

Reading Comprehension: The Purposes, Kinds, and Difficulties

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Abstrak

Membaca merupakan salah satu keterampilan berbahasa yang harus dikuasai oleh pembelajar bahasa, baik pembelajar bahasa Indonesia maupun bahasa Inggris. Membaca juga merupakan keterampilan yang sangat penting dan kompleks yang melibatkan proses kognitif, linguistik, dan lainnya. Artikel ini membahas pengertian, tujuan, dan jenis membaca. Yang tak kalah pentingnya juga membahas tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kemampuan membaca. Secara umum, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman bacaan bergantung pada berbagai hal, seperti pengetahuan linguistik, pengetahuan latar belakang, motivasi, strategi membaca dan budaya. Pembahasan turut menyoroti berbagai kesulitan membaca yang dihadapi pembelajar EFL (bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing), yakni keterbatasan kosakata, kelemahan tata bahasa, strategi yang kurang efektif, kendala sosial-ekonomi, serta hambatan digital. Seorang pembelajar bahasa hendaklah dapat memiliki kemampuan membaca dan memahami bacaan yang baik. Sebagaimana tujuan penulisan artikel ini, maka diharapkan para pembaca dapat memahami konsep membaca, pentingnya membaca, jenis-jenis membaca, memahami faktor-faktor yang dapat menghambat kemampuan memahami bacaan. Pembahasan dalam artikel ini diharapkan dapat bermanfaat bagi para pembaca dalam memahami berbagai konteks yang berkaitan dengan kajian dalam artikel ini.

Kata Kunci: Pemahaman Bacaan, Kesulitan Membaca, Pembelajar EFL, Strategi Membaca, Literasi Digital, Pembelajaran Bahasa

Introduction

Learning English is interesting since it allows us to examine a variety of English skills. Not everyone likes to use or share every aspect; some people love to read or speak than others. They can do whatever they want, but learning English requires the four skills of speaking, listening, writing, and reading. While not everyone is proficient in every area, all talents are crucial. One aspect that is investigated in this writing is reading.

Reading is one of the most essential skills in language learning, serving as both a means of acquiring knowledge and a tool for communication. It involves not only the ability to decode written symbols but also the capacity to comprehend, interpret, and



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evaluate meaning from texts. This paper discusses the concept of reading and reading comprehension, explores the purposes of reading, identifies different kinds and types of reading, and highlights important factors that should be considered in the reading process. The last important aspect to be discusses in this paper is about the problems that face by the students or readers in reaching the meaning from the texts. By understanding these aspects, learners and educators can develop more effective reading strategies that support academic success and lifelong learning.

Definition of Reading and Reading Comprehension

Reading has been defined in various ways by scholars, reflecting its complex nature as a cognitive, linguistic, and social process. Reading means the interactive process that occurs in the human mind where the readers reconstruct the meaning for what they read (Harida et al., 2021). The definition tells us that reading is not a passive activity but it is rather an active and interactive process that takes place in the human mind. When readers engage with a text, they do not simply absorb the words; instead, they reconstruct the meaning based on their prior knowledge, experiences, and the context of the material. This process allows the readers to get new information, make sense of ideas, and link written language with their own understanding. In other words, reading involves both decoding symbols and constructing meaning, making it a complex cognitive skill essential for learning and communication.

In relation to the idea above, Smith (2004) describes reading as understanding messages encoded in print, emphasizing its role as a process of interpreting written language. Further, Urquhart and Weir (2014) stated that reading is the process of accepting and interpreting information encoded in language form via print. By the explanation, it is seen that reading is an interactive cognitive process through which individuals reconstruct meaning by receiving and explaining messages encoded in written language. It goes beyond merely recognizing printed symbols, as it requires readers to actively engage with the text in order to comprehend and gain information from it.

Reading is also as a complex cognitive activity that combines rapid word recognition and comprehension processes (Grabe, 2009). It means that reading is a complex cognitive activity that involves both recognizing words quickly and understanding their meaning. Word recognition allows readers to identify written



symbols efficiently, while comprehension enables them to interpret the message of the text. These two processes work together to make reading an effective way of gaining knowledge and information.

Goodman (1996) views reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, suggesting that readers do not decode every word but rely on cues and prior knowledge to predict meaning. Goodman's view emphasizes that reading is not just about decoding words one by one but about actively predicting meaning. Readers use linguistic signals, such as context and grammar, along with their prior knowledge, to make sense of the text. This approach confirms that reading is an interactive process where comprehension is built through prediction and confirmation.

Further, Alderson (2019) frames reading as an interactive process between text and reader, in which background knowledge and linguistic knowledge play crucial roles. He emphasizes that reading as an active process in which readers construct meaning by integrating textual information with prior experiences. Here, Alderson highlights that reading involves constant interaction between the reader and the text. To understand a passage, readers rely not only on the words they see but also on their background knowledge and linguistic ability. Through this combination, readers actively construct meaning rather than passively receive information.

By the explanation above, it can be understood that reading is stated as a complex and interactive cognitive process in which readers reconstruct meaning by combining word recognition, comprehension, and prior knowledge. It is not a passive act of decoding symbols, but an active engagement where linguistic cues, context, and background experiences play fundamental roles in interpreting messages from written text. Thus, reading functions as both a cognitive and social activity that enables individuals to construct, connect, and expand their understanding of information.

When talking about reading comprehension, it has been defined in various ways by different scholars, but all share the view that it is a complex and interactive process. Snow (2002) explains it as understanding, using, and reflecting on texts, exposing that comprehension goes beyond decoding words and involves connecting text to prior knowledge and reading purposes. Similarly, Pang et al. (2003) emphasize that it is the integration of linguistic information with comprehensive textual understanding, while





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Grabe and Stoller (2013) highlight the role of language processing, background knowledge, and strategies in constructing meaning. In summary, reading comprehension is not only the act of decoding text but a deeper process of constructing meaning. It requires the integration of linguistic info, background knowledge, and appropriate strategies to fully understand and use written texts. This highlights the active role of the reader in making sense of information and connecting it to prior knowledge and purposes.

Furthermore, Koda (2005) informs us that comprehension requires both decoding skills and cognitive engagement. This shows that reading comprehension is not only about the mechanical ability to recognize words, but also about the mental effort needed to process and understand the ideas presented in a text. Another quotation about comprehension noted that it is the process of getting the meaning or ideas from the text, and then trying to offer an interpretation (Harida, 2014). Similarly, Perfetti and Stafura (2014) emphasize the importance of vocabulary depth, syntax, and inference-making, suggesting that comprehension depends heavily on the richness of a reader's linguistic knowledge. These perspectives highlight that language proficiency plays a critical role in determining how well readers can interpret written information.

Anderson (2019) underscores the constructive nature of comprehension, where readers actively combine textual input with their own knowledge to build new understanding. This point of view signals the interactive relationship between the text and the reader, showing that comprehension is a dynamic process rather than a one-way reception of information. In line with this, Duke and Pearson (2002) stress that reading comprehension emerges through active strategies such as prediction, inference, and evaluation, which help readers make sense of incomplete or implicit meanings in the text. These perceptions suggest that effective reading requires readers to be strategic and reflective, not just passive users of written material.

In addition, Cain and Oakhill (2004) highlight the cognitive reasoning processes that distinguish skilled readers from less skilled ones, emphasizing the role of inferential thinking in comprehension. Harida (2021) contributes a practical perspective by noting that students often face difficulties in identifying supporting details, which shows how comprehension challenges are manifested in real classroom contexts. Taken together, these definitions and findings reinforce that reading comprehension is a dynamic process



that integrates linguistic, cognitive, and experiential knowledge. Ultimately, comprehension should be viewed as an active meaning-making activity in which readers construct, evaluate, and apply textual information in order to achieve a deeper understanding.

In conclusion, reading comprehension is best understood as an active and meaningful process rather than a simple act of decoding words. It requires not only linguistic competence but also cognitive engagement, where readers actively connect textual information with their prior knowledge and personal experiences. Through this process, meaning is constructed, negotiated, and sometimes even reshaped. Proficient readers are distinguished by their ability to use strategies, reasoning, and reflection to deepen their understanding, while less skilled readers may struggle to make such connections. Thus, reading and comprehension should be viewed as interactive practices that involve language, thought, and lived experience—making reading not merely a technical skill, but a way of engaging with knowledge and the world.

The Purposes of Reading

Reading has purposes, and the purposes are diverse and influenced by the reader's goals, context, and text type. Grabe and Stoller (2011) identify general purposes such as reading for information, pleasure, and academic achievement. Reading for info emphasizes practical objectives, such as gaining knowledge, following instructions, or understanding facts relevant to daily life. Reading for pleasure is motivated by enjoyment and personal interest, where individuals engage with texts for relaxation, entertainment, or curiosity. Meanwhile, academic reading achievement is more formal and requires deeper comprehension, as it focuses on acquiring knowledge, developing critical thinking, and succeeding in educational contexts. These aims show that reading serves both functional and affective needs, depending on the reader's goals.

In line with this, Nuttall (2005) argues that reading not only helps readers understand messages but also supports the development of language proficiency. Furthermore, Anderson (2008) groups the purposes of reading into functional, recreational, and academic, each reflecting how reading serves different needs in human life. Both perspectives focus that reading spreads beyond academic contexts, as it also plays a vital role in everyday communication and personal growth.



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Brown (2006) notes that readers may engage with texts either extensively, for enjoyment and fluency, or intensively, for accuracy and detailed understanding. For example, students might read a novel extensively for pleasure, while studying an academic article intensively to extract key arguments. Brown further explains that extensive reading helps build reading speed, vocabulary, and overall language confidence, whereas intensive reading trains learners to focus on grammar, details, and careful interpretation of meaning.

Furthermore, Mikulecky and Jeffries (2007) argue that reading purposes include literal comprehension (understanding facts), inferential comprehension (interpreting implied meaning), and critical comprehension (evaluating ideas). These levels of comprehension illustrate how reading involves progressively deeper engagement with a text. They also highlight that effective readers move flexibly between these levels, depending on their goals and the nature of the material being read.

Finally, reading can be for reaching the information, for learning, for having fun, for taking main ideas, for criticizing, or for getting authors' ideas or viewpoints (Harida et al., 2021:7). This shows that reading serves multiple dimensions, ranging from the practical need to obtain knowledge to the intellectual challenge of evaluating arguments. Reading for fun provides enjoyment and motivation, while reading to grasp main ideas or authors' viewpoints develops critical and analytical thinking. Thus, the reading activities can be understood for both functional and reflective purposes, helping learners expand their knowledge while also shaping their perspectives.

In conclusion, the purposes of reading are broad and interconnected, encompassing functional, academic, and recreational dimensions. Reading can be a means to obtain information, achieve academic success, or simply enjoy literature for pleasure. Beyond these purposes, it also serves as a tool for personal growth, knowledge expansion, and the development of language proficiency. Therefore, teachers and learners need to understand these varied purposes to design reading activities that are meaningful and aligned with learners' needs.

Kinds and Types of Reading

Different types of reading have been identified in the literature, reflecting the variety of ways readers approach texts. To categorize reading, Grellet (2009) states that





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there are two kinds of reading; intensive and extensive. Similarly, Patel and Jain (2008) organize reading into intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading is focused, detail-oriented, and often used for language study, while extensive reading involves reading longer texts for general understanding and enjoyment. Day and Bamford (2002) emphasize that extensive reading supports fluency and vocabulary development, while intensive reading sharpens analytical skills. Intensive reading focuses on accuracy and close analysis of shorter texts, while extensive reading emphasizes fluency, enjoyment, and exposure to larger amounts of language. This distinction highlights the complementary roles of accuracy and fluency in reading development.

Further, Grellet (2009) classifies reading into three main types of activities: skimming for gist, scanning for specific information, and detailed reading for full comprehension. These categories show how readers adjust their strategies depending on whether they want general understanding, quick facts, or deeper insights. Alderson (2000) defines skimming as reading quickly to grasp the overall meaning, while scanning involves looking for specific information. Nuttall (2005) highlights that these skills are essential for academic and real-world contexts, where efficiency is often necessary. Skimming enables readers to identify the main ideas of a text without reading every word, which is particularly useful when previewing articles, newspapers, or lengthy reports. Scanning, on the other hand, allocates readers to locate names, dates, figures, or keywords fast, making it valuable for tasks such as exam preparation, research, or handling daily information. Together, skimming and scanning demonstrate the practical adaptability of reading, showing that effective readers must adjust their strategies to match the demands of different texts and purposes. Skimming and scanning allow readers to save time and focus on relevant parts of the text, which is particularly useful in academic and professional contexts. Meanwhile, detailed reading fosters deeper comprehension, enabling readers to critically analyze arguments and evaluate the quality of information. This type of reading is often used in academic study, where careful attention to evidence, structure, and reasoning is necessary to fully grasp the author's message. The discussion above shows that skimming, scanning, and detailed reading are complementary strategies that enable readers to adapt their approach depending on whether they need quick information, general understanding, or deep critical analysis.





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In addition, Mikulecky and Jeffries (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007) differentiate between literal, inferential, and critical reading. Literal reading deals with surface-level understanding, focusing on facts, details, and directly stated information. For example, readers may recall names, dates, or events explicitly mentioned in the text. Inferential reading requires going beyond the text to derive implied meanings and establish connections. This involves interpreting the author's intention, drawing conclusions, or predicting outcomes based on context. Last, critical reading evaluates arguments and credibility by questioning the reliability, logic, and evidence presented. Readers engage in judgment, comparing the text with other sources or their own knowledge to form an informed opinion. These types represent rising levels of comprehension, engaging different cognitive strategies.

In addition, Urquhart and Weir (2014) explain two main types of reading: careful reading and expeditious reading. Careful reading means reading slowly and thoroughly in order to understand the meaning in detail. It requires concentration and attention to detail, allowing readers to grasp subtle arguments, complex structures, and nuanced meanings. This type of reading is usually used when studying academic texts or when accuracy is very significant. Expeditious reading, on the other hand, is faster and consists of strategies such as skimming and scanning. Expeditious reading helps readers manage time efficiently, making it useful when dealing with large volumes of information or time-sensitive tasks. This shows that readers need to choose the right way of reading depending on their goals and the kind of text they face.

Here are some types of reading according to some experts. According to Grabe & Stoller (2019); there are six types of reading. They are:

1. Intensive Reading

- o Focuses on short texts for detailed understanding.
- o Learners pay attention to vocabulary, grammar, and meaning in depth.
- Often used in classroom exercises or academic contexts to improve accuracy and comprehension.

2. Extensive Reading

o Emphasizes reading longer texts for general understanding and enjoyment.





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 Encourages learners to read freely at their own pace, building fluency and confidence.

3. Skimming

- o Reading quickly to get the main idea or overall gist of a text.
- o Useful for previewing content or deciding if a text is relevant.

4. Scanning

- o Searching for specific information such as names, dates, or keywords.
- Helps learners efficiently locate needed details without reading the whole text.

5. Critical Reading

- o Involves analyzing, evaluating, and questioning the text.
- o Learners assess reliability, bias, or assumptions in the reading material.

6. Reading for Pleasure or Personal Goals

- o Reading driven by personal interest rather than academic requirement.
- Supports lifelong learning and motivates learners to engage independently with texts.

Please look at the table for more practical examples of types of reading from Grabe and Stoller!

Type of Reading	Purpose	Key Features	Example / Classroom Activity
Intensive Reading	Detailed understanding of short texts	grammar and magning	Reading a paragraph from a textbook and answering comprehension questions; analyzing sentence structure
Extensive Reading	General understanding and fluency	own pace; enjoyment and	Reading a short story, news article, or graded reader for pleasure; summarizing main ideas
Skimmino	Quickly grasp main ideas	every word is read	Previewing an article to understand the topic; reading headings and first sentences of paragraphs
	Locate specific information	numbers, or names; fast	Finding a date in a history text; locating a specific fact in a science article
Critical Reading	Analyze and evaluate	assessing bias, reliability,	Discussing whether an opinion article is trustworthy; evaluating arguments in a debate
Reading for Pleasure / Personal Goals	Enjoyment and personal growth	Driven by interest rather than assignment;	Reading a favorite novel, blog, or magazine; sharing favorite passages with peers





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Type of Reading	Purpose	Key Features	Example / Classroom Activity
		encourages lifelong reading	

Below are listed types of reading according to Snow (2002):

- 1. Reading for Basic Decoding
 - o Focuses on recognizing words and letters accurately.
 - Essential for beginning readers to build foundational literacy skills.
- 2. Reading for Comprehension
 - o Goes beyond decoding; emphasizes understanding meaning from text.
 - o Readers connect sentences and ideas to construct understanding.
- 3. Reading for Learning
 - o Involves reading to gain new knowledge or information.
 - o Often requires integrating information from multiple sources and applying it.
- 4. Reading for Pleasure / Aesthetic Reading
 - o Reading for enjoyment and personal engagement.
 - o Encourages motivation, imagination, and emotional response to texts.
- 5. Critical Reading
 - o Readers analyze, evaluate, and interpret content.
 - Focuses on questioning assumptions, detecting bias, and forming judgments about the text.

The types can be seen practically in the following table:

Reading Type	Purpose / Focus	Example / Classroom Activity	
Reading for Basic Decoding	Recognizing words, letters, and basic text; foundational literacy	Practicing phonics, word recognition exercises, reading simple sentences	
Reading for Comprehension		Reading a short story or passage and answering comprehension questions	
Reading for Learning / Informational Reading	information; integrating ideas from	Reading a textbook chapter or scientific article and summarizing key points	
Reading for Pleasure / Aesthetic Reading	Enjoyment, personal engagement,	Reading a novel, short story, or magazine article for fun; discussing favorite parts	





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Reading Type	Purpose / Focus	Example / Classroom Activity	
Critical Reading	interpreting text; questioning	Evaluating arguments in an opinion article or discussing the reliability of a news source	

In addition, here are a list of types of reading from Nuttal (2005):

1. Intensive Reading

- o Focused on detailed understanding of short texts.
- o Readers pay attention to vocabulary, grammar, and exact meaning.
- o Commonly used in classroom exercises to improve accuracy.

2. Extensive Reading

- o Involves reading longer texts for general understanding or enjoyment.
- o Encourages reading for pleasure, fluency, and overall comprehension.
- o Readers choose texts that interest them to foster motivation.

3. Skimming

- o Quick reading to grasp the main idea or gist.
- o Useful for previewing a text or determining its relevance.

4. Scanning

- o Searching a text for specific information such as names, dates, or keywords.
- o Helps readers locate details efficiently without reading the whole text.

5. Critical Reading

- o Involves analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting the content.
- o Readers question assumptions, detect bias, and assess reliability.

6. Pleasure Reading

- o Reading driven by personal interest rather than academic requirement.
- o Supports motivation, imagination, and lifelong reading habits.

Reading Type Purpose / Focus		Example / Classroom Activity	
Intensive Reading	texts; focus on vocabulary,	Reading a short passage and analyzing sentence structure, vocabulary exercises, answering comprehension questions	
Extensive Reading		Reading a novel, graded reader, or article for pleasure; summarizing main ideas	





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Reading Type	Purpose / Focus	Example / Classroom Activity	
Skimming	gist of a text	Previewing an article by reading headings and first sentences; deciding whether to read further	
		Finding a date or fact in a text; looking up key information in a textbook or article	
Critical Reading	interpreting content; detecting	Discussing whether an opinion article is trustworthy; evaluating arguments in a debate	
		Reading a favorite short story, magazine, or blog; sharing favorite passages with peers	

According to Urquhart and Weir (2014) reading can be broadly categorized into two main types:

1. Careful Reading

- o **Purpose**: To achieve detailed and accurate understanding of a text.
- Characteristics:
 - Reading slowly and thoroughly.
 - Focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and nuances of meaning.
 - Often applied to academic texts, exams, or legal/professional documents.
- Example / Classroom Activity: Analyzing a paragraph in a textbook for meaning, answering comprehension or inference questions.

2. Expeditious Reading

- o **Purpose**: To extract information quickly and efficiently.
- Characteristics:
 - Fast reading with less focus on every word.
 - Emphasis on getting the gist, main ideas, or locating specific information.
 - Useful for timed reading tasks, browsing, or scanning for relevant data.
- Example / Classroom Activity: Skimming a news article to summarize main points or scanning a passage for specific facts.

The detailed types can be seen in the following table:





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Reading Type	Purpose	Characteristics	Example / Classroom Activity
Careful Reading	and accurate	nuances- Often applied to academic	Analyzing a paragraph in a textbook; answering detailed comprehension or inference questions
Expeditious	information quickly	every word- Focus on gist, main ideas, or locating information-	Skimming a news article to summarize main points; scanning a passage for specific facts

Further, Naomi S. Baron (2021) in her 2021 book *How We Read Now: Strategic Choices for Print, Screen, and Audio*, explores how different reading mediums—print, screen, and audio—impact our reading behaviors, comprehension, and memory. While she doesn't provide a formal list of reading types, she identifies key distinctions in how we engage with texts across these formats. Here's a summary of her insights:

1. Print Reading

- Characteristics: Engages readers in deep, focused reading with minimal distractions.
- Benefits: Supports sustained attention and better retention of information.
- Challenges: May be perceived as less convenient in fast-paced environments.

2. Screen Reading

- Characteristics: Often involves multitasking and exposure to various media.
- o Benefits: Allows for quick access to information and interactive features.
- Challenges: Can lead to fragmented attention and superficial understanding.

3. Audio Reading (e.g., Audiobooks, Podcasts)

- o Characteristics: Provides an auditory experience, enabling multitasking.
- o Benefits: Offers accessibility and convenience for on-the-go learning.
- o Challenges: May limit the ability to engage deeply with complex texts.





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The five experts' ideas can be compared in the following table:

Reading Type	Nuttall (2020)	Grabe & Stoller (2019)	Snow (2002)	Urquhart & Weir (2014)	Baron (2021)	Purpose / Focus
Intensive / Careful Reading	Intensive Reading	Intensive Reading	Reading for Comprehension	Careful Reading	Print Reading	Detailed and accurate understanding; focus on vocabulary, grammar, and meaning
Extensive / Pleasure Reading	Extensive / Pleasure Reading	Extensive Reading / Reading for Pleasure	Reading for Pleasure / Aesthetic Reading	_	Print / Digital Reading (for engagement)	General understanding, fluency, enjoyment, motivation
Skimming	Skimming	Skimming		Expeditious Reading	Digital / Screen Reading	Quick reading to get gist or main ideas
Scanning	Scanning	Scanning	_	Expeditious Reading	Digital / Screen Reading	Searching for specific information efficiently
Critical Reading	Critical Reading	Critical Reading	Critical Reading	_		Analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting text; questioning assumptions
Reading for Learning / Informational	_	Intensive Reading / Scanning	Reading for Learning / Informational Reading	_	_	Acquiring knowledge; integrating ideas from multiple sources
Audio / Alternative Medium Reading	_	_	_	_	Audio Reading (audiobooks, podcasts)	Reading through listening; convenient for multitasking

From the table above, it can be seen that there are some types of reading, and we come to the ideas as follows:

1. Core Reading Types

Across all scholars, careful/intensive reading emerges as essential for comprehension and detailed understanding, while extensive/pleasure reading supports fluency, motivation, and engagement. These two types represent the foundation of effective reading instruction.





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2. Efficiency-Oriented Strategies

Skimming and scanning (or expeditious reading) are emphasized for quick information retrieval, showing the practical need to balance speed with comprehension, especially in academic and digital contexts.

3. Critical and Analytical Skills

Critical reading is highlighted by several scholars (Nuttall, Grabe & Stoller, Snow) as vital for evaluating, interpreting, and questioning texts, reflecting the growing importance of higher-order thinking in reading.

4. Medium Matters

Baron (2021) adds a modern dimension by showing that the medium—print, screen, or audio—affects reading strategies, attention, and comprehension. This underscores the importance of adapting reading instruction to digital and multimedia contexts.

5. Pedagogical Implications

Effective reading instruction should integrate all types of reading:

- o Intensive/Careful reading for comprehension accuracy
- o Extensive/pleasure reading for fluency and motivation
- o Skimming/scanning for efficiency
- o Critical reading for evaluation and higher-order thinking
- Awareness of medium (print, screen, audio) for optimal engagement

6. Overall Insight

Reading is a multifaceted skill, combining cognitive, affective, and strategic dimensions. Teachers and learners should apply different reading types flexibly, depending on purpose, text type, and medium, to maximize comprehension, learning, and enjoyment.

In conclusion, different types of reading reflect the various ways readers engage with texts, depending on their goals and the nature of the material. Generally, reading can be differentiated into five kinds: intensive reading, extensive reading, skimming, scanning, and critical reading. Each type serves a specific purpose, from building fluency and vocabulary to analyzing details and evaluating arguments. Effective readers are those who can flexibly choose and combine these strategies to achieve comprehension



efficiently and meaningfully. This demonstrates that reading is a multidimensional activity requiring both skill and strategic awareness.

This table demonstrates the types of reading:

Reading Type	Definition / Focus	Scholars Referenced	Purpose / Classroom Use
Resaling		Nuttall (2020), Grabe & Stoller (2019), Snow (2002), Urquhart & Weir (2014)	Analyzing paragraphs, answering comprehension questions, studying academic texts
Pleasure	Reading longer texts for general understanding, fluency, or enjoyment	Nuttall (2020), Grabe & Stoller (2019), Snow (2002)	Reading novels, graded readers, articles for pleasure; summarizing main ideas
Skimming	Reading quickly to get the gist or main idea	Nuttall (2020), Grabe & Stoller (2019), Urquhart & Weir (2014, part of expeditious reading)	Previewing articles, identifying topics, deciding whether to read further
Scanning	Searching for specific information or details		Finding names, dates, keywords in texts; locating facts efficiently
Critical Reading	Analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting text; questioning assumptions	Nuttall (2020), Grabe & Stoller (2019), Snow (2002)	Evaluating opinion articles, assessing arguments, discussing reliability of sources

Exploring the Factors that Matter in Reading

Reading is not an isolated cognitive activity; it is influenced by multiple factors that determine how effectively a reader comprehends a text. Anderson (2019) highlights that linguistic knowledge—such as vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures—is a fundamental requirement for reading comprehension. Without appropriate linguistic resources, readers may struggle to decode meaning from the text. In addition, strong linguistic knowledge enables readers to make connections between ideas, recognize nuances, and interpret implied meanings more accurately. It also supports the ability to infer, summarize, and critically evaluate information within a text. In conclusion, linguistic competence is really important for effective reading, as it forms the foundation upon which comprehension and higher-order reading skills are constructed.

Another important factor is background knowledge or schema. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) assumed that comprehension depends heavily on the relations between the reader's prior knowledge and the information in the text. When readers possess



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relevant background knowledge, they can make inferences more effectively and integrate new information with existing frameworks. Conversely, a lack of schema may lead to misunderstanding or superficial comprehension. Additionally, background knowledge helps readers predict content, recognize implicit meanings, and evaluate the plausibility of information. In conclusion, schema plays a crucial role in reading comprehension, as it enables readers to connect new ideas with what they already know, enhancing understanding and retention.

Motivation also plays a significant role. Guthrie and Wigfield (2004) suggest that motivated readers are more likely to engage deeply with texts, use effective strategies, and persist in the face of difficulties. In relation, Harida (2017) points out that motivation is important in reading activities. This aligns with Day and Bamford (2002), who argue that positive attitudes and enjoyment can enhance reading fluency, particularly in extensive reading contexts. Motivated readers tend to set personal goals, choose reading materials that interest them, and maintain focus for longer periods, which contributes to more worthwhile comprehension. Moreover, intrinsic motivation promotes a habit of reading, encouraging learners to investigate texts beyond academic requirements. In conclusion, motivation is known as a key factor in reading, as it pushes engagement, persistence, and the development of both reading skills and a lifelong reading habit.

The next factor is external factors, such as text difficulty, genre, and cultural context must also be considered. Nation (2009) points out that lexical coverage—i.e., the proportion of known words in a text—directly affects comprehension, suggesting that texts should be matched to the reader's proficiency level. Additionally, the genre of a text can impact how readers interpret structure and meaning, while cultural context affects understanding of references, idioms, and implicit messages. Teachers should therefore select texts that are appropriate in difficulty, culturally relevant, and suited to the readers' background knowledge. In conclusion, external factors significantly influence reading comprehension, as they determine how accessible and meaningful a text is to the reader.

In addition, the students' own use of reading strategies is a crucial determinant of reading comprehension. reading strategies are generally categorized into cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies involve practical techniques such as skimming, scanning, predicting, and inferencing, which help students deal with the text



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at the word and sentence level; while metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, involve higher-order processes such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's comprehension while reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Reading strategies play important roles to help students comprehend their reading process; many studies have shown that it has big relationship to students' reading. Studies demonstrate that students who are trained to consciously apply reading strategies are more successful in English texts (Ali & Razali, 2019; Harida, 2016; Husna et al., 2025; Lenski & Lewis, 2008; Sitompul et al., 2019). Furthermore, students who adopt flexible strategy use—adjusting their techniques depending on the purpose of reading—tend to outperform those who rely on a single, rigid approach. This indicates that strategy use is not merely a supplementary skill but a core element of reading comprehension.

In addition, metacognition is another critical factor. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), successful readers monitor their understanding, evaluate their progress, and adjust strategies when comprehension breaks down. This self-regulation distinguishes proficient readers from struggling ones. In addition, metacognitive readers plan their reading, set goals, and reflect on the effectiveness of their strategies, which helps them tackle complex or unfamiliar texts. They are also able to identify when they do not understand something and apply repair strategies such as rereading or summarizing. In conclusion, metacognition is essential for effective reading because it enables readers to actively manage and enhance their comprehension process.

Further, the techniques, strategies, and methods of instruction are stated as the most significant factors influencing students' reading comprehension. Effective reading instruction goes beyond teaching vocabulary or decoding skills; it also involves equipping learners with strategies to construct meaning from texts (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Hattie, 2023; Siregar & Harida, 2019). The explicit strategy instruction or differentiated instruction will enhance or improve students' reading comprehension. Teachers who integrate scaffolding, modeling, and guided practice provide learners with a structured pathway to develop independent reading competence. In contrast, ineffective instructional practices, such as relying solely on rote reading exercises, often result in students struggling to extract meaning and failing to apply appropriate strategies in diverse reading contexts (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). It is understandable that teachers'



methods directly shape not only the content of reading lessons but also the processes by which students approach texts. Teachers' methods, strategies, and techniques are essential and crucial for developing students' reading comprehension, as effective instruction equips learners with the skills and strategies needed for successful reading.

Finally, the readers can also be influenced to comprehend English texts because of some aspects. The aspects can be ethnicity, culture, geographical location, and textbook topic (Suyanto et al., 2024) and also the integration of local culture to the learning materials (Kartini et al., 2025). The statement emphasizes that reading comprehension and material development are not only influenced by linguistic and cognitive factors but also by socio-cultural aspects. Ethnicity, culture, geographical location, and textbook topics shape how learners interpret texts, as these elements affect their prior knowledge and perspectives. Likewise, integrating local culture into learning materials makes reading more relatable, meaningful, and engaging for students. This approach also supports inclusivity by acknowledging learners' diverse backgrounds and promoting cultural awareness in education.

In conclusion, reading comprehension is affected by multiple interrelated factors, from students, teachers, inside, and outside. They include linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, motivation, metacognition, external text characteristics, sociocultural aspects, and instruction. Each factor plays a crucial role in determining how effectively readers understand, interpret, and evaluate texts. Therefore, effective reading requires not only language skills but also strategic, cognitive, motivational, and contextual awareness. Teachers have a duty to design reading instruction with these considerations in mind, ensuring that learners are both linguistically prepared and strategically equipped to handle diverse texts.

Reading Difficulties

Reading difficulties are commonly defined as learners' challenges or difficulties in decoding, understanding, and interpreting written texts. Snow (2002) defines reading difficulties as obstacles or obstructions that appear when readers cannot effectively integrate word decoding, language comprehension, and background knowledge to construct meaning from a text. It means that even if students can recognize words, they

19



may still fail to comprehend the text if they lack the linguistic or contextual support needed to build meaning.

In addition, Grabe and Stoller (2013) tell that reading difficulties occur when readers fail to coordinate linguistic skills, cognitive processes, and reading strategies effectively, a problem that is particularly evident among second or foreign language learners. In other words, readers often strive because they cannot balance the demands of language proficiency with the strategic skills required to understand texts.

Finally, Urquhart and Weir (2014) label reading difficulties as the condition in which readers struggle to process texts due to limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, or insufficient reading strategies to understand both explicit and implicit meanings. This highlights how linguistic limitations and the absence of effective strategies can cause comprehension breakdowns.

In summary, reading difficulties are the challenges that prevent readers—especially EFL learners—from understanding texts effectively, often caused by limited linguistic knowledge, problems in decoding, and a lack of effective reading strategies.

Talking about reading difficulties themselves, many difficulties faced by readers when they read English texts. Some of them are stated in the following explanation. According to Gough and Tunmer (1986) in their *Simple View of Reading*, reading comprehension is the product of two components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. When students experience problems in either decoding or comprehension, they are likely to face reading difficulties. For instance, learners may struggle with recognizing words quickly and accurately, or they may fail to connect textual information with prior knowledge, which hinders comprehension.

Another challenges when reading may involve decoding, limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, lack of background knowledge, and difficulties in applying cognitive or metacognitive strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Snow, 2002). For many learners, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, reading becomes even more complex because they must simultaneously process linguistic knowledge and employ higher-order comprehension skills. As a result, they often struggle with identifying main ideas, making inferences, or interpreting implicit information within a text.



Recent research further highlights that reading difficulties are not solely linguistic but also strategic and environmental. Studies have shown that learners frequently lack effective reading strategies such as predicting, summarizing, and monitoring comprehension, which leads to poor text understanding (Husna et al., 2025). Other factors, including low motivation, limited exposure to English texts, and even external issues such as inadequate learning facilities or digital distractions, also exacerbate reading difficulties (Nisa' et al., 2024; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). Taken together, these findings suggest that reading difficulties are multidimensional, requiring both linguistic support and strategic instruction to help learners achieve effective comprehension.

Further, let's see some of the reading difficulties faced by readers in their reading activities.

- 1. Harida (2014; 2022) found that students often struggled with identifying supporting details, making inferences, and understanding implicit meanings in texts. These difficulties are strongly related to limited vocabulary and weak reading strategies, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to strengthen learners' comprehension skills.
- 2. Ningsih et al. (2023) stated that reading difficulties are influenced by socio-economic status, focus ability, and information literacy, as limited resources, poor concentration, and weak critical skills restrict learners' comprehension. This suggests that reading challenges extend beyond linguistic issues and are also shaped by broader social and informational factors.
- 3. Nisa et al. (2024) reported that Indonesian secondary students' reading difficulties stem from limited vocabulary, inadequate exposure to English texts, and insufficient practice opportunities. These findings show that environmental and instructional factors significantly contribute to comprehension problems.
- 4. Fadullah et al. (2024) revealed that EFL students experienced reading difficulties not only due to linguistic barriers but also because of non-linguistic factors, such as poor internet connectivity and inadequate learning environments in online classes. This highlights how contextual challenges can compound linguistic difficulties.

21





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- 5. Yusof et al. (2025) identified that undergraduates face reading difficulties mainly due to poor vocabulary knowledge and the underuse of metacognitive reading strategies. This indicates that learners struggle both with understanding word meanings and with regulating their comprehension processes.
- 6. Husna et al. (2025) emphasized that reading difficulties often arise from a lack of effective cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which weaken learners' ability to make inferences and monitor comprehension. Their study demonstrated that explicit strategy instruction can help mitigate these problems.
- 7. Fitriani & Sunarti (2024), Ningsih et al. (2023), Purmayanti (2022), and Santosh et al. (2024) reported that EFL learners experienced technical barriers such as poor internet connectivity and limited access to e-resources; then about students' low information literacy, and also by notifications from social media which constrained their reading practice in online classes. These factors further compounded linguistic difficulties and slowed down reading progress.

The reviewed studies reveal that reading difficulties among EFL learners are multifaceted, encompassing linguistic, cognitive, socio-economic, and technological aspects. Linguistic challenges such as limited vocabulary, weak grammar knowledge, and poor decoding skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Harida, 2014; Harida et al., 2022; Snow, 2002) consistently hinder comprehension, while cognitive and metacognitive absences limit learners' ability to infer, monitor, and strategize effectively (Husna et al., 2025; Yusof et al., 2025). In addition, socio-economic status, focus ability, and information literacy (Ningsih et al., 2023) as well as environmental and digital constraints, including poor internet connectivity and social media distractions (Fadlullah et al., 2024; Fitriani & Sunarti, 2024), exacerbate these difficulties. Taken together, these findings underscore that reading difficulties are not caused by a single factor but rather by the interaction of linguistic limitations, inadequate strategies, and external conditions, which must be addressed holistically to enhance learners' reading comprehension.

In conclusion, reading difficulties among EFL learners are shaped by a wide range of factors, from linguistic limitations and weak strategy use to socio-economic challenges and technological barriers. These difficulties highlight the need for comprehensive instructional approaches that not only strengthen vocabulary, grammar, and decoding



skills but also foster cognitive and metacognitive strategies. At the same time, addressing external issues such as limited access to resources, low information literacy, and digital distractions is equally essential. Therefore, overcoming reading difficulties requires a holistic approach that integrates linguistic, cognitive, and contextual support to help learners achieve effective reading comprehension.

Conclusion, Suggestions, and Recommendations

In conclusion, reading and reading comprehension are complex, multidimensional processes that involve cognitive, linguistic, and experiential skills. Effective reading requires the integration of word recognition, comprehension strategies, background knowledge, motivation, and metacognitive awareness. Different types of reading, such as intensive, extensive, skimming, scanning, and critical reading, highlight the need for flexibility and strategic choice depending on the purpose and nature of the text. Moreover, external factors like text difficulty, genre, cultural context, and instruction significantly influence comprehension. The internal factors, such as motivation and interest are also included. Overall, proficient reading depends on the dynamic interaction of these factors, enabling readers to construct, evaluate, and apply meaning from texts effectively. Finally, there are some difficulties found in reading comprehension, such as a lack of grammatical ability, vocabulary mastery, inefficient reading strategies, and others.

Teachers should design reading activities that consider learners' linguistic abilities, background knowledge, motivation, and strategic skills. Selecting appropriate texts and encouraging metacognitive strategies can help learners engage actively and meaningfully with reading materials, supporting both academic success and lifelong learning. In addition, teachers should also help learners to minimize students' difficulties to help them being able to comprehend what they read and to perform good reading process.

Additionally, it is recommended that educators provide varied reading experiences, including intensive and extensive reading, skimming and scanning tasks, and critical evaluation exercises, to develop flexible and strategic readers. Incorporating culturally relevant texts and gradually increasing text difficulty can further enhance comprehension and motivation.





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