

Revisiting Reading Approaches Practiced in EFL Classrooms: Insights into Adult English Learners' Perspectives and Preferences

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Abstract

The study investigates the perceptions and attitudes of EFL adult English learners regarding effective reading strategies for enhancing their reading proficiency. Employing qualitative methods, focus group discussions were conducted with 20 participants from intensive English language programs, which revealed five preferred strategies: Expressive Reading, Quiet Reading, Collaborative Reading, Fast Focus Reading, and Timed Reading. Each approach presents its advantages, yet also entails certain drawbacks, such as the impact of reading rate on comprehension and the potential pressure associated with timed exercises. Nonetheless, the findings underscore the importance of employing a flexible approach to reading strategies in EFL classrooms to accommodate the diverse needs of individual learners and promote meaningful engagement. Furthermore, this study highlights the necessity for instructors to integrate these strategies into their teaching practices, thereby fostering an environment that not only enhances reading proficiency but also encourages learner autonomy and motivation in the language acquisition process.

Keywords: adult english learners, reading strategies, EFL instruction, learner engagement, language proficiency

1. Introduction

Reading in English within a foreign language (EFL) context has received much attention as researchers and foreign language educators have sought the most effective and beneficial ways to develop language learners' reading skills. For many educators (Horwitz, 2020; Krashen, 2007; Nation, 2008; Singhal, 2001), reading is the bridge that allows English language learners to acquire and develop other language skills including speaking, writing, and vocabulary acquisition. In other words, developing language learners' oral and written competency is associated with developing their reading skills (Horwitz, 2020). Krashen, (2007) pointed out that a good reader usually becomes fluent in other language skills such as writing and speaking. Also, Research on reading has been extensively conducted, with a significant number of studies (e.g., Chomphuchart, 2006; HoFang, 2008; Khurram, 2023; Nordin, Pace, Miles et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2013; Peng et al., 2024) investigating the various reading strategies implemented to enhance the reading competency of language learners. These investigations contribute to a deeper understanding of effective pedagogical approaches in developing reading skills within diverse learner populations.

Barrot (2016) mentioned that research surrounding teaching English reading focuses on the type of text or materials used in English classes and the strategies that ESL teacher utilize to facilitate teaching and learning of English reading. These strategies are influenced by many factors including but not limited to age, gender, English proficiency level, and the learning styles. In other words, research around English reading strategies is essential in identifying the most effective and beneficial methods and techniques that can be used with language learners.

Even though much research has been done regarding foreign language reading, there is a dearth of studies examining the perceptions of adult language learners who utilize various reading strategies daily. As such, the current study sought to shed light upon what reading strategies language learners prefer during ESL reading classes and why. It is important to understand these perceptions in the hope of enhancing the teaching methods used in reading classes. Therefore, the present study explores adult language learners' perspectives regarding the most effective and beneficial reading strategies that can be used to develop the reading competency of adult English language learners.

Using qualitative research methods, the study examined what specific reading strategies language learners believe are effective in developing their reading skills. Accordingly, the following research questions guided the research study:

- 1) How do adult English language learners perceive and experience the use of different strategies in EFL reading classes?
- 2) What reading strategies do adult language learners prefer to practice in EFL classes?

Understanding these perceptions is important for foreign language teachers to design lesson plans and classroom activities that help in developing the reading skills of language learners. Moreover, such knowledge will extend our understanding of language learners' preferences in terms of how and which strategies are utilized in language classes. In other words, the study attempts to give voice to language learners and to allow them to be part of shaping and designing their learning process. With students' opinions and feelings, teachers can conduct more effective and appealing ESL classes. Language learners' opinions, preferences, and idea should be valued regarding the materials, methods, and sources that are incorporated in ESL classes.

Additionally, recognizing the diverse backgrounds and learning contexts of adult language learners is crucial in tailoring reading instruction. By acknowledging their unique experiences and challenges, educators can better align reading strategies with learners' specific needs and preferences. This approach not only enhances engagement but also fosters a sense of agency among learners, empowering them to take ownership of their learning journey. As a result, the integration of learners' perspectives into curriculum design may lead to more effective reading instruction and improved overall language proficiency.

2. Literature Review

Over the past decade, research on English language teaching and learning has emphasized the importance of developing the reading skills of language learners. Although developing this skill is crucial, improving it can be quite challenging. Catts (2022) emphasized that improving reading comprehension is a complex process that requires multiple levels of instruction and practice. Clearly, building background knowledge that is both deep and broad is needed to lay the foundation for comprehension and for further knowledge acquisition. However, students also need high-quality reading instruction involving decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies to best use their knowledge in different reading contexts and for different purposes.

Many researchers (Haupt, 2015; Horwitz, 2020; Nation, 2008; Singhal, 2001) believe that assisting language learners in the development of their reading skills is a crucial step in leading them to refine and master other language skills. Horwitz (2020) explained the importance of reading in second language acquisition by stating that Horwitz (2020) emphasized the crucial role of reading in acquiring a second language by stating that it is essential for achieving complete proficiency. Through reading, learners gain insight into the daily lives and cultures of native speakers, allowing them to experience a much greater diversity of conversational contexts than they would through direct interactions alone.

The exploration of reading strategies has evolved over decades, with early research focusing on basic comprehension techniques. As educational theories advanced, the understanding of reading as an interactive process gained prominence, leading to a richer analysis of how various factors influence reading strategies. This literature review aims to bridge historical findings with current trends, illustrating the ongoing relevance of reading strategies in the context of language acquisition and pedagogy.

In terms of reading strategies, several studies (Chomphuchart, 2006; HoFang, 2008; Nordin, Rashid, Zubir, and Sadjirin, 2013) have examined different strategies that can be effectively employed by language learners. Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) define reading strategies as “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text” (p. 368). Moreover, researchers have investigated key factors related to the use of these strategies, including gender (Denton et al., 2015), readers' proficiency level (Denton et al., 2015; Nordin et al., 2013), text type (HoFang, 2008), text genres (Chomphuchart, 2006), and reading purposes (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) classified reading strategies into three categories: global strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies. Global strategies refer to the intentional and unintentional methods that readers use to monitor their reading, such as previewing, predicting, skimming, and scanning. Problem-solving strategies involve methods and actions that help readers better process difficult texts, including guessing the meaning of words, visualizing reading materials, adjusting reading pace, and reading slowly. Lastly, support strategies are used to

enhance comprehension, with examples including taking notes, paraphrasing, using related materials, asking questions, and summarizing.

Furthermore, Chomphuchart (2006) examined the reading strategies employed by Thai English language learners exposed to various English texts. The study aimed to identify the strategies used by these learners and the effect of text genres (e.g., academic vs. literary texts) on their strategy selection. The study involved 253 Thai graduate students studying at different universities in the U.S. The results indicated that the participants used reading strategies moderately, with significant differences depending on the type of reading material. Importantly, learners with higher reading proficiency tended to rely more on effective strategies, indicating their awareness of the importance of these strategies in developing reading skills. Chomphuchart concluded that variables such as major, gender, familiarity with U.S. English, and educational background had minimal impact on the use of different reading strategies.

In addition, HoFang (2008) highlighted that one of the primary factors affecting language learners' reading processes is the type of text, which serves specific linguistic and communicative purposes. For learners, the type of text can influence their choice of learning strategies, impacting their reading fluency. Some texts require careful reading to grasp main themes, while others can be understood through faster strategies like skimming and scanning.

Nordin et al. (2013) investigated the reading strategies used by ESL learners in higher education, focusing on the frequency of pre-reading and post-reading strategies among low and high-achieving learners. Their findings revealed that high-achieving ESL learners relied more on post-reading strategies, while low-achieving learners favored pre-reading and while-reading strategies. This suggests that low-achieving learners benefit from exposure to texts before engaging with them, providing valuable insights for language teachers regarding effective learning strategies.

Similarly, Haupt (2015) noted that reading is an essential skill for language learners, developed alongside other language skills such as writing, speaking, and listening. Haupt emphasized that enhancing reading skills facilitates growth in these other areas.

Banditvilai (2020) examined the effectiveness of reading strategies on the reading comprehension of second-year English major students through questionnaires, reading tasks, and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that reading strategies positively influenced students' comprehension, with favorable attitudes towards skimming, scanning, making predictions, and questioning, all of which contributed to better text understanding.

Sotiria et al. (2021) explored reading and writing strategies used by typical and struggling readers among 233 undergraduate Greek students, with 46 self-identifying as struggling readers. The research indicated that typical students employed reading and writing strategies more frequently than their struggling peers.

Peng et al. (2024) investigated the active ingredients in reading comprehension strategy interventions for struggling readers, using Bayesian network meta-analysis. The results revealed that more strategies did not necessarily equate to stronger effects on reading comprehension, and no single strategy emerged as the most effective. The benefits of strategies were evident only when background knowledge instruction was included.

Althewini (2025) examined how teaching experience affects Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction, focusing on skills-based, whole language, and metacognitive strategies. A quantitative survey involving 65 teachers categorized into novice, intermediate, and veteran groups revealed distinct instructional preferences. Novice teachers favored skills-based models, intermediate teachers balanced whole language and metacognitive approaches, while veteran teachers primarily adopted metacognitive strategies that promote learner autonomy. Regression analysis identified professional development and higher qualifications as key factors influencing the adoption of innovative teaching strategies. The findings emphasize the need for tailored teacher training programs and institutional support to enhance instructional practices.

To conclude, the literature emphasizes the vital importance of reading skills in English language teaching and learning. The studies reviewed reveal that reading comprehension is a complex process requiring a blend of extensive background knowledge and effective instruction in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. It is widely recognized that developing reading skills is crucial not only for academic success but also for strengthening other language abilities.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative research method to collect and analyze data, allowing for a nuanced understanding of participants' beliefs and opinions regarding effective and beneficial reading strategies. The qualitative inquiry

provided the researchers with the flexibility to delve into the underlying reasons behind these preferences, offering rich, contextual insights that quantitative methods might overlook.

Focus group discussions served as the primary method of data collection. Three sessions were conducted with a total of 20 adult language learners, ensuring a diverse representation of experiences and perspectives. These discussions were guided by semi-structured questions designed to elicit learners' preferences for reading strategies and the rationale behind these preferences. This approach aligns with Krueger and Casey's (2014) recommendation that focus groups facilitate data collection by bringing together participants with shared characteristics to exchange opinions and build upon each other's ideas regarding the study topic. This dynamic interaction often leads to deeper insights, as participants can react to and expand upon each other's contributions, enriching the data collected.

The focus group sessions were transcribed meticulously to capture the nuances of the discussions, ensuring that participants' voices were accurately represented. The analysis was conducted using Dedoose, an online-based platform for organizing and coding qualitative data. This tool proved instrumental in ensuring systematic data organization and analysis, allowing for efficient coding and thematic identification. By utilizing Dedoose, the researchers could identify patterns and trends within the participants' responses, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the various reading strategies discussed. Figure 1 illustrates the data collection and analysis process, providing a visual representation of the steps involved in this qualitative inquiry.

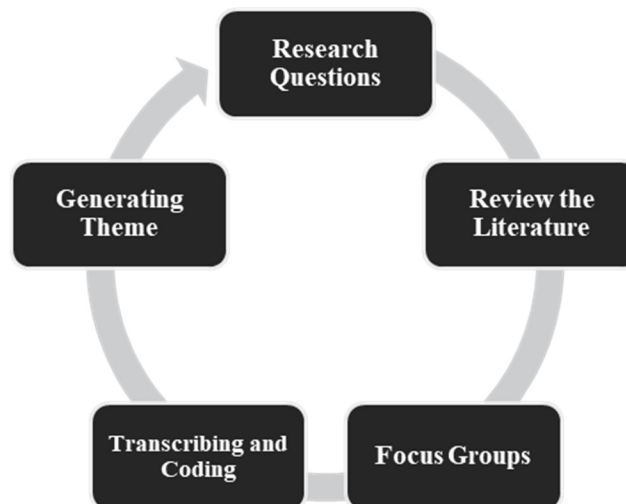


Figure 1. The Data Collection and Analysis Cycle

Moreover, the study involved 20 adult language learners enrolled in two intensive English language programs. These programs cater to learners aiming to improve their English proficiency. The participants varied in their English language proficiency levels, some being low intermediate, high intermediate, or advanced. Additionally, their educational backgrounds ranged from undergraduate to graduate-level students. The group included 15 males and 5 females, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Focus Groups Sessions

Focus Group	Participants	Proficiency Levels	Gender
<i>1st</i>	7	High-Intermediate (3) Advanced (4)	4 Males and 3 Females
<i>2nd</i>	6	High-Intermediate (1) Advanced (5)	4 Males 2 Females
<i>3rd</i>	7	low-Intermediate (4) Advanced (3)	7 Males

4. Results and Findings

The analysis of the data generated through the focus group discussions revealed five reading strategies mentioned consistently by the participants. Figure 2 illustrates the codes generated through the data analysis process, highlighting the key patterns and insights identified in the data. These codes were organized into groups that contributed to developing themes addressing the research questions, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the underlying issues.

Themes	Examples of codes	Explanations	Data from The Focus Groups
Collaborative Reading	Collaborative Learning, Peer Support, Perspective Sharing, Discussion	Collaborative reading involves learners working together to read and analyze texts.	"I really enjoy discussing the text with my classmates; it helps me understand better."
Fast-Focus Reading	Skimming, Efficiency, Main Ideas	Fast-focus reading is a strategy that emphasizes quickly scanning or skimming a text to identify key ideas, main points, or specific information	"When I read quickly, I can find the main ideas without getting lost in details."
Expressive Reading	Engagement, Emotion, Connection	Expressive reading involves reading aloud with emotion, intonation, and emphasis to convey the meaning and mood of the text.	"Reading aloud makes the story come alive; I feel more connected to the characters".
Quiet Reading	Reflection, Focus, Deep Thinking	Quiet reading, also known as silent reading, refers to the practice of reading without vocalizing the words.	"I prefer to read quietly because it helps me think deeply about what I've read".
Timed Reading	Challenge, Speed, Time Pressure, Focus, Minimizing Distractions	Timed reading is a strategy where readers are given a specific time limit to read a passage or text.	"When we have a timer, I feel challenged to read faster, and it helps me improve".

Figure 2. The Themes and Codes Generated Through the Data Analysis Process

Furthermore, in the following sections, each reading strategy is identified and discussed in detail:

4.1 Expressive Reading

Previous research (Hiebert, 2012; Price et al., 2016) has indicated that Reading Aloud is one of the essential reading strategies used to develop reading literacy, enhance text comprehension, and facilitate understanding of themes and ideas that appear in the text. Hiebert et al. (2012) describe Expressive Reading as a technique where students take turns reading a given text aloud, allowing for a shared and interactive reading experience. This reading approach was commonly embraced by the language learners in the three focus groups from the current study, with many participants identifying it as the most effective and beneficial technique for their learning.

According to the participants, Expressive Reading fosters a more in-depth understanding of both general ideas and

specific details in the text. One participant noted, "Reading aloud helps me grasp the meaning better; I can hear the rhythm of the language." This auditory element enhances their ability to pick up nuances and subtleties in the text that might be overlooked during silent reading. Participants believed that this practice not only develops their reading skills but also enhances other language skills, such as speaking and pronunciation. As another learner explained, "When I read aloud, I get immediate feedback on my pronunciation, which really helps me improve." This instant feedback is crucial for language learners, as it enables them to correct errors in real-time and fosters a sense of accomplishment.

Additionally, participants reported that Expressive Reading makes the reading process more enjoyable and engaging. They expressed that reading aloud allows for the expression of emotions, which motivates them to connect more deeply with the text. "When I read with feeling, it makes the story come alive for me," one participant remarked. This emotional engagement not only enhances comprehension but also fosters a deeper connection with the material, leading to a more active and fulfilling reading experience.

Furthermore, the social aspect of Expressive Reading was highlighted as a significant benefit. Participants noted that reading together in a group setting creates a supportive learning environment. "Hearing my classmates read helps me feel more confident in my own abilities," a participant shared. This collaborative atmosphere not only reduces anxiety but also encourages learners to share their interpretations and insights, enriching the overall learning experience. By combining emotional expression with peer interaction, Expressive Reading emerges as a powerful tool for developing both language proficiency and a love for reading among adult learners.

4.2 Quiet Reading

Another reading strategy discussed during the focus group sessions was Quiet Reading. Participants viewed silent reading as a beneficial approach that enhances speed, although they acknowledged it often leads to less comprehensive understanding. One learner noted, "When I read silently, I can really focus on the themes and ideas without distractions," highlighting how a quieter environment improves concentration.

Participants also emphasized that silent reading helps develop reading rhythm. "It lets me maintain a steady pace without worrying about pronunciation," explained another participant, underscoring how this practice allows for deeper immersion in the text. This immersion enhances overall comprehension and enjoyment, as the focus shifts from technical accuracy to a more fluid understanding of the content. "I feel like I can get lost in the story when I read silently," remarked one learner, indicating how this method fosters greater engagement with the material.

However, some participants expressed frustration that, despite the speed advantages of silent reading, it can lead to decreased comprehension. "I find that I can read quickly, but I often miss important details," one participant shared, reflecting a common concern within the group. This sentiment contrasts with research by Hiebert et al. (2012) and Taguchi, Melhem, and Kawaguchi (2016), which suggests that silent reading facilitates concentration on understanding the text without the distraction of pronunciation, ultimately enhancing reading fluency.

The participants' experiences illustrate the challenges associated with silent reading. Many felt that while it offers speed, it may compromise their ability to grasp essential ideas. "I wish I could read faster and still understand everything," another learner admitted, expressing a desire for strategies that balance speed and comprehension. This underscores the need for an integrated approach to reading practices, enabling learners to benefit from both silent and expressive reading techniques to optimize their learning outcomes.

Moreover, the participants discussed the importance of integrating silent reading with other strategies to enhance comprehension. Many suggested that combining silent reading with post-reading activities, such as discussions or summarization, could reinforce understanding. "I think if we talked about what we read after silent reading, it would help me remember the details better," one participant proposed, indicating a desire for collaborative learning experiences that build on individual reading practices.

Finally, the focus group emphasized the importance of teacher guidance in implementing Quiet Reading techniques. Participants voiced a need for instructors to offer clear frameworks and support for silent reading. "Having a teacher explain how to read without moving or making sounds would really help us," one learner remarked, highlighting the value of structured guidance in enhancing their reading skills. This feedback indicates that educator involvement is essential for fostering a comprehensive approach to reading instruction that meets the diverse needs of learners.

4.3 Collaborative Reading

One of the reading strategies reported by the participating language learners was Collaborative Reading. This approach emphasizes cooperative interaction with specific texts, fostering a sense of teamwork and shared

understanding among learners. By reading together, students can discuss their interpretations, ask questions, and clarify doubts in real time, significantly enhancing their comprehension and retention of the material. As one participant noted, “Collaborative Reading helps us to bounce ideas off each other, making the text come alive in ways we wouldn’t achieve alone.”

Participants highlighted several benefits of this reading strategy. First, they believed that Collaborative Reading enables all students to succeed and develop their reading skills simultaneously. “It feels like we’re all in this together,” remarked another learner. “When one person struggles, we can help each other out, which makes the whole class stronger.” This collaborative spirit not only bolsters individual confidence but also cultivates a supportive learning environment.

Second, participants pointed out that shared reading during classes provides essential linguistic support for everyone. They appreciated the immediate feedback from teachers, as one participant shared: “When we read together, the teacher can correct us right away, and that really helps us learn.” This immediate support reinforces understanding and allows for personalized guidance in a group setting. Another learner added, “Having the teacher there to explain things as we read makes complex ideas easier to grasp,” illustrating the value of direct interaction during the reading process.

Third, the participants reported that Collaborative Reading creates a more enjoyable and engaging way to approach texts. “It makes reading feel less like a chore and more like a fun activity,” one learner explained. They found that this cooperative approach not only made the material more interesting but also promoted a better classroom environment. “I look forward to our reading sessions because we get to share thoughts and laugh together,” another participant noted, emphasizing the social aspect of this strategy.

Moreover, participants emphasized that Collaborative Reading helps develop their reading abilities in a comfortable and productive atmosphere. “Working together not only boosts our comprehension but also builds a sense of community,” another learner observed. “It’s nice to know that we’re supporting each other, which makes learning more enjoyable and effective.” This sense of community and support among peers enriches the overall learning experience, making Collaborative Reading a powerful strategy for enhancing reading skills in adult learners.

In addition to these benefits, participants noted that Collaborative Reading encourages critical thinking and deeper analysis of the text. “Discussing different viewpoints challenges me to think more critically about what I read,” one participant stated, highlighting how group discussions can lead to richer interpretations. This collaborative engagement fosters not just a better understanding of the text but also a more profound appreciation for diverse perspectives, further enhancing the learning experience.

4.4 Fast-Focus Reading

Another reading strategy emphasized by the participants was Fast-Focus Reading. This strategy involves reading quickly to grasp the main ideas and locate specific information throughout the text. Participants described it as a way to rapidly read materials to gain a general overview.

Many participants believed that Fast-Focus Reading was particularly helpful for navigating lengthy passages or complex materials. One participant stated, “When I have a long text, fast reading helps me get the main points quickly, which makes the detailed reading much easier later.” They noted that this technique is often employed in the pre-reading phase, allowing them to prepare effectively. Another participant added, “Before diving into the details, I like to skim the text to see what it’s about. It sets me up for better understanding when I read line by line.”

Moreover, participants highlighted that Fast-Focus Reading not only enhances comprehension but also boosts their confidence in handling complex information. “Previewing the content and spotting key themes makes me feel more ready to engage with the material,” one participant remarked, emphasizing that this approach leads to a more effective and efficient reading experience.

Another benefit mentioned was its ability to help them locate specific information quickly. “During reading tests, I don’t have time to read everything in detail,” a participant explained. “Fast reading lets me scan the text for what I need, which saves me time and reduces stress.” This efficiency makes the process more effective, especially when answering questions.

Additionally, participants noted that this method enhances their overall comprehension by allowing them to concentrate on key concepts and details while minimizing distractions from less relevant content. As one participant put it, “By focusing on the important parts, I can remember more and worry less about getting lost in unnecessary details.” This targeted approach not only boosts their confidence in tackling reading assessments but also improves

their retention of critical information, leading to a better overall learning experience.

4.5 Timed Reading

Discussions during the three focus group sessions revealed that the least preferred reading strategy was Timed Reading. Participating language learners acknowledged that Timed Reading does improve their reading speed. One participant stated, “I can definitely read faster now than before I started using this method.” They added that frequent use of Timed Reading helps in developing their reading comprehension. However, participants also noted that while the pressure of a timer can be stressful, it encourages them to focus more intently on the text. As one participant remarked, “I find that when the timer is on, I concentrate harder, but it’s also really nerve-wracking.” This duality—where the strategy is both challenging and beneficial—prompted a conversation about finding a balance between speed and comprehension.

Another participant shared, “I can see improvements in my speed, but sometimes I feel like I’m just racing through without really understanding everything.” This underscores a critical concern among learners: the tension between achieving reading fluency and ensuring deep comprehension. As noted by McNamara (2007), comprehension requires time and cognitive engagement, suggesting that the pressure of timed exercises may hinder students' ability to engage with the material fully.

Overall, learners expressed a desire for a more varied approach that incorporates both timed and untimed reading exercises to better support their development. This finding resonates with Chang’s (2010) research, which indicates that timed reading is an effective learning strategy that leads to improvements in reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. However, participants in all focus groups pointed out their preference against this reading strategy, especially since it is often used to assess their reading skills. They believed that the time aspect usually puts them under pressure, which decreases their ability to concentrate and perform well on tests.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted that timed reading restricts their ability to explore the text in depth. One participant noted, “When I’m trying to read quickly, I miss out on the deeper meanings of the text.” This emphasizes that reading as quickly as possible curbs the attention they can give to other aspects of the reading process, such as understanding main ideas or identifying themes.

Additionally, Smith (2015) suggests that a balanced approach to reading instruction, which includes both timed and untimed practices, can foster a more comprehensive understanding of texts. This approach not only accommodates varying learner preferences but also enhances overall reading proficiency by allowing learners to appreciate the nuances of language and meaning.

In conclusion, while Timed Reading can be a useful tool for improving speed, it is essential to consider the broader implications of reading strategies on comprehension and learner confidence. A more integrated method that balances speed with deeper textual engagement may provide a more effective framework for English language learners.

5. Discussion

The present research examined language learners’ perceptions regarding their preferred reading strategies for developing various reading skills. Through qualitative methods and three focus groups, the study delved into these perceptions, revealing several strategies believed to enhance reading skills, including Reading Aloud, Silent Reading, Shared Reading, Scanning or Skimming, and Timed Reading. Each strategy offers distinct advantages and limitations, reflecting the multifaceted nature of reading.

The findings align with Yapp et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of tailored L2 reading instruction for adult English learners, especially those from vocational backgrounds. This connection highlights the broader challenges these learners face and the need for targeted interventions to support their academic success. Consequently, it is vital for foreign language educators to consider students' preferences and understanding of these strategies, enabling them to guide learners in identifying the most effective methods for language development.

Participants generally expressed positive perceptions towards a range of reading strategies to improve their reading competency. The choice of strategies often varied based on the reading task's purpose. For instance, Quiet Reading and Fast-Focus Reading were primarily employed to enhance reading speed, while Expressive Reading and Collaborative Reading were favored for their potential to boost comprehension. This nuanced understanding indicates that participants are aware of the different purposes of these techniques and can align their reading practices with specific learning goals.

Expressive Reading emerged as a particularly favored strategy, consistent with the findings of Hiebert (2012) and

Price et al. (2016), who highlight its role in improving text comprehension and literacy. The auditory aspect of this approach, where learners read aloud and emotionally engage with the text, supports McGhee's (2014) assertion that expressive reading fosters deeper connections with the material. Participants noted the importance of immediate feedback during this practice, echoing Swain's (2000) research on the benefits of social interaction in language learning.

Conversely, participants had mixed feelings about Quiet Reading, recognizing its advantages in developing speed while also expressing concerns about comprehension. This perspective aligns with Hiebert et al. (2012) and Taguchi, Melhem, and Kawaguchi (2016), who suggest that silent reading can improve fluency but may compromise understanding if not paired with reflective practices. The suggestion to integrate post-reading activities reflects Duke and Pearson's (2002) advocacy for strategies that enhance comprehension after silent reading.

The advantages of Collaborative Reading also resonated with participants, reflecting Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, which posits that learning is socially mediated. This collaborative approach not only fosters peer support but also encourages critical thinking, as participants shared diverse interpretations of the text. Research by Mercer (2000) supports this, showing that collaborative dialogue enhances understanding and retention.

Similarly, Fast-Focus Reading was recognized for its efficiency in identifying main ideas and key themes, corroborating Grabe's (2009) emphasis on skimming and scanning as essential reading skills. Participants noted that this technique prepares them for more detailed reading, aligning with McNamara's (2007) focus on cognitive engagement in reading.

Discussions about Timed Reading revealed a complex relationship between speed and comprehension. While participants acknowledged improvements in reading speed, they also expressed concerns about potential drawbacks. This duality is supported by Chang (2010), who suggests that timed reading can enhance fluency but may inhibit deeper comprehension if not balanced with untimed practices. Participants' desire for a varied approach resonates with Smith (2015), who advocates for a blended reading instruction model that accommodates diverse learner preferences.

Understanding the alignment of reading strategies indicates a level of metacognitive awareness among learners, allowing them to reflect on their reading processes and select the most effective approaches based on their objectives. For instance, when participants aimed to quickly grasp main ideas, they opted for Fast-Focus Reading; when seeking deeper understanding of complex themes, they leaned towards Expressive and Collaborative Reading. This ability to switch strategies based on task demands reflects a sophisticated approach to reading, enhancing both individual skills and collaborative learning experiences.

Moreover, participants recognized that employing a variety of strategies contributes to a more holistic development of their reading abilities. They noted that using different methods keeps their reading experience engaging and helps them improve in various aspects. This perspective underscores the importance of flexibility in reading practices, enabling learners to adapt to different contexts and challenges in their academic journeys.

Surprisingly, participants demonstrated strong awareness of various reading strategies and their intended purposes, likely due to the considerable time and effort invested in their language learning. All participants were categorized as high-intermediate or advanced learners, which may have contributed to their adeptness in recognizing and utilizing these strategies effectively. Their preference for incorporating a variety of strategies into their reading practices illustrates a commitment to proficiency improvement. By acknowledging the strengths and limitations of each approach, learners can tailor their reading methods to meet specific tasks and objectives.

Such adaptability is particularly essential in today's rapidly evolving academic environments, where diverse reading materials require resourcefulness and strategic thinking. This insight reinforces the need for educators to cultivate an environment that encourages exploration and experimentation with various reading strategies, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and effective language learning experience. By fostering this exploratory mindset, teachers can better support learners in developing critical reading skills necessary for academic success, equipping them to navigate complex texts and enhance their overall language proficiency.

Overall, the participants' positive attitudes toward diverse reading strategies highlight their commitment to becoming more effective readers. By consciously selecting strategies that align with their specific learning goals, they demonstrate active engagement in their learning process, ultimately enhancing their reading competency and fostering a deeper appreciation for the texts they encounter.

6. Implications

Based on the findings, the study has some implications related to the teaching and learning of foreign language reading. One of the study's implications suggests that perhaps teachers need to devote more learning time to introduce reading strategies during EFL classes. Language learners need to learn the benefits and drawbacks of each reading strategy, so they can decide which approach fits their reading needs.

Derakhshan and Nazari (2015) pointed out that ESL teachers need to increase students' awareness of different reading strategies to be able to use them where it is relevant and suitable. This according to the researchers allows language learners to have "more responsibilities for using the proper strategies independently." (p. 435). Hence, more class time should be given to clarify what, when, and for what purpose reading strategies should be used. The second implication of this study suggests that language learners should learn more about other reading strategies. Even though the participants identified five different reading methods, there are still more reading techniques to know about.

For instance, Birch (2014) identified other reading strategies that can be used to develop the reading proficiency of language learners. These strategies include summarizing, sequencing, inferencing, comparing and contrasting, and relating background knowledge. Teaching reading strategies is essential for language learners to raise their awareness about different reading strategies that can be used. Mehrpour et al., (2012) examined the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension strategies explicitly for Iranian EFL pre-university students and found that it appeared to raise students' awareness and encourage them to use different strategies when necessary. That, according to the researchers, develops students' reading skills.

Ultimately, the present study is important because it gives language learners the opportunity to voice themselves in regard to what reading strategies they prefer to use. This information can be used to determine the specific purposes these strategies are used for and more importantly why the strategies are useful overall. Furthermore, the present study provides guidelines for both ESL instructors and language learners to be aware of what reading strategies should be emphasized during ESL classes. It also provides a framework for language learners to pay more attention to the reading approaches that match their language needs.

The present study, however, explores only language learners' perceptions about the reading strategies used in EFL reading classes. Hence, additional research is needed to explore ESL/EFL teachers' opinions and thoughts of regarding the effectiveness of different types of reading methods. Teachers' voices will be important to identify what language learners need to know about developing their reading skills.

Significantly, the findings of this research contribute to the growing body of literature on L2 reading strategies, providing valuable insights into learner preferences and the contextual factors that influence strategy selection. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, ongoing research in this area will be vital in informing instructional practices and improving outcomes for language learners.

7. Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the reading strategies preferred by high-intermediate and advanced adult English learners, it has notable limitations. The focus on a specific group may not represent the broader population of language learners, as beginners or lower-intermediate learners might have different preferences and experiences. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research, relying on focus group discussions, could introduce biases due to group dynamics, potentially overshadowing individual perspectives. This approach also limits the ability to quantify the prevalence of certain strategies, suggesting that future research should adopt mixed methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of reading strategy preferences across diverse learner profiles. Furthermore, the study does not adequately explore contextual factors, such as cultural background or educational history, that may influence learners' perceptions. Addressing these limitations in future research will enhance the understanding of reading strategies in various educational contexts.

8. Conclusion

The research focuses on adult learners' perceptions of the most effective approaches to reading in English. Through focus group discussions with 20 participants enrolled in intensive English language programs, five key reading strategies were identified: Expressive Reading, Quiet Reading, Collaborative Reading, Fast-Focus Reading, and Timed Reading. Each strategy was analyzed for its critical success factors and potential challenges.

While somewhat general, we can summarize the findings by highlighting specific teaching and assessment activities

associated with each strategy. For instance, Expressive Reading, which involves reading aloud with feedback on pronunciation, not only enhances text comprehension but also improves speaking skills. Conversely, Quiet Reading facilitates faster processing but may lead to lower comprehension levels, as noted by some participants. Collaborative Reading, which includes group discussions about texts, was particularly beneficial, providing linguistic support and fostering a positive classroom climate. In academic contexts, Fast-Focus Reading is utilized for skimming and scanning, allowing learners to quickly grasp main ideas and locate specific details. Timed Reading, while effective in increasing reading speed, faced criticism for inducing stress and offering limited strategies to mitigate reading anxiety.

The study underscores the importance of teaching diverse reading strategies that align with learners' preferences and needs. When educators are attuned to these factors, they can design more effective ESL lessons that encourage learners to employ a range of strategies, ultimately enhancing their overall reading proficiency.

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