EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND THE PRACTICES OF PAKISTANI PRE-UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS ABOUT THE READING APPROACHES: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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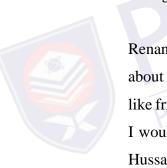
I dedicate to my thesis to late father, Muhammad Pannah Chachar, and mother, Masmat Qadul (Late), may Allah have compassion on their soul. I also dedicate my work to my dedicated wife, Bushra Erum, and my daughters Shanzay Ali and Hooria Ali and my son Waqar Ali and my brother and sisters for their unshakable and unconditional love and support over the years.

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ABSTRACT

Pakistani EFL learners suffer from a lack of reading proficiency. As a result, students have lost motivation and interest in reading in English. Furthermore, their poor reading skills have an impact on their academic performance. This study attempted to explore whether the currently employed intensive reading (IR) and extensive reading (ER) approaches could be a potential solution to address the reading issues in the Pakistani EFL context of Sukkur IBA University. This study attempted to explore the perceptions of students about these two approaches. The study also revealed how these approaches are employed in EFL classrooms at Sukkur IBA University. In addition, this study investigated the effects of these two approaches on the reading comprehension abilities and reading attitudes of EFL learners. A concurrent embedded mixed methods design was used to achieve the study's objective. Semi-structured interviews and readers' reflective diaries were used for exploring the practices and perceptions about the reading approaches and the reading attitude questionnaire and reading comprehension tests measured the effects of the two approaches. Prior to the data collection, the validity and reliability of the data collection tools were checked. The Cronbach alpha value of the questionnaire was 0.789 and the KR-20 score of the reading comprehension test was 0.752. Qualitative data trustworthiness was also checked. In total, 220 EFL learners were non-randomly selected based on the Morgan Table of sample size for the quantitative part, while for the qualitative part, in total, 20 participants were selected for semi-structured interviews and reflective diaries based on convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The researcher used descriptive statistics (mean scores) and inferential statistics (paired sample t-test) techniques for data analysis. The SPSS-27 software was used for quantitative analysis. In terms of qualitative data analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis techniques were used. The six steps are (1) Familiarity with data (2) Generating initial codes (3) Searching for initial themes (4) Developing and reviewing themes (5) Defining, and naming themes (6) Presenting themes with in-depth descriptions. The findings revealed that EFL learners were taught using both IR and ER approaches.



Furthermore, their perceptions of the reading approaches were very positive, as they believed that both approaches were useful and beneficial for the development of their reading skills and other language skills. The findings of the study also revealed that the EFL learners significantly developed positive attitudes towards reading in English, and their reading comprehension ability also significantly improved at the end of the program. The EFL learners also reported some challenges while reading in English, and thus the EFL teachers may reconsider their teaching of reading in the future based on the findings of this study. This study is believed to make a positive contribution to English language teaching and learning of reading in university settings. Furthermore, this study also contributes to the existing literature on IR and ER approaches. Implications drawn from the current study recommend the use of integrated IR and ER approaches in language classrooms to help learners develop their proficiency and positive attitudes toward reading in English. Finally, this study is projected to be PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH helpful for teachers, policy makers, syllabus designers, and administrators.

ABSTRAK

Pelajar EFL Pakistan mengalami kekurangan penguasaan membaca. Akibatnya, pelajar hilang motivasi dan minat membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris. Tambahan pula, kemahiran membaca mereka yang lemah memberi kesan kepada prestasi akademik mereka. Kajian ini cuba untuk meneroka sama ada pendekatan membaca yang digunakan pada masa ini boleh menjadi penyelesaian yang berpotensi untuk isu membaca dalam konteks EFL Pakistan. Pada masa ini terdapat dua pendekatan yang digunakan secara meluas oleh guru dalam bilik darjah EFL iaitu, bacaan intensif (IR) dan bacaan ekstensif (ER). Ia juga cuba meneroka persepsi pelajar tentang kedua-dua pendekatan ini. Kajian itu juga mendedahkan bagaimana pendekatan ini digunakan dalam bilik darjah EFL. Di samping itu, kajian ini menyiasat keberkesanan kedua-dua pendekatan ini terhadap kebolehan pemahaman membaca dan sikap membaca pelajar EFL. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran tertanam serentak digunakan untuk mencapai matlamat kajian. Teknik pengumpulan data termasuk temu bual separa berstruktur, diari reflektif pembaca, soal selidik, dan ujian kefahaman bacaan. Sebelum pengumpulan data, kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan alat telah diperiksa. Secara keseluruhan, 220 pelajar EFL dipilih secara tidak rawak berdasarkan Jadual Morgan saiz sampel bagi bahagian kuantitatif, manakala bagi bahagian kualitatif, secara keseluruhan, 20 peserta telah dipilih untuk temu bual separa berstruktur dan diari reflektif berdasarkan kemudahan dan pendekatan persampelan bertujuan. Pengkaji menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif (skor min) dan statistik inferensi (ujian-T sampel berpasangan) untuk analisis data. Perisian SPSS-27 digunakan untuk analisis kuantitatif. Dari segi analisis data kualitatif, teknik yang digunakan adalah berdasarkan enam langkah analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke (2006). Penemuan mendedahkan bahawa pelajar EFL diajar menggunakan kedua-dua pendekatan IR dan ER. Tambahan pula, persepsi mereka terhadap pendekatan membaca adalah sangat positif, kerana mereka percaya bahawa kedua-dua pendekatan itu berguna dan bermanfaat kepada perkembangan kemahiran membaca dan kemahiran bahasa lain mereka. Dapatan kajian juga mendedahkan bahawa pelajar EFL telah membangunkan sikap positif



terhadap membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris dengan ketara, dan keupayaan pemahaman membaca mereka juga meningkat dengan ketara selepas program tersebut. Pelajar EFL juga melaporkan beberapa cabaran semasa membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris, dan dengan itu guru EFL boleh mempertimbangkan semula pengajaran membaca mereka berdasarkan penemuan dalam kelas akan datang. Kajian ini dipercayai memberi sumbangan positif kepada pengajaran bahasa Inggeris dan pembelajaran membaca di persekitaran universiti. Tambahan pula, kajian ini juga menyumbang kepada literatur sedia ada mengenai pendekatan IR dan ER. Implikasi yang diperoleh daripada kajian semasa mengesyorkan penggunaan pendekatan IR dan ER bersepadu dalam bilik darjah bahasa untuk membantu pelajar mengembangkan kecekapan dan sikap positif mereka terhadap membaca dalam bahasa Inggeris. Akhir sekali, kajian ini diunjurkan dapat membantu guru, penggubal dasar, pereka bentuk sukatan pelajaran, dan pentadbir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The English language possesses an undeniable importance in today's societies (Suzina, 2021). English has a unique position in the world today. It has become a global language (Ilyosovna, 2020), and it is a communication tool for a lot of people all around the world (Baranicová & Zerzová, 2015). The need for learning the English language is increasing rapidly due to fast advancements in science and technology. It has now become the language of almost all disciplines. Therefore, progress and development in any field are not possible without having a solid foundation in this language. This is now a global language that facilitates international communication (Haidar & Fang, 2019). Nowadays, material from almost all fields of knowledge is published in English as it is the language of engineering, medicine, arts, science, and technology (Selvi, 2021).



English is in high demand all over the world. Speakers of this language are increasing rapidly. Deng (2015) posits that five percent of the people worldwide are native speakers, and ninety-five percent of worldwide speakers of English are non-native speakers. Moreover, the number of users of English is increasing in places where English was previously considered only a foreign language. For example, according to Bolton and Graddol (2012), the current popularity of English in China is exceptional, and further, it has been fueled by the recent political and social development of Chinese society (Macaro & Han, 2020). Many research studies on learning EFL (English as a foreign language) have been conducted around the world. Various language learning theories and models have been presented for learning this language.

However, the proficiency of English as a foreign language context is not good, even though English is nowadays the medium of instruction in the college and university level in various EFL contexts (Alhassan & Ali, 2021).

Similar to other contexts, English is still the official language of Pakistan, as it was during British rule in India (Ud Din & Akhlaq, 2020). Besides English being an official language, Urdu is also the official language. English is now taken as a compulsory subject in Pakistan. Shamim (2011) pointed out that people link English with progress and development. Coleman (2010) pointed out numerous roles that English language plays in the development of a person, for example, it creates employment, international coordination, and cooperation. Moreover, it provides access to research and information, and it also facilitates the mobility of students, tourists, and workers all around the world. Since Pakistan's independence, English has been the state and official language, as well as the language of the military and higher education (Zaidi & Zaki, 2017). Moreover, English in Pakistan is considered a key for entering the job market, bureaucratic, governmental, and high social positions (Rana, Bashir, & Abbas, 2020). Therefore, English language proficiency is deemed to be one of the most outstanding status symbols in Pakistani society (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018). Moreover, English language compulsory subjects are taught to develop English skills among students at school and colleges levels. However, the improvement in the language skills of the students is not up to the mark (Lou & Noels, 2020).



According to Neumann, McDonough & Crawford, (2020), there could be various reasons behind the poor language proficiency but the lack of reading among the students is the main barrier to this language development (Fathi & Afzali, 2020). Nuttall (1996) says that the best way to learn a language is to live with the speakers of that language or to read that language extensively. The researcher further explained that one learns to read by reading and if teachers want students to read better, they should encourage them to read more. Despite the significance of reading in English language learning, students are losing their interest and motivation for reading and their reading habits are also declining (Uslu, 2020). Moreover, the academic performance of Pakistani students is also affected due to poor reading skills. Most of the students read only to pass the exam as they do not have good reading habits (Naz et al., 2022; Akabuike & Asika, 2012). However, it is quite important for the individual's social and academic achievements that he gains reading habits after learning how to read and write, and then to begin reading with a critical point of view

(Yildiz, 2020; Pokharel, 2018). Reading also plays an important role in the academic development of learners, particularly when learners have to work over a huge amount of foreign language materials for their own specialist subjects (Lin & Lei, 2021; McDonough & Shaw, 2012).

1.2 Background of the study

Reading plays a key role in the academic development of students as in most contexts English is the medium of instruction and therefore students have to engage themselves in different types of reading material for their academic success (Zhou & Day, 2021). There is a direct relationship between reading and the academic performance of students (Par, 2020). In various research studies, it has been discovered that students suffer in reading skills and perform ineffectively in their academic life. For example, Balan, Katenga, and Simon (2019) found that the majority of students considered reading very important for their academic performance. However, the respondent did not have very good reading proficiency. Similarly, Wang, Zhu & Zhang (2022) found that participants were not good at reading comprehension, and they performed low in the reading assignments. Moreover, Wagstaff (2020) revealed that reading has an effect on the academic performance of students. Similarly, Dar, Ahmad, and Lone (2019) concluded that reading habits were very poor among students and the majority of the students were engaged in reading only for passing the exams. Dar et al. (2019) found that students valued reading for pleasure as an important aspect, but the results showed that students had low interest in reading. According to Meniado (2018), Saudi students have poor reading proficiency and lack essential reading habits and it impacts their academic performance. Similarly, Thai students also have poor reading proficiency, and it affects their overall English language ability (Maipoka & Soontornwipast, 2021). Furthermore, Gu and Lau (2021) found that Chinese students also face reading difficulties due to traditional teacher-centered reading instructions. In another study, Meniado (2021) found that Arabian Gulf learners have poor reading proficiency and reading habits due to a lack of strong reading culture and the use of inefficient reading instruction.



The above scenario depicts the problem of reading in English across the globe. Similarly, the condition of reading skills and reading habits of Pakistani students is also very disappointing (Naz et al., 2022). Amin and Bakhsh (2021) conducted a case study research study to know the reading proficiency of undergraduate students at the university level. The results showed that few students read only textbooks, while majority of them never engaged in additional reading (Dar, Ahmad, & Lone, 2019). In another study, Sajid and Kassim (2019) discovered that Pakistani college students have difficulty in all language skills, including reading skills. Their poor skills in reading also impact their academic performance. One of the reasons for this state of reading proficiency is the lack of reading culture in the classrooms. Students could become proficient in every aspect of the English language with the help of reading (Babayan, 2019).

The medium of instruction in the university education of Pakistan is English (Mukhtar, Sahito, & Siddiqui, 2021). The prescribed books and material of different fields of studies are also in English so reading skills are essential for Pakistani university students to meet the standard of education. To achieve this, students should be engaged in abundant reading to have a consistent effect on their academic performance (Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, & Adedeji, 2012; Zhou & Day, 2021). The above scenario portrays a picture that Pakistani EFL learners have poor reading skills and reading habits. To address their reading issues, different teaching reading approaches have been used in the classrooms. Despite this, there is no significant change in their reading skills. In literature, two reading approaches are commonly used in EFL classrooms, namely, Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading. ER develops good reading habits, knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and it also develops interest in reading (Richards, 2002). On the other hand, IR is generally done at a slower speed, and it requires a higher degree of understanding than ER (Nation & Waring, 2020). The research findings have revealed many benefits that come through ER. It enhanced language learning, increased knowledge of the world, improvement in writing and reading skills, more reading enjoyment, and more positive attitude towards reading, and more importantly, developed reading habits. (Jacobs & Renandya, 2015).

The purpose of the IR approach is to extract detailed information about the text to enhance reading accuracy (Nation, 2014). The purpose of the ER approach is to get general information from the text. The students choose interesting and easy material for enhancing their reading fluency (Renandya, 2016). In the IR approach, teachers



prepare a lot of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities and engage students in reading by utilizing reading strategies. Some Scholars have argued that reading is learned through more reading rather than merely doing language-related activities (Bamford & Day, 1998; Jacobs & Renandya, 2015). In the ER approach, activity in reading is just reading only and doing more reading. Sometimes, Post-reading activities are conducted to put accountability on students if they have read the given material. Moreover, Krashen (2011) uses the term free voluntary reading to refer to reading many books to understand the content.

Despite the usefulness and effectiveness of ER approach, the IR approach is a dominantly employed instructional approach in EFL Classrooms (Fang, 2021). Students' reading abilities and reading habits are unsatisfactory worldwide, including Pakistan, due to a lack of reading culture and teachers' reliance on a single teaching IR approach. IR alone has not proven successful in establishing positive reading attitudes among students in Pakistani classrooms (Ali & Ibrahim, 2021). So, the reading approaches such as IR and ER approach should be explored at Sukkur IBA contexts to benefit teachers, students, and other stakeholders in various contexts of Pakistan. The current study focuses on the usefulness of the ER approach along with the IR approach to improve the reading skills and reading attitudes of Pakistani EFL learners. The study also explores the perception and practice of the IR and ER approach.



1.2.1 Status of English reading proficiency of Pakistani students

There are multiple studies available in the literature that have provided negative results about the unsatisfactory performance of the students reading skills in Pakistan (Naz et al., 2022; Rafiq, Asim, Khan, & Arif, 2019; Lodhi & Akash, 2019; Haq, Khurram, & Bangash, 2019; Amin and Bakhsh, 2021). Additionally, the international companies and agencies that test the language proficiency of the learners also report that reading proficiency of the students is not satisfactory. According to the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) report (2021), Pakistan stands 99th out of the 132 countries with a total score of 491 and the Pakistani proficiency band is ranked in the low proficiency level, Pakistan stands 10th out of 26 countries monitored in Asia (EF, 2021).

Besides this, the overall International English language testing services (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores of Pakistani

participants are good on average, but their reading score is less than the mean score of the overall scores. According to the IELTS Report (2021), the overall score of participants in reading is 6.29 and the Pakistani participants' score is 6.08 which is very less. The results also showed that the reading score of Pakistani participants was less than all other three skills. The test score of TOEFL also provided the same results. According to the TOEFL (2021) report, the score of Pakistan participants in reading was 22 less than the other three skills. The TOEFL results also presented the unsatisfactory results and justified this assertion that the reading skills of Pakistani participants is less than all other three skills such as, listening, speaking and writing. The above results of international testing agencies of English language portray that reading proficiency of participants from Pakistan is not very satisfactory. This indicates that reading culture in Pakistani academic context is very poor that could not develop reading proficiency among the learners. As a result, they cannot perform well in the academies international language tests to pursue their studies. Furthermore, reading is not practiced in Pakistani culture, according to the Gallop Survey report (2020). The survey asked participants one question: "How many hours do you spend a day reading books (course books, religious books, novels, magazines, poetry, etc.)?" In response to the question, 16 per cent said they spend an hour a day reading books, 3 per cent said two hours, 2 per cent said three hours, 2 per cent said four hours, 2 per cent said more than four hours, and 75 per cent said they did not spend any time reading any kind of book outside their syllabus. The survey includes a nationally representative sample of male and female students from Pakistan's five provinces. All the indicators above show that reading is not deeply ingrained in the lives of Pakistani students for a variety of reasons, one of which is a lack of effective reading instruction methods. The following section describes the teaching methods used in Pakistani classrooms.

1.2.2 English language teaching of reading in Pakistan

This section discusses the teaching and learning of English language in Pakistan. English language is being taught from primary to the university level (Irfan, Khan & Malik 2020). It is a compulsory subject to be taught from grade 1 in accordance with the National Education Policy of Pakistan (2017). According to this policy, the government plans to establish state-of-the-art libraries for inculcating a reading culture

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