theory and instruction from the late 1970s to the present. Clarke and Silberstein (1977) outlined implications for instruction which could be drawn from a psycholinguistic model of reading. Reading was characterized as an active process of comprehending and students needed to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e. g., guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skimming for general idea and scanning to find specific information, etc. For teachers, the goal of reading instruction was to provide students with a range of effective techniques to better comprehend texts—including helping students define goals and strategies for reading, to use rereading activities to enhance conceptual readiness, and to provide students with some strategies to deal with difficult syntax, vocabulary, and organizational structure. It should also be noted that many of these instructional implications still remain as important guidelines though no longer motivated by the psycholinguistic model explanation.

Coady (1979) reinterpreted Goodman’s psycholinguistic model into a model which is more applicable to second language learners in particular. He argued that conceptualization of the reading process requires three components: process strategies, background knowledge, and conceptual abilities. Beginning readers focus on process strategies (e. g., word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge, using only as much textual information as needed for confirming and predicting the information in the text. His implications for teaching are similar to those of Clarke and Silberstein (1977). While the

1970s witnessed a transition from one dominant view of reading to another, the 1980s was a decade in which much ESL reading theory and practice extended Goodman and Smith's perspectives on reading (cf. Bernhardt, 1991). At the same time, second language research began to look more closely at other first language reading research for the insights that it could offer.

2.1.1 Reading Process

Most of our current views of second language reading are shaped by research on first language learners. This is true in part because first language research has a longer history, first language student populations are much more stable, cognitive psychology has seen comprehension research as a major domain of their field, and considerable cognitive psychology and educational grant funding is available. For these reasons, first language reading research has made impressive progress in learning about the reading process. It makes good sense, then, for second language researchers and teachers to consider what first language research has to say about the nature of the fluent reading process and the development of reading abilities. A primary goal for ESL reading theory and instruction is to understand what fluent L1 readers do, then decide how best to move ESL students in that developmental direction. A reasonable starting point for this discussion is with definitions of reading.

Smith (1973) claims that *"reading involves a trade-off between visual and no visual information."* *The more that is already known behind the eyeball, the less visual information is required to identify a letter, a word, or a meaning from the text"*. He believes that there are two important factors in the reading process: visual information and non-visual information. When visual information from reading material and no visual information from the reader's linguistic competence and background knowledge are balanced, the purpose of reading is realized. But the more the learner has non visual information, the less he depends on visual information to comprehend the reading material.

Rumelhart (1977) thinks that reading involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the two. Reader's engagement in the reading process is based on their past experiences, both in learning how to read and also in the ways reading fits into their lives. The readers are influenced by their families, educational and societal communities around them, the school environment and other social and cultural influences. (Goodman, 1970: 260) defines reading as follows:

"Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses".

He said that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game and a repeated process of sampling, predicting, testing and confirming. As to what reading is or what it involves, Goodman (1984:60) makes the following remarks:

"Reading is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with a meaning that the reader constructs. There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language as thought".

It is well known that simple definitions typically misrepresent complex cognitive processes such as reading. Rather, descriptions of basic knowledge and processes required for fluent reading make a more appropriate starting point. A description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing similar to what Anderson, Hebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, (1985); Grabe, (1988b); Hall, White, and Guthrie, (1986); Smith, (1982) also claimed. Research by Grabe (1991) has shown that fluent reading is rapid; the reader needs to maintain the flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections and inferences vital to comprehension. Reading is purposeful; the reader has a purpose for reading, whether it is for entertainment, information, research, and so on. Reading for a purpose provides motivation—an important aspect of being a good reader.

Reading is interactive; the reader makes use of information from his/her background knowledge as well as information from the printed page. Reading is also interactive in the sense that many skills work together simultaneously in the process. Reading is comprehending; the reader typically expects to understand what s/he is reading. Unlike many ESL students, the fluent reader does not begin to read wondering whether or not s/he will understand the text. Reading is flexible; the reader employs arrangement of strategies to read efficiently. These strategies include adjusting the reading speed, skimming ahead, considering titles, headings, pictures and text structure information, anticipating information to come, and so on. Finally, reading develops gradually; the reader does not become fluent suddenly, or immediately following a reading development course. Rather, fluent reading is the product of long-term effort and gradual improvement. The preceding general description of fluent reading suggests that reading is very complex, that it takes considerable time and resources to develop, and that it cannot simply be taught in one or two courses. This perspective holds equally well for ESL students who are not already fluent readers in English but who need to be for their academic future.

2.1.2 Factors Affect Reading Process

If one were to break down the various skills involved in reading, a seemingly endless list could be created. Because reading is such a complex process, many researchers attempt to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills (e. g., Carpenter et.al, 1986). The effort to subdivide reading into

component skills has led researchers to propose a selection of typical taxonomies as summarized below by Urquart and Weir (1998: 90) :

1. Davies (1968):
 - i. Identifying word meanings
 - ii. Drawing inferences
 - iii. Identifying the writer's technique and recognizing the mood of the passage
 - iv. Finding answers to questions
2. Lunzer et al. (1979):
 - i. Word meaning.
 - ii. Words in context.
 - iii. Literal comprehension.
 - iv. Drawing inferences from single and multiple strings.
 - v. Interpretation of metaphor.
 - vi. Finding salient or main ideas.
 - vii. Forming judgments.

Munby (1978):

- a. Recognizing the script of a language.
- b. Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- c. Understanding explicitly or implicitly stated information.
- d. Understanding conceptual meaning.
- e. Understanding the communicative value of sentences and paragraphs.
- f. Understanding relations within a sentence.
- g. Understanding relations between parts of texts through lexical cohesion Devices.
- h. Interpreting text by going outside it.
- i. Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- j. Identifying the main point of information in discourse.
- k. Distinguishing the main idea from detail.
- l. Extracting salient points to summarize the text or a proposition.
- m. Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
- n. Basic reference skills.
- o. Skimming.
- p. Scanning.
- q. Trans coding information to diagrams and charts.

4. Grabe (1991:377):

- i. Automatic recognition skills.
- ii. Vocabulary and structural knowledge.
- iii. Formal discourse structure knowledge.
- iv. Content/world background knowledge.
- v. Synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies.

vi. Meta cognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.

2.2 Language Learning Models

2.2.1 Interactive Model

For the interactive models of reading, interaction might mean two different concepts:

- (a) a general interaction between the reader and text; that is, the reader uses both textual information and his/her background information to comprehend the information in the text; and
- (b) an interaction of both bottom-up and top-down processing working together simultaneously in comprehending a text (Grabe, 1991; Carrel et.al, 1988). In other words, while the reader decodes the text, s/he uses his/her reasoning skills based on his/her background information.

Moreover, these two acts interact with each other, and occur simultaneously rather than sequentially (Rumelhart, 1977). As a result, readers have the chance to compensate for deficiencies in one aspect e.g., vocabulary by relying more on the other sources (e.g., background information) (Stanovich, 1980). Therefore, good readers combine the knowledge of the language (grammar and vocabulary) and knowledge of the world (background knowledge) through the use of reading strategies (Eskey, 1988; Carrell, 1988). Several interactive models of reading are mentioned in the field for L1 reading. Rumelhart (1977), acknowledged to be the originator of the interactive approach to reading, suggests that different kinds of information come from various knowledge sources. Mentioning several study findings, he concludes that syntactical, semantic, lexical and orthographic knowledge influence the reader in comprehending a text. "Thus, all of the various sources of knowledge, both sensory and non sensory, come together at one place and the reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all the knowledge sources" (Rumelhart, 1977: 588).

Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) propose a semantic model of reading comprehension explaining how semantic structures or propositions are processed for comprehension. According to this model, the reader recreates another text through classifying propositions of the author as relevant or irrelevant, which is seen as the key in text comprehension. Thus, the reader's goals in reading a text have utmost importance since they direct the way the text is transformed into a new text.

Stanovich (1980), along the same lines as Rumelhart, suggests that reading comprehension occurs on the basis of information flowing simultaneously from various sources, as mentioned above. However, he calls his model an 'interactive compensatory' one, meaning that a weakness in one area of knowledge can be compensated for by strength in another area. Practically speaking, he means that two readers might comprehend a text equally well using their strengths in different areas of knowledge. Interactive model of reading offers us a more direct description of the reading process of L2 learners.

Eskey (1988) suggests that the automatic identification of lexical units and grammatical forms activates the schemata of L2 reader to employ high-level skills to comprehend and interpret a text. Thus, low-level skills are necessary to use high-level skills. "Developing readers must therefore work at perfecting both their bottom-up recognition skills and their top-down interpretation strategies. Good reading – that is, fluent and accurate reading – can result only from a constant interaction between these processes" (Eskey, 1988: 96). Eskey sees language knowledge as a kind of schema, which is activated automatically by proficient learners but not others. In other words, information provided by both bottom-up and top-down processing require background knowledge; therefore, none can be neglected at the expense of the others. Instead, information coming from both sources need to be used interactively, contributing to each other, and ultimately leading to reading comprehension.

Bernhardt (1991) identifies three text-driven (bottom-up) and three reader driven (top-down) factors to explain the L2 reading process. She lists text-driven factors as word recognition (understanding word meanings), phonemic/grapheme decoding (identifying words with their spelling or pronunciations), and syntactic feature recognition (recognizing grammatical relationships among parts of a sentence). Reader-driven factors are intra-textual perception (relating the statements in a text), meta cognition (awareness of reader's own strategies during reading), and prior knowledge (reader's background knowledge related to the text). These factors altogether contribute to successful L2 reading. Bernhardt suggests that text-driven (bottom-up) and reader-driven (top-down) processes start interacting as linguistic competence increases, though they appear separately at early stages of linguistic competence.

As Bernhardt points out, language proficiency plays an important role in L2 reading in that beginning L2 readers focus on lower-level processing strategies (e.g., word identification), whereas more proficient readers shift attention to more abstract conceptual abilities and make better use of background knowledge; that is, they use textual information to confirm and predict the information in the text. Similarly, Carrel (1988) emphasizes the importance of language proficiency for successful L2 reading. Limited control over language may lead the reader to heavily rely on background knowledge, which may cause short-circuit, i.e. "reading that does not end with meaning" (Goodman, 1988:17).

Therefore, in order to read in an L2, a threshold level of L2 linguistic ability must first be achieved. The importance of a linguistic threshold for L2 readers is obvious when it comes to using effective reading strategies because a limited level of proficiency hinders comprehension, and may force the L2 readers to use only bottom-up or only top-down reading strategies (Clarke, 1988; Devine, 1988). However, Devine argues that linguistic threshold is not only related to lexis and grammar knowledge but also to the nature of background knowledge and text. In other words, it depends on the types of the texts and the amount of background knowledge readers bring with them as they read. Therefore, another key factor in L2 reading within the interactive theory is background knowledge or schemata (Urquhart and Weir, 1998), which is defined as "a reader's existing concepts about the world" (Barnett, 1989: 42).

Carrel (1983) argues that native speakers utilize top-down and bottom-up processes, and nonnative speakers do not process a text like native speakers; instead, they process the literal side of the text without making the necessary connections between the text and the relevant background knowledge. Schema theory for L2 reading suggests that readers need to activate prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read, and that this activated knowledge facilitates the reading process (Carrell, 1988). Thus, it is agreed that foreign language students need more than word meanings in order to understand a text (Davis and Hager, 1997). As Davis (1989) found in her study, subjects who received background information before reading did better in understanding of a literary text.

2.2.2 Top-down Model

Top-down models emphasize the reader's own interpretation of the text and prior knowledge, or schemata (Anderson and Pearson, 1988), besides the reader's goals and expectations; thus, they are also called reader driven models (Barnett, 1989). The reader, according to these models, is in a cyclical process of making guesses about the message of the text and checking the text for confirming or refuting them based on his/her prior knowledge or the contextual clues (Goodman, 1968; Urquhar and Weir, 1998). The reader, while doing this, needs to attend only to the general features and content of the text; therefore, s/he does not have to know all the bits and details contained in the text. In addition, when students make predictions and anticipate content, they are better prepared to make intelligent guesses when they come across unfamiliar words and structures (Barnett, 1989).

In his overview of reading models, Barnett (1989) portrays the theories of Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith as the basis of top-down views of reading which emerged during the early seventies. In explaining Goodman's model of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, Barnett suggests that readers use their sentential and contextual knowledge to compensate for their deficiencies in vocabulary, and go through four processes in reading: predicting the meanings in the text, reading enough of the text, confirming their guesses or correcting themselves in case they are wrong or there is insufficient information in the text. Similar to Goodman's predicting reader, Smith's anticipatory reader combines his prior knowledge and his expectations from a certain text with the learned information from the text (Barnett, 1989). Thus, Goodman and Smith give utmost importance to the reader, namely, to his L1 reading abilities and prior knowledge.

The top-down approach has contributed a great deal to explain the reading process with its emphasis on the reader; nevertheless, it only explains the situation of skillful and fluent L2 readers with a certain level of linguistic proficiency, and it does not give a true picture of the situation of less proficient language learners. In other words, this approach is criticized for its overemphasis on the prediction of meaning at the expense of identifying lexis and grammatical forms (Eskey, 1988; Clark, 1988). The Interactive Approach to reading, on the other hand, appeared to be a compromise for the dilemma created by bottom-up and top-down approaches.

2.2.3 Bottom-up Model

When foreign language readers attempt to read a text with a great number of unfamiliar words, they are likely to approach the text in an isolated way and disregard the context of the whole text. The bottom-up models, or text-driven approach to reading, assume that the reading process starts from decoding the print on a page and continues as the reader decodes and constructs meaning out of the text linearly from the smallest chunks to the largest, and then modifying the prior knowledge on the basis of information provided in the text (Barnett et.al, 1989). As also argued by Grabe and Stoller (2002:32),

“bottom-up models suggest that all reading follows a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece-by piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little interference from the reader’s own back ground knowledge”.

Thus the emphasis is on small chunks of text like letters, words, and sentences rather than the overall message of the text as a whole. Gough’s (1972 cited in Urquarhand Weir, 1998) bottom-up model, for example, assumes that the reader begins with letters, converting them into phonemes through decoding. As soon as the reader recognizes the phoneme as a word, he then goes on with the next word. This continues until he recognizes all the words in a sentence, at which point he applies the syntactic and semantic rules to give a meaning to the sentence. Finally, he reads the text aloud. Hence, Gough’s reading model describes the process of reading aloud (Urquarhand Weir, 1998).

The bottom-up views of reading are criticized due to their negligence of the reader contribution in the process of meaning construction because they consider reading a matter of decoding words rather than a process of interacting intelligently with the text to comprehend it in its integrity. However, the bottom-up models may help to understand the processes that less-proficient L2 readers go through (Barnett,1989), and help to detect and treat their reading deficiencies. Finally, reading strategies have an important role in realizing successful reading according to interactive models of L2 reading. Strategies can be defined as “abilities that are potentially open to conscious reflection and use” (Grabeand Stoller,2011: 17), or more specifically as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990: 8). Because foreign language learners are also readers of their L1, they would probably transfer their available reading strategies when reading L2 texts. Once they reach a certain threshold level, learners can transfer L1 reading strategies, and combine them with newly-acquired ones to comprehend the text better. There is evidence in the literature (Barnett, 1989; Carrell,1988) supporting the claim that using reading strategies enhances reading comprehension. Good reading strategies enable L2 readers to exploit the resources they have for successful reading comprehension.

In other words, reading strategies trigger the background knowledge or the knowledge of the language related to the text being read.To sum up, an interactive approach to reading

provides a more developed description of L2 reading because it considers the contributions of both lower-level processing skills and higher-level comprehension/reasoning skills as well as processing skills by means of good reading strategies. Thus, the L2 reader needs to acquire a certain level of L2 proficiency in order to exploit good reading strategies. That is to say, proficient readers are able to utilize both bottom-up and top-down processing, and successful comprehension is the result of an interaction and collaboration between both types of processing (Eskey, 1988; Bernhardt, 1991).

2.2.4 The Reciprocal Model

As the name may reveal, the reciprocal reading model focuses mainly on the collaborative elements of learning, making it connected to sociocultural learning approaches. When reading and writing are described as social practices, the importance of reading, writing, and texts in school and in society is regarded (Lundahl 1998:182). In the following, I will explain this reading method further. In reciprocal teaching, the teacher and the students start reading a new text by discussing the different paragraphs, and the teacher and the students take turn in functioning as teachers (Lundahl 1998:209). This highlights the students as important and in charge of their own learning. Further, the teacher explains the different steps in the method, the idea being that the students will, eventually, be able to use the method on their own.

The elements in the model are predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying, not necessarily in this order; the different elements may be combined, used in a consecutive order, or as one finds appropriate to predict what is to come in a text is a two-fold reading approach: it might be used as a preparation to reading; to consider or guess what the text is going to be about based on the title, pictures, and words one sees at first glance etcetera, but it might also be used as a strategy while reading. To predict and have expectations of what one is going to read about, whether based on prior knowledge or on what one sees or reads, is known to facilitate learning. These expectations will prepare the reader for what will come, making the reading more focused, motivated, concentrated, and active (Roe 2014:94). One might imagine that it will be easier to understand and remember what is read when one has an idea of what the reading will be about. This is comparable to how difficult it is to understand, and remember, a text with a topic that is totally unfamiliar. Such texts will most likely have to be read more than once to make any sense, even for more experienced readers. Hence, the importance of prior knowledge, predictions, and expectations are valuable in both understanding and learning, as well as for motivating students to continue reading. Questioning oneself whilst reading is considered beneficial in supervising the reading.

Efficient readers keep questioning their reading as they read. This is not always done consciously, but in different ways they enter into a dialogue with the text and adjust their interpretations as they read and learn. The questioning may happen before, during or after reading (Roe 2014:96). Hence, questioning may be considered to be beneficial pre-reading, as a way of predicting what is to come, during reading as monitoring, and post-reading, as a means of summing the text up. Making one's own questions to a text may also be fruitful in

gaining reading comprehension and understanding of a text, and is a means that is suggested by many researchers of reading, as, for example, Braten (2007) and Kverndokken (2012). They stress the importance of students creating their own questions to a text. Reflecting upon what ought to be asked about in a text will most likely increase learning, in addition to a heightened meta cognitive awareness, reflection, being able to draw lines and conclusions, and interpret. The questioning as a predictive or post-reading activity may be carried out when students answer the questions: "What do I know? What do I want to find out? What did I learn?" As seen, the questions are applicable to other parts of the reciprocal reading strategy: prediction, questioning and summarizing/clarifying and may hence be useful in gaining reading comprehension.

Clarifying means to clarify problems that arise during reading. To be able to do so, it is necessary to implement remedial actions to avoid breakdown of understanding (Roe 2014:99). To be able to know, use, and to understand the need for different means for impeding understanding is vital, and one might imagine that this is a crucial division between high and low proficiency readers, as referred to in the above. Low proficiency readers might not understand that comprehension is lacking, and just keep on reading without understanding, whereas high proficiency readers monitor themselves and stop themselves in their reading, go back, question the content, re-reading words, phrases or paragraphs, or use other means of getting back on track with the text. This requires conscious and concentrated readers who steadily monitor their understanding and comprehension.

2.2.5 Mental Modeling

While reading, skilled readers normally develop a text-based model, which is a mental representation of the actual text discourse. The textbased model incorporates propositions extracted from the reading of successive sentences that are sometimes supplemented by inferences that are necessary to make the text more coherent. At a local level, comprehension of written text involves the processing of the symbolic representations of parts of words, phrases, and sentences. At the same time, at a more global level, a reader must link ideas across sentences and form a mental model that incorporates complex themes and story plots. In contrast, situation models include elaborative inferences that integrate prior knowledge with text-based information.

Unlike the text based models, situation models do not normally retain the verbatim text information but support a more flexible knowledge structure that can enable the integration of both visual and verbal representations (Pearson and Johnson 1978; Snow 2002; Stull and Mayer 2007). Thus, the construction of a situation model is a dynamic constructive process that is determined by the interaction of the reader, the text structures, and the semantic content. It is a cohesive representation of the meaning of the text ideas (Kintsch 1998). In constructing a situation model the reader is required to search for coherence at the local and global levels and to infer meanings that are often implied by drawing from their existing background knowledge. While doing this, the reader actively

constructs the situation model by using information within the text and also information from stored prior knowledge. Thus, the main difference between text-based and the situation model is assumed to be one of inference making, the text-based model is inferentially light while the situation model is inferentially dense.

Reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. In understanding read text information, children developmental models, or representations of meaning of the text ideas during the reading process. There are two classes of mental models: a text-based model, which is a mental representation of the propositions of the text and a situation model consisting of what the text is perceived to be about (Kintsch 1998; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983).

Reading is a complicated skill that demands considerable time and practice to develop (Lundahl 1998:175). The ability “to read” involves more than merely decoding a text. In addition to the practical skill of putting letters together, turning them into words, one is also supposed to understand what is read: one has to combine decoding; the ability of putting words together, with comprehension; the result of interpreting linguistic elements. Philip B. Gough and William Tunmer (1986) explain reading comprehension as the formula: “Decoding (D) x Language Comprehension (LC) = Reading Comprehension (RC)”.

The multiplication relates to the fact that everything that is done to facilitate reading will multiply the result, in addition to alluding to that if one of the elements is missing, the result will be zero. Hence, if there is no understanding of what is read, there is no actual reading; there is no reading comprehension. When this first goal of reading is achieved, one has to add further elements to the reading process in order to become a proficient reader. The next steps on the way to full reading ability are motivation, empathy, and meta cognitive ability (Kverndokken, 2012:28). When a reader manages all these elements, he/she reads with high proficiency. According to Ivaret.al (2007:196)., reading is often described as an interactive process, where comprehension is a result of joint efforts from the author and the reader. The author has to formulate the content so that it is interpretable, whereas the reader must mobilize the skills and knowledge needed to comprehend the text – a joint venture. However, the reader is the one most likely to spoil the process; fail to understand, give in, and stop reading. Hence, the reader is considered to be the one most responsible for gaining comprehension. This questions the interactivity of reading.

Reading strategies and learning strategies are tightly intertwined, and what is considered vital in learning processes is further applicable to reading comprehension (Roe 2014:84). Hence, many researchers refer to the two concepts as one and the same . If one fails to understand the content of texts or tasks, learning and fulfilling of tasks will be difficult, if not impossible. As the students grow older, the requirements for reading with accuracy and proficiency steadily increase. In lower secondary, the subjects become harder than in elementary school, and the amount of theory to be read is vast. This is further fortified in higher education. Nowadays, many students face several years of higher education, and good

reading strategies are essential (Roe 2014:88). To be able to read with fluency and accuracy and to understand what is read is essential in all learning. Louise (1985:100, in Lundahl 1998:194). argues that comprehension is a result of a transaction between the reader and the text, and explains reading a text as: *“an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group”*.

This quote portrays well the full challenge of reading, and it shows the immense variety of elements that are vital in understanding texts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Instruments of Data Collection

The researcher used one tools to collect the data for this study. This tool is a test for students.

3.2 Procedures

The test is designed and used as a tool to collect data for investigating the topic the reading comprehension problems encountered by secondary school students.

4. Test Analysis and Discussion

Table (4.1) Task fulfillment

	Frequenc y	Percent
Good to average	75	45.5
Fair to poor	29	17.5
Very poor	61	37.0
Total	165	100.0

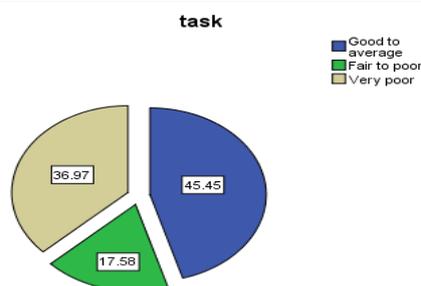


Figure (4.1)

Table and figure (4.1) illustrated that (75) students (45.5%) had good to average level, (29) of them (17.6%) had fair to poor level on test results in task fulfillment while (61) students (61%) had very poor level concerning task fulfillment in their test answers.

Table(4.2) Coherence

	Frequency	Percent
Good to average	51	30.9
Fair to poor	29	17.6
Very poor	85	51.5
Total	165	100.0

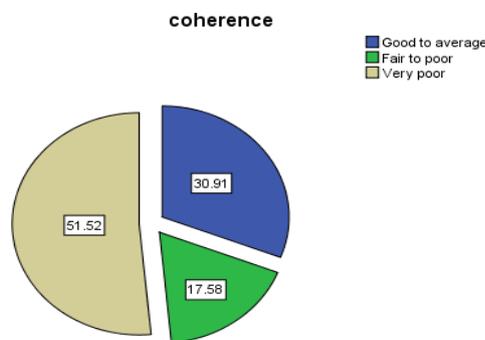
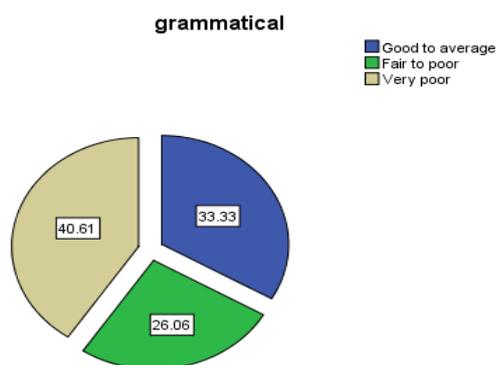


Figure (4.2)

Table and figure (4.2) showed that (51) students (30.9%) had good to average level. (29) students (17.6%) had fair to poor while (85) of them (51.5%) had very poor performance in this area of coherence.

Table (4.3) Grammatical

	Frequency	Percent
Good to average	55	33.3
Fair to poor	43	26.1
Very poor	67	40.6
Total	165	100.0



Figure(4.3)

Table and figure (4.3) showed that (55)students (33.3%) had good to average level. (43) students (26.1%) had fair to poor while (67) of them (40.6%) had very poor performance in this area of grammatical.

Table (4.4) Lexical

	Frequenc y	Percent
Good to average	38	23.0
Fair to poor	26	15.8
Very poor	101	61.2
Total	165	100.0

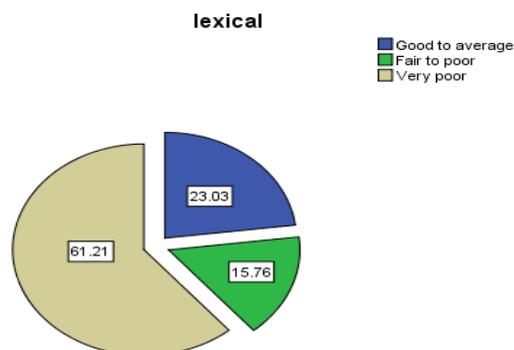


Figure (4.4)

Table and figure (4.4) showed that (38)students (23%) had good to average level. (26) students (15.8%) had fair to poor while (101) of them (61.2%) had very poor performance in this area of lexical.

5. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Reading comprehension, which appears to be a simple phenomenon, is made up of multiple evanescent sub processes that influence each other. The capacity of the human system is put to the test every time mental resources are called upon to provide attention, consciousness and memory required for the purpose of reading. This is why reading models enable the existence and functioning of such sub processes in the storing of information and providing of answers, which work in parallel and interactively.

5.2 Findings

- 1.EFL learners show problems of cohesion
- 2.Limited word knowledge is the main shortcoming in the EFL learners.
- 3.Reading comprehension is preferably done as home works.
- 4.Teachers' follow-up improve students' production reading comprehension

5.3 Recommendations

1. Teachers should be well qualified in developing their students in reading comprehension.
2. Teachers should give their students additional activities in reading comprehension.
3. Teachers should divide the students into groups in order to develop their reading comprehension abilities.
- 4.Teachers should correct their students' mistakes in reading comprehension

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