

**Reading Difficulties amongst EFL 2nd year – English Majoring Learners
at Al Mustaqbal University**

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صعوبات القراءة بين طلاب اللغة الانكليزية المرحلة الثانية في جامعة المستقبل

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Abstract

Reading is the main input for learners in general and tertiary level students in particular. It is also known that good reader are usually good learners. Comprehension is an essential ability that helps learners to understand, engage with all field of knowledge. The study aims at investigating the reading comprehension of 6 (3 female and 3 male) second year –English -majoring students at Al Mustaqbal Uni. in Iraq. Two data collection methods were utilized; reading comprehension test and in-depth interview. The participants showed a moderate level in comprehending the utilised texts. They also manifested a moderate to weak level in communication during the interviews. The findings revealed that there are a number of reasons stand behind the low performance of some participants; their previous – elementary education with regard to learning English, some teachers are not qualified to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in addition to the fact that most school are not equipped with the necessary language learning technology, i.e., smart boards, internet access for example.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, tertiary level, reading difficulties

الملخص:

القراءة هي المدخل الرئيسي للمتعلمين بشكل عام ولطلاب المستوى الجامعي بشكل خاص. ومن المعروف أيضًا أن القارئ الجيد يكون عادة متعلمًا جيدًا. الفهم هو قدرة أساسية تساعد المتعلمين على استيعاب والتفاعل مع جميع مجالات المعرفة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في الاستيعاب بعد القراءة لدى 6 طلاب من السنة الثانية - تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية (3 إناث و3 ذكور) في جامعة المستقبل في العراق. تم استخدام طريقتين لجمع البيانات؛ اختبار الاستيعاب بعد القراءة والمقابلة المعمقة. أظهر المشاركون مستوى متوسط في فهم النصوص المستخدمة. كما أظهروا مستوى متوسط إلى ضعيف في التواصل أثناء المقابلات. كشفت النتائج أن هناك عدة أسباب تقف وراء انخفاض أداء بعض المشاركين؛ من هذه الأسباب هو تعليمهم السابق - التعليم الابتدائي فيما يخص تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وكذلك بعض المعلمين ليسوا مؤهلين لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بالإضافة إلى حقيقة أن معظم المدارس غير مجهزة بالتقنيات اللازمة لتعلم اللغة، مثل الألواح الذكية والوصول إلى الإنترنت على سبيل المثال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستيعاب في القراءة، المستوى الجامعي، صعوبات القراءة

Introduction

The ability of humans to use signs, such as words and body language to communicate with one another is known as language. Without language, communication will be difficult and there will be numerous restrictions. English is one of the most widely used languages in the world. Thus, learning English nowadays is crucial for everyone in general and for tertiary level students in particular. In order to learn a language, one must master four key skills. These four skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Reading is the main input of data for learners and it is a challenge between the reader's schema and printed information and notions. To understand these information and notions, a reader needs to evoke and utilise his previous experiences and background knowledge. Previous experiences and knowledge facilitate the process of reading comprehension for the reader and lead to a successful reading process. Successful reading process means comprehending meanings and notions included in the text. Alderson (2007), argued that successful reading passes two steps, processing and producing. In the former the reader tries to decipher words, relates meanings to his previous knowledge, when in the latter the reader tries to conceive the read data and bring notions together to produce meanings .

According to Binsalah & Guerroudj (2020), EFL learners' schemata is deemed essential, readers bring their previous knowledge and experiences when they come to read and understand a text. Learners' experiences and prior knowledge assist their perception and comprehension. In learning EFL for academic purposes, learners need to learn strategies that

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ease and facilitate the process of reading comprehension of advanced and complicated notions. Nevertheless, reading remains a challenge for many English- majoring students in dealing with academic texts .

Statement of the problem

For college-level students, reading is the primary and most essential source of information. It is also a process by which learners collect meanings out of printed materials, Alsawar (2017). As part of their efforts to acquire the necessary knowledge, college-level readers typically encounter a variety of reading materials, including textbooks, correspondence with other educational institutions, articles, and web-based information they search. As a result, college-level students find it extremely difficult to handle large reading materials.

According to the researchers' experiences and preliminary observations indicate that Iraqi college-level EFL students, generally, lack the necessary prior knowledge and perceptions required for a successful reading task. Moreover, they are not strategic readers. A sizeable portion of Al-Mustaqbal University second-year English majoring students find reading comprehension task as a kind of challenge when asked to read aloud. The majority of students become discouraged and ashamed. They also exhibit a high degree of anxiety .

[Al-Kubaisy (1993), Naif (2011), Ahmed et al. (2015), Al Obaydi & Bahadli (2018), Al Zubaidi (2021), Mohammad (2022), and Ali & Ghnee (2023)] all concurred that Iraqi students lack the required reading comprehension and the ability to utilize their background knowledge successfully. Mukhlif and Amir (2017) also supported this idea, claiming that most Arab students struggle with reading texts and attributing this to a lack of prior knowledge and reading strategy awareness .

There is no denying that social, political, and economic factors influence all educational movements. All facets of life have been unstable in Iraq for the past thirty years as a result of the political regional wars. Naturally, the conditions of education was at the top of the list .

All Iraqi public schools curricula are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. It is in charge of creating the syllabus, teaching strategies, and textbooks, Ahmed et al. (2015). Researchers critique the curriculum referenced by the Iraqi Ministry of Education. They

claim that EFL curriculum is inadequate and does not satisfy the demands of both teachers and learners, Naif (2011), Al Zubaidi (2021), Al Kusairy.(2007)

There is a growing need for English as an international language, and it has been noted that English language teachers in Iraqi schools frequently employ outdated and antiquated teaching methods. On the other hand, schools are not equipped with the necessary learning resources (visual & auditory aids) that are necessary for the process of language acquisition. They make language learning easier for students and facilitate the acquisition process. Therefore, it is believed that the degree of comprehension of the academic contents by the Iraqi students is low.

The Questions of the Study

• Research question

In order to fill this gap in the literature, the current study tries to answer the following question:

- What are the reading comprehension challenges encountered by 2nd –year English majoring students?

The Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to support and help both instructor and EFL college level English-majoring learners to diagnose the reasons that stand behind the issue of reading comprehension difficulties. The findings will also provide curriculum designers and EFL remedy- courses administrators with insights on the reading comprehension difficulties encountered by Iraqi EFL learners.

Literature review

Teachers need to assess their learners' language four skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This will help them to diagnose their points of strengths and weaknesses. Reading is the main source of knowledge for Iraqi EFL learners and a big portion of these learners struggle to comprehend English texts sufficiently. They do not have the ability to decode new words, elicit meanings and draw out notions included in the text. Thus, it is a major issue for EFL college-level learners.

Types of language assessment

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Habib (2016) presented three types of assessments, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment. For diagnostic assessment, it helps language instructors to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the learners before starting the course. This will help instructors in designing activities and instructions that tackle the area of weakness for the learners and meet their needs. The second kind of assessment refers to a continuous assessment that ends with a real progress in the learners' performance. However, the last one assesses the learners' final outcomes in language learning. This kind of assessment is usually held with adequate prior notice for the learners to be prepared for that. In the present study diagnostic assessment will be adopted to diagnose the difficulties encountered by second year-English majoring students while dealing with academic texts.

Previous Related Studies

Several studies have investigated reading difficulties among school students and college-level students. This section discusses related studies, highlighting their similarities and differences with the current study regarding sample size, methods, and research design, i.e., qualitative or quantitative.

Table 1 studies related to reading difficulties

Research/ year	Purpose of the study	Methods	Sample	Findings
Juma'a (2024)	The effect of word recognition on reading comprehension	Pre-test & post-test and interview	30 (15 experimental group & 15 control group) secondary school students in Iraq	-Instruction & awareness in word recognition strategies is essential. -The experimental group showed better performance than the control group in the reading comprehension post-test.
Mohamm ad (2022)	To investigate reading dyslexia awareness.	Explorator y Approach	34 Primary school EFL teachers	Participants lack the required understanding of dyslexia & the necessary training to promote the awareness.
Ali &	To identify	The	30 (15 male & 15	-females showed better

Ghnee (2023)	reading miscues	reading miscues inventory	female) Iraqi primary school pupils	performance at reading skill than males.
Al Zubaidi (2021)	Studies the reading comprehension	Questionnaire	140 teachers, 72 female & 68 male Iraqi intermediate EFL students	- Difficulties in reading comprehension due to students' reading behaviours, textbook, teaching aids and methods. -
Al Obaydi & Bahadli (2018)	Reading difficulties from EFL teachers' viewpoints	Questionnaire	15 EFL teachers & 30 intermediate school students	-Difficulty in reading literary texts. - student sample showed punctuation & reading difficulties.
Alsawar, (2017)	To assess the reading ability of a single Arab young subject.	Using The Qualitative Reading Inventory	One Arab young learner of English in the US.	-Reading skill is essential for language learning. -lack of vocabulary & prior schemata are major problems in reading comprehension. -Diagnostic test is essential for language educators.
Khayat, (2017)	Reading difficulties among university students.	Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.	200 UAE first-year university students from different disciplines.	-lack of vocabulary knowledge & poor reading habits as major contributors to reading difficulties.
Meniado, (2016)	Investigated the relationship between metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and reading	Survey using MARS questionnaire and comprehension test.	150 Saudi EFL college level students.	Found that students with higher metacognitive awareness performed better in reading comprehension tasks.

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	comprehension.			
Alsamadani, (2012)	Examined the relationship between reading strategies and reading comprehension performance.	Questionnaire and reading comprehension test.	122 Saudi EFL university students.	Reported a significant positive correlation between the use of reading strategies and higher comprehension scores.
Naif (2011)	To investigate the use of the cognitive reading strategies.	Think-aloud protocol, self-report questionnaire, & in-depth interview	Five Iraqi -EFL final year students	-limited usage for the cognitive reading strategies. -lack of awareness in reading strategy use.

Table 1 shows a number of studies that covered the issue of reading skill and reading comprehension in general. Nevertheless, most of these studies investigated reading difficulties encountered by young EFL learners [Juma'a (2024), Mohammad (2022), Ali & Ghnee (2023), Al Zubaidi (2021), Al Obaydi & Bahadli (2018), Alsawar (2017)] while tertiary level students will be utilized as a research sample for the present study. Juma'a (2024) investigated the effects of word recognition on the reading comprehension of 30 Iraqi first-year secondary school students. The sample was divided into two groups, experimental and control groups. The results revealed that the experimental group, that received instruction in word recognition strategy, performed better than the control group in the reading comprehension post-test. In the same vein, Ali & Ghnee (2023) conducted a study to identify reading miscues of 30 (15 male and 15 female) fifth –year primary school students in Iraq. The female participants manifested better reading performance (syntactically and semantically) than the male participants who demonstrated frequent attempts to correct their reading mistakes. Similarly, Mohammad (2022) investigated reading dyslexia awareness amongst primary school EFL teachers in Iraq. The results revealed that the participants lack the required understanding for dyslexia and the necessary training that is necessary for EFL

teachers. The same issue was investigated by Alsawar (2017) who assessed the reading ability of a single Saudi young subject learning in the US as an ESL learner. The findings indicated that the lack of vocabulary and prior schemata were major problems for reading comprehension difficulty. The findings also revealed that diagnostic test is essential for language educators to help their learners who suffer from dyslexia. Including EFL teachers as research sampling, Al Obaydi & Bahadli (2018) studied difficulties encountered by intermediate school EFL students. 30 students and 15 teachers participated in this study and findings revealed difficulties in reading literary texts in addition to spelling and punctuation problems. In the same manner and involving (140) EFL teachers as research sampling, Al Zubaidi investigated the issue of reading comprehension of (140) female and male intermediate school EFL students. The study also investigated the impact of the teachers' variables (years of experience, gender, qualification) on the students' performance. The results revealed that reading difficulties were due to the students' reading behavior, the curriculum implemented in schools, and the teaching methods used by teachers.

The purpose of conducting the aforementioned studies are inline with the present study i.e., to investigate the reading difficulties amongst EFL Iraqi learners. However, the present study targeted tertiary –level EFL learners while these studies utilized school EFL learners. Moreover, Al Zubaidi's study is concurrent with what the present study assumed and claimed in the statement of the problem.

Another group of studies [Khiat (2017), Meniado (2016), Alsamadani (2012), Naif (2011)] tackled the issue of reading difficulties among ELF learners with different research sampling category, i.e., tertiary level learners. Khiat (2017) conducted a study to assess the reading habits and attitudes of university students in the United Arab Emirates. The study included a sample of undergraduate students from different colleges within a private university. The results revealed that while students acknowledged the importance of reading, their reading habits were generally poor. The study concluded that motivational and institutional support is essential to foster stronger reading practices among students. In the same manner, Meniado (2016) examined the relationship between metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension performance amongst (312) preparatory-year students of the academic college in Saudi Arabia. The study found a significant positive correlation between strategy awareness and reading comprehension performance.

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Reading comprehension performance and reading strategy use were also looked into by Alsamadani (2012) in a study involved 100 male Saudi students from the English Department at Umm Al-Qura University. The findings revealed that students had low proficiency in reading comprehension and rarely used effective reading strategies. Additionally, the findings highlighted the need for strategic reading instruction to improve comprehension. In like manner Naif (2011) researched the cognitive reading strategies used by 5 tertiary level English –majoring EFL learners from the Ladies College of Education in Baghdad. The results revealed a lack of awareness in reading strategy use in addition to a limited use of the cognitive reading strategies.

The study is in harmony with [Khiat (2017), Meniado (2016), Alsamadani (2012), Naif (2011)] studies in terms of research sampling, that is tertiary level EFL learners. Moreover, the aforesaid studies confirmed the significance of reading strategy use and awareness for better reading comprehension results what the current study assumed and intends to recommend. The present study is also inline with Naif's (2011) study when both adopted the qualitative paradigm. However, Khait (2017) and Meniado (2016) studies adopted the quantitative paradigm.

In summary, previous studies have provided valuable insights into reading difficulties among university students, primarily using quantitative approaches with varied sample sizes and procedures. However, few have focused specifically on second-year students at a localized institution such as Al-Mustaqbal University. This highlights a gap that the current study seeks to fill, offering a more focused and context-specific contribution to the literature on reading difficulties in higher education.

Despite its significance, the reviewed literature showed a dearth in studies related to reading comprehension challenges encountered by Iraqi EFL learners and that is the impetus for conducting this study.

The design of the study

A qualitative paradigm was adopted in the current study to understand closely and examine in detail the problem studied. The purpose of this research is to measure and analyse the participants' reading difficulties systematically through structured tools such as reading diagnosing tests and interview. The researchers intend to understand closely and examine in detail the problems studied. A case study is defined by Yin (2003:13) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context".

Participants

Table 2, Biography of the participants

participant	Sex	Age	diagnosing test	Marks at English Matriculation Exam
A	male	20 years old	9	70
B	male	23 years old	9	68
C	male	21 years old	5	54
D	female	21 years old	6	58
E	female	22 years old	12	73
F	female	21 years old	8	55

Six second – year English majoring participants (3 males and 3 females) were selected randomly out of 45 students. All participants were from the same stage to determine the homogeneity composition of the group. The respondents are also homogenous in terms of age that ranges between 20 to 23 years. As shown in Table 2 above, the results of the reading comprehension diagnosing test showed a medium to low level of the participants, marks ranged between 5 to 12 out of 15. The table also shows the participants' marks in English at the high school matriculation exam (organized by the Iraqi Ministry of Education) that ranged between low to medium level.

Data collection methods

The importance of assessing the reading comprehension skill of the students lies in the fact that it supplies instructors of English with a clear perception of difficulties learners usually encounter during their study. In addition, it provides instructors with clear insights into the EFL learner's needs and competency.

According to Habib (2016:26) "Assessment is viewed as one of the vital pedagogical practices to both teaching and learning". To assess the reading comprehension ability of the participants, a qualitative paradigm has been adopted in this study. A reading comprehension diagnosing test and in-depth interview were utilized for the purpose of data collection. The participants answered questions related to two reading comprehension texts. The first was about Shakespeare and the second one was about Christopher Marlow. Both texts were revised and approved by two experts in education working at the Department of English,

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(Prof. Asim Aboud and Dr. Redah Ghanim) see Appendix 1. The text-related questions were modified according to their notes. The participants were 2nd year- English majoring students and both texts should be close to the previous knowledge. Both diagnosing tests consisted of two text-related questions. The first consisted of 5 items of WH- question, whereas the second one included ten items of matching vocabulary, one mark for each. The participants had to read the texts one by one to answer two related questions. The six participant took the test together and it was conducted in a classroom. The time allocated for the test was one hour.

In-depth interview was the second data collection method. Interviews were conducted to verify the data collected from the reading comprehension diagnosing test and also for the purpose of collecting data related to the participants' experiences related to English language learning. Interviews were conducted individually in a classroom. The in-depth interviews included two groups of questions. The first covered the participants' perceptions of learning English while the second group was related to difficulties in reading comprehension encountered by them during the test. All interviews were voice-recorded and video recording was excluded to give the participants the confidence to answer the raised questions. Each interview lasted for about 15-20 minutes. All voice - collected data were transferred to Word files and verbatim.

Data Analysis

In this stage qualitative raw data collected and generated from the diagnosing reading tests and interviews will be transcribed in Word files, summarized, and organized according to themes emerged from a large amount of data. The second step will be findings relationships between various identified, emerged themes. Analysis comprises working on the collected raw data by generating and classifying these categorizes into manageable data blocks. The last step is summarizing these categories and finding crucial study-related patterns for reporting, Lacey& Luff (2009).

Findings

Participant F and during the interview showed a high level of anxiety and could not reply many questions, she also showed a weak performance in the test. She reported that both text were incomprehensible for her and she could not reply when asked in English.

Both, participants C and D did not showed a good communication skill during the interview however, they did not show good results in the reading comprehension diagnosing test. When asked about her low performance participant D, said that *"I did not care about getting high marks, I just wanted to pass the exams"*. It is worth to mention here that participant D showed a low performance at the high school Matriculation Exam and gained 58 only.

Justifying the weak performance in the reading comprehension diagnosing test participant C showed a low performance in the test as well. He scored 54/100 in the English Matriculation Exam. He C justified that low mark by saying *"I was not used to study my lessons. I was used to not attending the classes at school. I used to go to take exams only"*. When asked about the reason for choosing the English language to study, C replied that he was encouraged by his cousin, who is doing business in South Korea, to study English language to be eligible for life and work there in the future. He also justified his low mark in the reading comprehension diagnosing test and reported that *"many words were knew for me, I didn't study them before"*.

On the other hand, participants E and B showed a very good communication level during the interview and performed well at the reading comprehension diagnosing test. When asked about that, both reported that their interest in English started at early age. For that participant E who showed a distinguished level among the participants and managed to score the highest mark (12) among the participants. She reported that *"my interest in English started at high school and she started to watch English material on You Tube to develop her language skills"*. She also explained the methods she used to promote her English and said *"I watch short videos with transcription and I try to read with the video. That helped me a lot to develop my reading skill"*. In the same vein participant B, who scored (9) in the reading comprehension diagnosing test, described his experience in leaning English and reported that his interest started at early age and said *"my interest started in grade seven"*.

Discussion

What are the reading comprehension challenges encountered by 2nd –year English majoring students?

In general, data collected from the reading comprehension diagnosing test manifested a medium level of the participants who faced problems with reading comprehension and understanding many new words included in both texts, besides a clear lack in prior schemata.

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In addition to a weak communication skill during the interview. These findings are in line with [Juma'a (2024), Al Zubaidi (2021), Alsawar (2017), Khiat (2017)] studies that stressed the lack of vocabulary and schemata can be major problems that hinder the reading comprehension process for EFL learners. This was also confirmed by the participants during the interviews. For instance participants C reported that *"some vocabulary were a bit difficult. I didn't see them before"*.

This might be attributed to the participants' little learning aptitude in general and that was clear in their weak performance in the high school final Matriculation Exam. This was also confirmed by information obtained from the interviews when four out of six participants reported weak performance in speaking skill when asked to answer the questions of the interview in English. For that participant D reported *"Before I come to the college, I did not try to develop my English, depended on only the school text book"*. According to Alsawar (2017), reading comprehension and excelling in the academic field always require a deeper understanding of vocabulary by students.

Moreover, the participants' weak performance might be also attributed to their weak previous education which is deemed an obstacle for good EFL learning. That is clear when the participants manifested difficulties with decoding (reading the words) and difficulties with language understanding (understanding what the words mean). In addition to their weak prior knowledge that is clearly reflected on their performance. Participant C confirmed that and said *"I used to study at home, I did not attend any class at school"*. These findings are inline with (Mohammed, 2021; Al Zubaidi, 2021; Mukhlif and Amir, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2015; Al Kusairy, 2007; and Al-Kubaisy, 1993) studies that confirmed the weak performance in EFL reading comprehension.

The second prominent theme emerged in the collected data is the way English is taught at schools in Iraq. Schools in Iraq lack the inevitable language learning technology, i.e., internet access, audio visual aids, technology-assisted language learning programmes. Nowadays, the use of technology is essential in ESL and EFL learning. In addition to the issue of the EFL teachers in Iraq as far as proficiency is regarded.

Teachers and language teaching methods used at schools are deemed another reason that stand behind the weak performance of EFL learners in general and reading comprehension in particular. Iraqi EFL teachers lack the required proficiency for teaching English. Ali & Ghnee (2023:1) confirmed that and said *"reading difficulties among school language learners is attributed to teachers of English"*.

Similarly, the participants supported this phenomena and for that participant A said *“the students’ problem in general starts at the primary learning in English. The way of studying English at school is usually wrong. The teaching methods were not very effective. Accordingly their base in English is very weak”*. These notions were also raised in the reviewed literature by many researchers [Al-Kubaisy (1993), Naif (2011), Ahmed et al. (2015), Al Obaydi & Bahadli (2018), Al Zubaidi (2021), Mohammad (2022), and Ali & Ghnee (2023).

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, we conclude that EFL 2nd-year English majoring learners are facing difficulties in reading comprehending English texts efficiently. When tested, the participants could not answer all text-related questions in spite of the fact that both texts, used in the reading diagnosing tests, are close to their schemata. Apparently, this weakness can be attributed to the learners’ learning aptitude. This is obvious in their performance at the National Matriculation Exam. In addition to another factors reported and confirmed by many researchers that English language curriculum at Iraqi school is not sufficient. Besides the unqualified EFL teachers. Schools, on the other hand, are not equipped with the inevitable technology that facilitate the process of learning EFL that is internet access, smart boards, new curriculum, and libraries.

Recommendations

The issue of reading is of high importance as the main input for knowledge, thus it is recommended to conduct more research to find out more about factors that stand behind reading difficulties and the low performance amongst Iraqi EFL learners in general.

It is highly recommended to conduct more research on the relationship between EFL learners’ aptitude, i.e., the ability to learn, and language acquisition.

It is recommended to administer training courses for primary and high school EFL teachers to enhance their awareness in reading strategy use. EFL learners need to learn strategies that facilitate successful reading skill. For instance, word decoding, word associations. It has been noticed that many Iraqi EFL teachers struggle with pronunciation and weak reading skill and that is clearly reflected on their learners’ performance in reading skill.

As English is a foreign language in Iraq, it is recommended to promote the primary education, the corner stone in the learning process. By equipping school with internet access and modern technology that facilitate the learning process in general. For instance supplying schools’ classrooms with smart boards, library, and audio-visual apparatuses for better language learning process.

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Appendix 1

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College of Arts and Human Sciences
Department of English

Participant's consent

Dear students, your participation in this study is highly appreciated by the researchers, accordingly you are required to carefully answer the questions related to the passage below. The research aims at investigating the reading comprehension difficulties encountered by 2nd year –English majoring students. The results will be useful for instructors, learners of English, and institutes that administer EFL courses as well. Your participation will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used.

Participant's pseudonym; -----

Signature and date; -----

Text 1

Read the following passage and answer the questions below.

Christopher Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe, the second of nine children, and oldest child after the death of his sister Mary in 1568, was born to Canterbury shoemaker John Marlowe and his wife Katherine, daughter of William Arthur of Dover. He was baptised at St George's Church, Canterbury, on 26 February 1564. Marlowe's birth was likely to have been a few days before, making him about two months older than William Shakespeare, who was baptised on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon.

By age 14, Marlowe was a pupil at The King's School, Canterbury on a scholarship and two years later a student at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he also studied through a scholarship with expectation that he would become an Anglican clergyman. Instead, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1584. Marlowe mastered Latin during his schooling, reading and translating the works of Ovid.

Marlowe is alleged to have been a government spy. Park Honan and Charles Nicholl speculate that this was the case and suggest that Marlowe's recruitment took place when he was at Cambridge. In 1587, when the Privy Council ordered the University of Cambridge to award Marlowe his degree as Master of Arts, it denied rumours that he intended to go to the English Catholic college in Rheims, saying instead that he had been engaged in unspecified "affaires" on "matters touching the benefit of his country".

Q.1 Answer the following question

1. Where was Christopher Marlowe born?

2. When was Christopher Marlowe baptised?

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3. At what age did Christopher join The king's School?
4. When did Christopher receive his Bachelor of Arts degree?
5. Which university awarded Christopher Master of Arts?

Q2. Match the words in list A to their meanings in list B.

A	B
1. Baptised	A free study granted by a university
2. Stratford	Priest
3. Scholarship	claimed
4. Expectations	Hearsays
5. Clergyman	Assumption
6. Alleged	A city in England
7. Speculate	To give a name to someone at the church
8. Recruitment	Prize
9. Award	Employment
10. Rumours	Hypothesize

Al Mustaqbal Uni.
College of Arts and Human Sciences
Department of English / Research plan.
Reading Comprehension Test 2

Participant's consent

Dear students, your participation in this study is highly appreciated by the researchers, accordingly you are required to carefully answer the questions related to the passage below. The research aims at investigating the reading comprehension difficulties encountered by 2nd year –English majoring students. The results will be useful for instructors, learners of English, and institutes that administer EFL courses as well. Your participation will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used.

Participant's consent

Participant's pseudonym; _____

Signature and date; _____

Text 2

Read the following passage and answer the questions below.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (23 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" or simply "the Bard". His extant works, including collaborations, consist of some 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living languages and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare remains arguably the most influential writer in the English language, and his works continue to be studied and reinterpreted.

Shakespeare was born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Sometime between 1585 and 1592 he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men after the ascension of King James VI of Scotland to the English throne. At age 49 (around 1613) he appears to have retired to Stratford, where he died three years later.

Q1. Answer the following questions.

1. When was Shakespeare born?

2. What was Shakespeare's career?

3. How many poems did he write?

4. How many plays did Shakespeare write?

5. To whom was Shakespeare married?

Q2. Match the words in list A to their meanings in list B.

A	B
1. playwright	Effective
2. regarded	Pensioned
3. including	Last
4. uncertain	Profession
5. major	Dramatist
6. remains	Seat
7. influential	Undetermined
8. career	Involving
9. throne	Main
10. retired	Considered

Good Luck

Appendix 2

Interview sample / participant B

Male. Age/ 23

Mark scored in the English matriculation Exam was 68

General average at high school 56

Year:- Department of English 2nd

I:- Thanks for participating in this research as a sample.

I:- What's your problem with reading comprehension in reading a text in English?

B:- Nothing, I can read very well.

I:- Can you understand everything?

B:- Yes.

I:- But your mark is 8/15. What kind of problem did you face in the exam?

B:- The new meanings, vocabulary. Some meanings were advanced, higher than my level.

I:- What was your level in English in High School?

B:- It was very good, honestly.

I:- Were you interested in English in High School?

B:- Yes, very much. I used to study English a lot.

I:- How was your performance in English. Did you get high marks in English in High School?

B:- Yes, but I got unlucky in the matriculation exam.

I:- When you start reading a text in English, what kind of problems do you usually face.

B:- The new words.

I:- With regard to the text about C. Marlow, didn't you study about his life in drama class.

B:- In general, we did.

I:- Were you interested in English in High School before you came here?

B:- Yes, my interest started in grade seven. I had a very good English teacher. She had a way of making English interesting. I started to develop my English until High School. Is started to watch my social media in English and that promoted my vocabulary and the general reading also. I used to watch short videos that consisted of short paragraphs. I used to try to understand those until I got better at reading. My pronunciation also improved.

I:- Very good. That means your perception towards English is positive.

B:- Yes, sure.

I:- How did you find these two text I gave you?

B:- I really found them hard especially the matching question.

I:- Who is Shakespeare?

B:- He is a playwright.

I:- Have you heard about Christopher Marlowe?

B:- I heard about him, only heard about him.

I:- Who is the writer of Doctor Faustus?

B:- I have no idea who is he.

I:- Do you know the meaning of the word "pensioned"?

B:- No.

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I:- Do you know the meaning of the word "playwright"?

B:- No.

I:- Do you know the meaning of the word "novelist"?

B:- He is a novelist.

I:- What criteria that you depend on while you were answering the first question?

B:- I read the question and I go back to the passage and find the answer.

I:- Thank you very much and I wish you good luck.

I:- Thanks for your time and for participating in this research. Remember no real names are used in this research. Pseudonyms will be utilized instead.