A Systematic Review of Reading Instruction in ESL Classrooms

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Abstract- There is a lack of systematic reviews on reading in an ESL context at the tertiary level. The purpose of this research is to fill the gaps. To perform systemic analysis, the PRISMA method is used. Recent academic articles and books were included in the inclusion criterion. The research-based on reading competencies. The best pedagogical practices and assessment practices on Reading were explored. The synthesis revealed that a sub-skills approach to Reading would be effective. Some interesting findings emerged from the study. Caveats for future research are presented in the research synthesis.

Keywords: ESL, PRISMA method, pedagogical practices

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is an essential skill in inclusive classrooms. Reading proficiency in L2 will make a major difference to learners' academic achievement and lead to their academic progress. (Chapman, 2009). The main question of the value of reading in academic settings is how to comprehend and interpret content. In L2 research, it has been acknowledged that language learning is when learners are subjected to great and comprehensible input.

Furthermore, it has been believed that L2 students learn better while they are particularly inspired. The literature on Reading emphasizes the pedagogies of teaching reading. The notion that Reading cannot be explicitly taught is debunked in this systematic review.

Statement and significance of the Research Problem

Tertiary-level teachers face big challenges in the instruction of literacy. The student's lack of comprehension and lack of knowledge on the techniques used with Reading and the existing instructional activities contributes to reading difficulties. Reading recognition is the main feature of academic proficiency. For academic achievement, successful Reading and other communicative skills, listening, communicating, and writing are extremely important. Emphasis on the sub-skills of Reading is also improved during instruction.

Steps in the study
A nine-step process is employed in the research. The steps involved in the research is shown in the figure-1
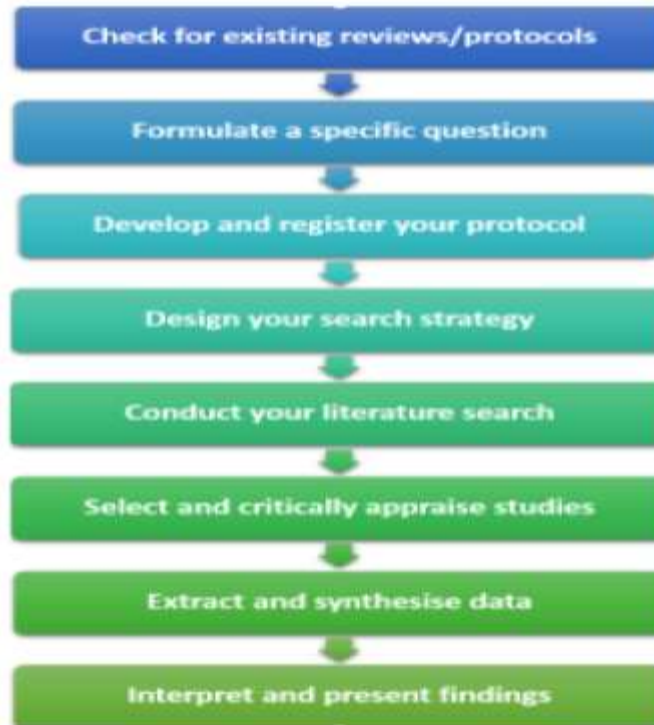
Fig-1 Process description of systematic review

Focus on Micro-skills of reading

An emphasis on the micro-skills of Reading has been suggested as one of the successful ways of understanding language. Micro-skills promote learner performance, inspire learning outcomes and contribute significantly to L2 Reading. What is lacking in ESL classrooms is Reading for pleasure (Krashen, 2013). Reading capabilities of the target learners are only expected to improve with constant exposure to Reading. The four key sub-skills of Reading are defined by Krashen & Terrell (1998) as skimming, scanning, intense Reading, and comprehensive Reading; nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that these sub-skills complementarily communicate with reading strategies.

Research Questions
1.   To what extent will the skimming strategy facilitates better comprehension?
2.   To what extent will scanning facilitate better comprehension?
3.   To what extent will intense Reading facilitate better comprehension?

Hypothesis

The target L2 learners who are exposed to micro-skills of teaching reading perform better compared to learners who are exposed to other methods of instruction.

II.   RESEARCH PROTOCOL

PRISMA approach was employed to conduct this systematic review. According to Moher et al. (2009), PRISMA is a minimal selection of items for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses based on facts. PRISMA focuses on the reporting of randomized trial assessment reviews but can also be used as a basis for reporting comprehensive reviews of other forms of study, particularly intervention evaluations. Since PRISMA provides an international benchmark for systematic reviews PRISMA approach was used in this study for systematic reviews. This literature search was undertaken with the primary purpose of finding research and

evidence-based strategies involving the use of reading techniques. Fluency and encoding ability of literacy skills in English language reading at the tertiary level was also studied in this analysis. Article search was undertaken from scientific peer-reviewed articles, studies, dissertations, and recent publications spanning over the last decade. Search words are representative of the factors we are studying. Studies that were explicitly pursued on reading intervention research were chosen based on the following criteria: The systematic review's inclusion and exclusion criteria are given in figure-1.
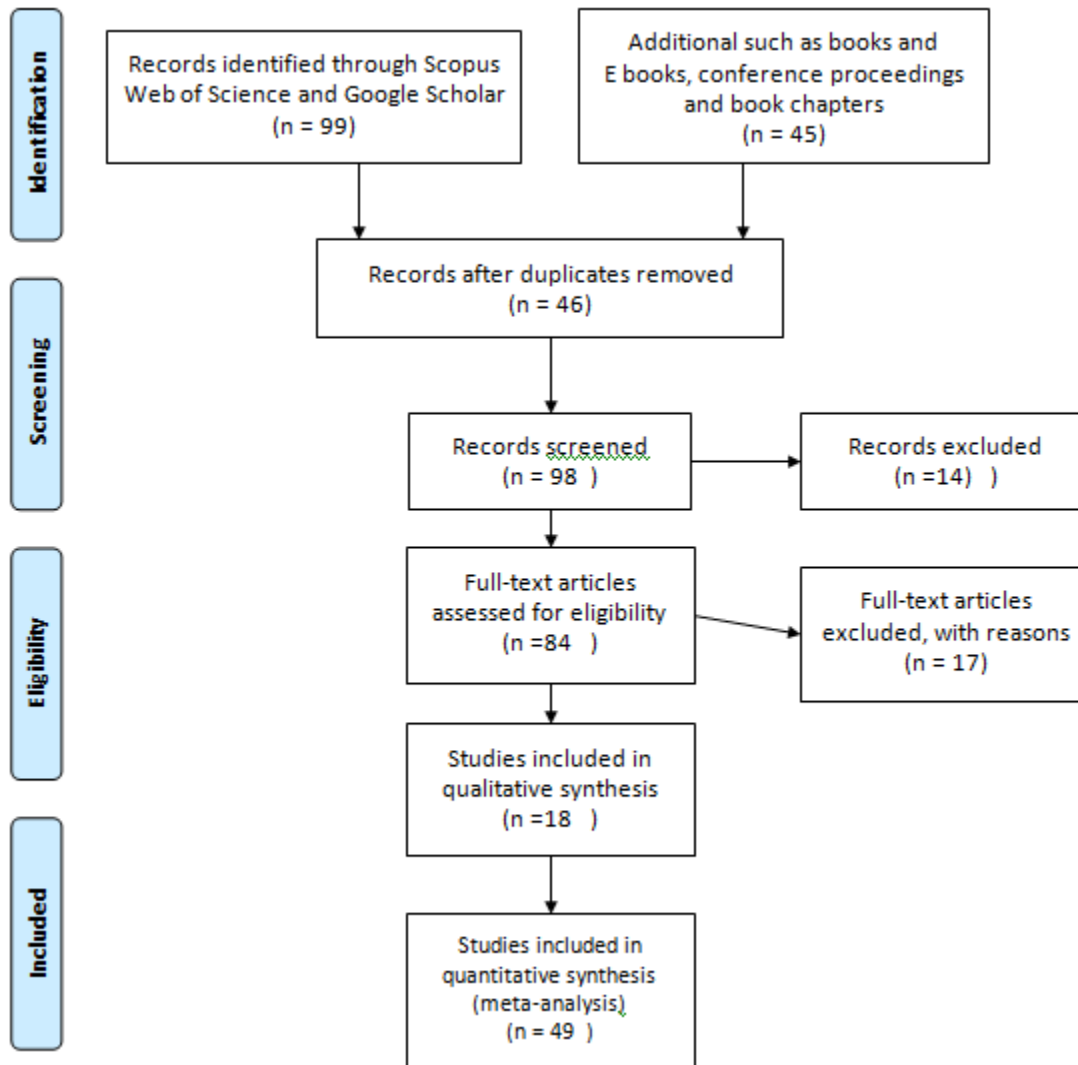

Fig-2: Flow diagram of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Initially, 144 studies related to the research questions were chosen for the study. The split-up of research texts by year of publication is given in table-1.

Table-1 Year wise split-up of the research studies

2020–2021	2019–2020	2018–2019	2017–2018	2016–2017	2015–2016	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013	2011–2012
7	21	29	17	19	17	10	8	8	8

Best practices in previous Intervention studies on Reading
None of the previous studies dealt with a sub-skills approach to reading intervention. (Takase, 2007). The studies focused on universal approaches and not for linguistically diverse students. Based on the limited studies on reading pedagogy reported in the ESL context, it cannot be assumed that prominent reading comprehension approaches are well documented. (Stewart, 2011). Previous reviews and Meta-analytic studies on reading comprehension suggest explicit reading strategies for readers with poor comprehension. Cognitive strategy instruction was yet another best practice reported in previous studies. Multiple comprehension strategies skimming, scanning, and making inferences are also reported as effective practice. Consistently, reading comprehension strategy instruction is reported as a common instructional practice in which a good reader follows a set of steps such as the SQ3R approach to Reading. Day and Bamford, (2008).

Explicit strategies also involved the use of semantic maps, graphic organizers, and mind maps. Research findings state that such practice enhances vocabulary, inferential knowledge, and factual comprehension. Cognitive strategy instruction and teacher-mediated instruction have been reported in many previous studies. Cooperative strategies and peer-assisted learning is an effective practice for reading comprehension.

Previous studies on Assessment Practices in Reading

Reading comprehension proficiency varies between L1 and L2 learners. Performance standards are usually assessed by standardized testing, including the TOEFL and IELTS. The common European framework of reference is employed. (Kliewer, 2018) conducted a comprehensive study on the reading proficiency of Asian populations. His study revealed that nine of ten learners had low-proficiency proficiency levels. He used the task descriptors of IELTS. So the research clearly states that they can make Common European framework statements a standard tool to assess Reading.
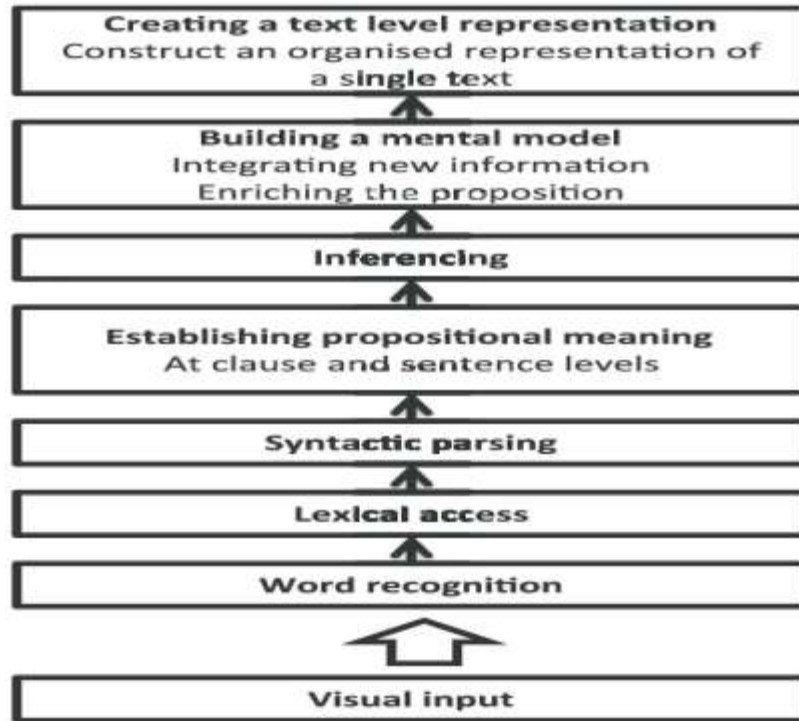
Research Gap
Previous research on the efficacy of different teaching methodologies on reading to university students was inconclusive. Based on the research synthesis, it was concluded that further research was required to understand an effective method for reading instruction. The findings did not offer conclusive evidence for any instrument under review. Analysis is inconclusive and inconsistent. According to (Hoover & Gough 2010), there is inadequate literature for the tertiary students on a skill-based reading methodology. The analysis of the examined literature shows that a better form of reading instruction is required. In essence, all studies report on either of these three models of Reading. They are i) top-down model, ii) bottom-up model, and iii) interactive model. The first model gives primary importance to deep structures. The second model to surface structures and the interactive model, as the name implies, focuses on interactive aspects. Since these models have limitations, an eclectic model to teaching reading is the need of the hour. The three primary models of Reading are presented in figure –3.
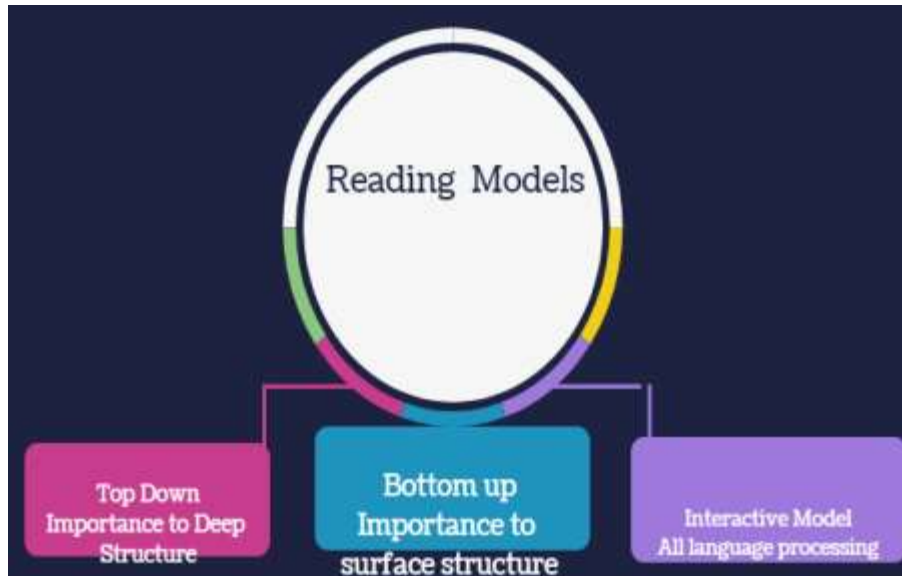
Fig-3 Models of Reading.

III. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

➤ Research evidence suggests that teaching reading has not undergone a drastic change for the past two decades.

➤ Certain methods of reading prove to be more powerful than other methods. Yet, there is no consensus on an effective method.

➤ There are signs that cultural variations impact-reading outcomes and meaning of the English language

➤ The earlier studies showed that the statistical validity of oral reading comprehension using specific guidance on L2 was contradictory to the spectrum of associations recorded in L1 studies.

➤ The experiments that explored the connection between specific instruction and Reading and what they discovered about reading comprehension at the tertiary level suggest that this interaction alone is inadequate to understand the general increase in reading comprehension success.

➤ The research reviewed above can be used to foster sub-skills for developing reading abilities.

➤ L2 vocabulary awareness was shown to be strongly associated with listening comprehension.

➤ However, considering that vocabulary learning and reading comprehension abilities are essential to L2 Reading, some issues still exist.

➤ Four previous studies reviewed showed the importance of skill-based approaches to reading with varying explanatory power. (Mesgar, & Tafazoli, 2018; Singer & Alexander 2017; Ware 2017; Delgado et al., 2018)

➤ However, two of the most cited empirical studies, both in building on previous research, on reading comprehension offer valid evidence that explicit teaching of sub-skills may be key determinants of reading comprehension. (Graham, & Harris, 2005; Geva, & Massey 2013).

➤ There is a need for more studies on reading comprehension and factors involved such as environmental variables, home language usage, the function of dual or monolingual schooling, and the amount of previous reading experience a reader has.

➤ In this report, curriculum-based assessments of several factors are addressed, but personal influences and historical exposure does not adequately merit inclusion. All cognitive models of Reading are based on Khalifa and weirs' model. An iteration of Khalifa's model is given in fig-3.

Fig.4. Iteration of Khalifa's model. Source: Mccray, Gareth & Brunfaut, Tineke. (2016)

IV. FINDINGS BASED ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

This chapter reports the derived from the evaluation of the three research questions raised earlier. They are 1.To what extent will skimming facilitate better comprehension? 2. To what extent will scanning facilitate better comprehension? 3. To what extent will intense Reading facilitate better comprehension?

The analysis of variance treatment of the data and the previous meta-analytic studies indicates that skimming scanning and intensive reading facilitates better comprehension. Therefore, the study did not allow the rejection of the Hypothesis (The target L2 learners exposed to micro-skills of teaching reading perform better than learners exposed to other instruction methods.)

V. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were impeding this study that are important to note.
Many of these limitations stem from the fact that this study is based upon secondary data,
which limits the amount of control the researcher may have upon how variables are?
Measured and which variables are included in the study. Another limitation to this study was that the secondary data used in this sample were collected for ten years. The cohort was also limited to only studies at the tertiary level. In future studies, the researchers should gather large data

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Future researchers can replicate this study with a different population and add more sub-skills or variations to the materials and design. The pedagogies of Reading cannot be recalibrated using context and culture-specific content. Further studies can also investigate effective instructional design associated with effective reading strategies. It is hoped that this study will significantly contribute to the enhancement of instructional programs at the tertiary level. The efficacy of digital environments for reading instruction can also explore.

This study explored the synthesis of studies on reading with special reference to ESL contexts. Future researchers can perform a similar study in EFL contexts. The instructional strategies discussed in this synthesis can be implemented across all levels and contexts.

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