



## SOME CHALLENGES IN TEACHING READING

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores key challenges in teaching reading, particularly in the context of first and second language acquisition. It analyzes theoretical foundations such as schema theory and metacognitive strategies, and examines specific issues including vocabulary limitations, the gap between decoding and comprehension, learner motivation, assessment methods, and the impact of digital reading. The paper concludes by recommending evidence-based strategies like extensive reading, reciprocal teaching, and the use of digital tools for enhancing reading outcomes in diverse classrooms. The study advocates for a holistic, inclusive, and technologically adaptive approach to reading instruction in contemporary education.*

Reading is one of the most essential skills for learners in both first and second language contexts. As a receptive skill, reading enables learners to access, process, and reflect upon written information, making it central to academic achievement and lifelong learning. Despite its significance, teaching reading remains one of the most complex areas in language education. Numerous learners experience difficulties not just in decoding text but in achieving full comprehension [1]. Reading is not simply about recognizing words; it involves decoding, understanding syntax, building meaning from context, and making inferences. For many learners, especially second language (L2) students, these cognitive demands can be overwhelming. Struggling readers often exhibit difficulties with phonemic awareness, working memory, and processing speed. One of the most significant barriers to reading comprehension is limited vocabulary. Learners may be able to decode a word but not grasp its meaning or nuance. Academic vocabulary, idioms, and low-frequency terms further complicate reading tasks, particularly for non-native speakers. The rise of digital media has changed how students interact with text. Shorter attention spans, skimming, and multitasking on screens can reduce deep reading and comprehension. Teachers now face the challenge of teaching reading in both print and digital formats. The growing diversity in classrooms, coupled with rapid shifts in technology and pedagogy, further complicates the reading instruction landscape. This paper explores some of the key challenges that educators face in teaching reading effectively, comparing first and second language environments, and

proposes strategies grounded in current theory and classroom practice. Reading is a complex cognitive activity involving multiple processes, including phonemic awareness, vocabulary decoding, syntactic parsing, semantic understanding, and critical evaluation. Different models of reading illustrate this complexity. The bottom-up model emphasizes decoding from letters to sounds to words, while the top-down model focuses on using background knowledge and prediction. The interactive model, which integrates both approaches, is widely accepted in contemporary reading research [2]. Schema theory asserts that readers' prior knowledge greatly influences comprehension, especially in second language contexts where cultural familiarity may be lacking [3]. Struggling readers often lack metacognitive strategies such as: Skimming for gist, Scanning for details, Making predictions, Self-monitoring (e.g., rereading when confused) Meanwhile, metacognitive theory highlights the reader's ability to regulate their understanding through planning, monitoring, and evaluating their reading process [4].

Limited vocabulary, particularly in second language learners, can obstruct comprehension. Even advanced students may struggle with discipline-specific terminology and idiomatic expressions. Explicit vocabulary instruction and integration into reading contexts are essential for long-term retention [5]. Decoding fluency does not guarantee comprehension. Learners may accurately read words aloud but fail to infer meaning, connect ideas, or evaluate arguments. Teachers must therefore move beyond phonics to teach higher-order reading skills [6]. Students' motivation to read significantly impacts learning outcomes. Reading materials that are culturally irrelevant or too difficult discourage engagement. Reading self-efficacy and interest-based materials are shown to boost motivation and reading frequency [7]. Standardized reading assessments often fail to capture the full range of student reading ability, particularly when it comes to inference, evaluation, and integration of ideas. These tests may also not be inclusive of learners with special needs or those from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Standardized tests often fail to account for diverse reading strategies or background knowledge. Alternative assessments such as reading journals, portfolios, and peer discussions allow a richer understanding of learner development [8]. E. Print vs. Digital Reading Digital environments influence how students process information. Online reading encourages scanning and multitasking, which can harm deep reading skills. Educators must train students in digital literacy and cognitive control strategies [9]. Teachers can address these issues through scaffolding and strategy instruction. Pre-reading techniques such as concept mapping and questioning prepare learners for the text. While-reading tasks, including annotation and reciprocal teaching, support active engagement. Post-reading discussions and summaries aid reflection and synthesis [10]. Extensive reading programs, where learners read large amounts of level-appropriate material for pleasure, have also been proven effective [11]. Moreover, incorporating digital tools—such as interactive e-books and online discussion boards—can modernize reading instruction while maintaining pedagogical focus [12]. As a conclusion Reading cannot be taught in isolation; it should be integrated with listening, speaking, and writing to create a holistic language learning environment. Multimodal approaches that combine text, visuals, and interactive elements have shown promising results in increasing comprehension and retention. This means reading pedagogy should adopt cross-skill strategies to ensure deeper learning outcomes [13]. Teaching reading is a multifaceted challenge that requires thoughtful application of linguistic theory, cultural understanding, and pedagogical innovation. Educators must be equipped to deal with

decoding issues, vocabulary limitations, digital distractions, and motivational factors. By fostering strategic reading habits and leveraging diverse materials and technologies, teachers can support students in becoming confident and capable readers .

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