

# IDENTIFYING YOUNG LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES IN ESL READING COMPREHENSION

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**Abstract.** *Mastering a foreign language requires acquisition of reading skill as the fundamental skills in language learning. However, statistics show that Uzbek young learners in elementary schools are not reading enough especially second, third and fourth graders who are labeled as reluctant readers. This is deeply reflected in their reading comprehension which is one of the tested components of the entrance examinations of the presidential schools or agency specialized schools. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the learners' difficulties in ESL Reading comprehension. Thus, a test was conducted among 142 fourth grade students of elementary schools in Gulistan district. Reading test were given out to the respondents involved. The data obtained from the survey were analyzed using SPSS. There were five different types of questions of reading comprehension. Based on the analysis it was found that the most of the students' difficulties are related to the process of reading inside and outside of the classroom. Finally, what the teachers could do to address this issue was discussed as the implication of these findings and some ways were provided to solve them.*

**Keywords:** *reading comprehension, acquisition, Elementary school students, difficulties.*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading skill is the most essential tool and the most important element in English language learning. Krashen stated that through reading process the readers are able to develop not only good writing style and adequate vocabulary but also, they are able to become excellent spellers. Reading skill influences the development of other language learning skills as it helps to obtain the required information from different types of reading materials. Reading develops the readers concentration, improves critical thinking skill and stimulates imagination as well as slow down memory loss.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between reader and the text is called reading skill said Rumethart (1997). Reading is the product of word recognition and language comprehension components. Reading comprehension occurs when there are these two essential components together. Decoding printed words accurately and fluently makes reader good comprehenders. Struggling with the word reading makes text reading much slower and does not let decode all of the important words accurately.

One of the components of reading skill is reading comprehension. The definition of reading comprehension varies from one source to another. According to Goodman (1970), the only goal of reading skill is comprehension. Readers are required to use all syntactic information, graphic information and semantic information since they are the objectives of reading comprehension. Hence, according to Bernhardt & James (1987), reading comprehension is giving connection to the unknown and the known information.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using the test method which allowed the researcher to drive the data in the specified period of time. The test was monolingual which was in English. The test

was consisted a small text about daily routine and five questions related the text. Each question had four options ABCD and each correct answer carried one point. Three questions out of five were true false does not say. One question was about vocabulary which asked the synonym of the given words in order to check the participants vocabulary and guessing the meaning from the context. And the last question was wh-question which asked the time.

The test was conducted in one of the 32 secondary schools in Gulistan district. The study primarily focused on the elementary school students. The chosen population with 142 students were aged between 10 and 11 years old who are in grade 4. The participants were chosen according to their availability on the day of conducting the test.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The test was conducted in an examination setting by which the test was distributed to all respondents, guided them throughout the given time to ensure that the respondents answered all questions in the test and mark them on their answer sheets.

The main goal of the research was to answer the test questions by choosing the right option. Each right option carried one point. The data obtained from the answered questions by the participants was analyzed using statistical comparative method.

64 males and 78 females participated in this study. They were among 10-11 years old studying in grade 4. There were five reading questions in this research which were to identify the learners' difficulties in ESL reading comprehension problems faced by the young language learners of secondary school students. All questions in the test reflect the difficulties faced by the young language learners in ESL reading comprehension.

### **RESULTS**

The obtained responses were collected and analyzed quantitatively to determine the frequency and percentage. The findings were simplified in the table form.

The overall statistics of the given answers 53 participants answered only 1 question and showed 20%, 38 participants answered 2 of the given 5 questions and showed 40%, 15 students answered 3 questions correctly and showed 60 %, only 2 students were able to answer 4 questions and showed 80%. 34 students could not answer the questions correctly and showed 0%.

The categorical analysis of the given questions of the research. There were five questions three of them were about true, false, does not say. Second question was about vocabulary and it asked about finding the suitable synonym option for the given words from the text. The last question was wh-question which asked about exact time of getting up during the weekdays.

57 respondents were able to answer only one question out of three of true/false questions and showed 33%, 35 respondents answered 2 questions indicating 66%, only 6 respondents answered all three questions of true/false and showed 100%. 44 young learners were not able to answer any of this type questions. For the second vocabulary type question only 14 respondents answered correctly and the right answers for the last question showed 28%.

Overall choosing the right options for all five questions showed only 25,6%.

### **DISCUSSION**

According to the result, the respondents do not know the proper reading process of comprehending the content of the texts based on the questions 1-3 in the test. According to the results of true/false/does not say the students have proven that they have obstacles in scanning the main idea and understanding the content of the reading comprehension This finding also supports the research conducted by Davoudi and Yousefi (2015) who had argued that learners who face

reading difficulties have comprehension problems that could be due to imprecise or ineffective word recognition and decoding methods in their reading process. When this happens, the students are unable to tackle reading comprehension. In order to solve this, the students must be exposed to the appropriate ways of reading process so that they will be able to answer the related questions based on the reading comprehension accurately.

The results of the fourth question proved conclusion given by Birch (2007). He concludes the same when she states that readers who skip over words, they do not

know do not acquire them and often times do not fully comprehend the texts in which they were found.

### **CONCLUSION**

The research objective was achieved and the research questions were answered by the respondents and the answers were collected and analyzed. The research has given an insight into the difficulties faced by the elementary grade Uzbek language learners in reading comprehension. Therefore, this research can be seen as highly significant for the language teachers who teach young learners.

This research focused on learners' difficulties in ESL reading comprehension from one region of Uzbekistan. This research could be expanded to other schools as well as language learning centers to identify the other reading comprehension difficulties by using other methods.

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