

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **1.1 Context of the study**

I think you would agree that if we want students to become more confident and competent readers. They need to spend more time reading. In a place called school, *goodlad* reported that less than 2 percent of each high school day was being spent on actual reading. In spite of the research that supports independent reading time as a critical component in effective literacy programs because it affords readers the opportunity for “clocking up reading mileage” many administrators and teachers have difficulty creating effective independent reading programs.

The study describes and explore how highly effective teachers understand and implement independent reading in their classrooms. In spite of a call by the NRP (2000). “The national reading panel, by UN congress on finding the best ways of teaching children to read” for further inquiry, little research consideration of independent reading has occurred in more than a decade. Attention to the ways that highly effective classroom teachers perceive independent reading and utilize it with their students seems to be lacking, Therefore this study begins with this overarching question: what are highly effective lecturers’

understanding and perspective regarding independent reading, and how are those exemplified in lecture room practice?.

This study is a result of my concern over the far – reaching impact of independent reading “ lecture room practice” on the undergraduate students level of achievement, so motivation to read independently appears to be a key component of reading success and should be a goal of reading instruction. Lecturers and teachers are not merely responsible for providing instruction in the mechanics of text and reading, they also bear responsibility for implanting in all students a desire to read independently from a variety of sources.

Although research has provided a wealth of information to inform instruction on the mechanics of text, there are few findings from well-designed, experimental research studies to guide educators in motivating students to spend a great deal of time reading widely and independently, and the study also urges teachers who teach undergraduate students to guide and advise them to do much independent reading, so when you give your students the chance to practice and strengthen their reading skills on high-quality, high-interest books, which they read with confidence and accuracy, they make progress, which enhances their level of achievement, and their score will be remarkable.

## **1-2 Statement of the Problem:**

Teachers who teach undergraduate students do not encourage them to read independently. This study is to urge teachers to guide and advise the students to do much independent reading. So when you give your students the chance to practice and strengthen their reading skills on high-quality, high-interest books which they read with confidence and accuracy, they make progress, which enhances their level of achievement in school.

## **1-3 Objectives of the Study:**

- The purpose of this study is to provide information to policy makers, curriculum developers, parents, teachers and librarians about the importance of independent reading and the programs that support it.
- The objective of independent reading is to implant in each student a joy and genuine interest in reading. This is done by allowing the freedom to choose what students read, learn and enjoy.
- The aim of study is to make the students read more willingly and more often.
- Become more interested in the printed word in general including their own writing.
- Become more receptive to enrichment activities related to their reading.



- Discover that they can think and write in a meaningful way about their reading.
- Learn that literature can enrich their lives, and expand their vocabulary as well as receiving higher test scores.

#### **1-4 Significance of the Study:**

Most writers agree that independent reading has many benefits for students. According to the American Association of School Librarians, there is a strong correlation between independent reading and general academic achievement. Independent reading boosts vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal skill and achievement – test scores. Moreover, early independent reading can create a snowball effect that expands knowledge.

Reading opens up a world of knowledge and can help children pursue their interests and hobbies. Students who read regularly have better research skills and are more effective writers, according to “Educational psychology”.

They also have access to secondary sources of knowledge. If a teacher’s style doesn’t work well for a student, if he/she reads regularly and well, he can seek out a book to help him boost his knowledge.

### **1-5 Questions of the Study:**

This study aims to explore student perception regarding independent reading specifically to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the beliefs of the students about the independent reading?
- 2- What are the benefits students think independent reading can give them?
- 3- In what ways and to what extent students think independent reading can promote their level of achievement?

### **1-6 Hypotheses of the study:**

- Through independent reading students believe that reading different kinds of books, lead to enrich their knowledge and their ability to read.
- Voluntary reading enhances students' achievement, build fluency and it is a major source of vocabulary acquisition.
- Students think that independent reading promotes their reading skill, which help them receive higher test scores.

### **1-7 Limits of the Study:**

- This study is limited to the undergraduate students of English in Sudan University of Science and Technology. It is conducted in 2016.

### **1-8 Methodology of the study:**

The methodology followed in this study is descriptive and analytical. Two tools are used to collect data, questionnaire for the students and interview for teachers.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**  
**AND PREVIOUS STUDIES**

## **Chapter Two**

### **2.Literature Review And Previous Studies**

#### **Introduction**

This introductory chapter will provide a description of the theoretical framework of the study with special focus on the statement of the problem, study questions hypotheses, aims and the methodology of the study. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first one is on the theoretical framework, and the other is on previous studies.

#### **2.1 Part One: Definition of Reading(Reading As a Skill)**

I have always believe that reading has a significant impact on our comprehension and appreciation of the world. As both a life-long passionate reader and an experienced English language arts translator, I have witnessed first-hand the impact that reading has on the ability of learners in terms of comprehension, grammar.

This study tries to give an integrate representation of classroom independent reading and how different approaches dealt with it to boost students' level of achievement.

In the present research classroom independent reading is a means to an end. It is being targeted to lead to boosting students' level of achievement. It is not intended to be put under focus in its own right.

The field of education has undergone drastic shifts affecting the entire educational operation and principles. A teacher, for example was considered to be the sage or the wise-man whose job is to fill the heads of the students with knowledge. The new perspective is that learners are not empty cans to be filled with knowledge. They are humans with their own personal needs who want to initiate their own personal learning. It is due to this shift in perspectives; classroom independent reading has become of paramount importance in teaching and learning process.

By definition, classroom independent reading is the reading students choose to do on their own. It reflects the reader's personal choice of the material to be read, as well as the time and place to read it.

Independent reading is done for information or for pleasure. No one assigns it, no one requires a report, no one checks on comprehension. Independent reading is also called voluntary reading (Krashen 1993, Short 1995, Morrow 1991). Leisure reading (Greaney 1980), spare time reading (Searls 1985) recreational reading (Manzo and Manzo 1995), and reading outside of school (Anderson, Wilson and Fielding 1988).

### **2.1.1 Guided Reading:**

Guided reading can be done silently or with a child reading aloud to a friend, parent or teacher. Before the reading the learner

and teacher talk about the book. Research by Wong and McNaughton (1980) showed that for the learner they studied, pre-reading discussion resulted in a greater percentage of words initially correct, and a greater percentage of errors self-corrected. The teacher and the learner look at the title of the book and make sure that all the words in the title are known. Then they talk about the pictures in the story and make predictions about what might happen in the story and talk about any knowledge the learner already has about the topic. Important words in the story are talked about but need not be pointed to in their written form. So, before the learner actually starts to read the story, the ideas and important words in the story are talked about and clarified. Then the learner begins to read.

If the learner is reading aloud to the teacher, then it is good to use the pause, prompt, praise procedure (Glynn et al., 1989; Smith and Elley, 1997: 134-136). This means that when the learner starts to struggle over a word the teacher does not rush in with the answer but pauses for the learner to have time to make a good attempt at it. If the learner continues to struggle the teacher gives a helpful prompt, either from the meaning of the story or sentence or from the form of the word. When the learner finally reads the word correctly the teacher then praises the attempt.

If the learner is reading silently, then a part of the text is read and there is a discussion of what has just been read and prediction of the next part of the text.

### **2.1.2 Independent Reading:**

In independent reading the learner chooses a book to read and quietly gets on with reading it. During this quiet period of class time, the teacher may also read or may use the time as an opportunity for individual learners to come up to read to the teacher. In beginners' classes there is a set time each day for independent reading and learners are expected to read out of class as well. Other names for extended independent reading are **sustained silent reading (SSR)** and **drop everything and read (DEAR)**.

Learning to read is also helped by learning to write and learning through listening. In writing as in reading, first language teachers emphasise the communication of messages and expect the learners gradually to approximate normal writing over a period of time.

Research indicates that the best age to learn to read is about six to seven years old. Starting early at five has no long-term advantages and may make it more difficult for some learners to experience success in reading. At the age of about six or seven children are intellectually ready to begin reading.



It should be clear from this description that native speakers learning to read have the advantage of bringing a lot of language knowledge and a lot of experience to learning to read. They might have the disadvantage of beginning to learn a complex skill when they may not be quite ready for it.

### **2.1.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF READING**

Reading is an essential skill for learners of English. For most of learners it is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success in learning. With strengthened reading skills, learners of English tend to make greater progress in other areas of language learning. Reading should be an active, fluent process that involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning. Often, however, it is not. The average learner's second language reading ability is usually well below that of the first language. This can impede academic progress in the second language. English language teachers and learners face many challenges in the classroom. Teaching students how to utilize the skills and knowledge they bring from their first language, develop vocabulary skills, improve reading comprehension and rate, and monitor their own improvement are just some of the elements that teachers must consider in preparing for an English language reading class. For the student, learning to read in a second or foreign language is a process that involves learning skills, learning new vocabulary and collective patterns, and cultivating the ability to transfer these skills from the classroom to the real world, where English may be used.

Computers and the internet play an increasingly important role in the lives of L2 readers around the world. Online reading

serves as the source of input for thousands of L2 readers. Leu (2002) points out that “the internet has entered our classrooms faster than books, television, computers, the telephone, or any other technology for information and communication” (p.311). with the increased use of computers comes the increased need to train language learners how to read online. Cairo (2003) stresses that “electronic texts introduce new supports as well as new challenges that can have a great impact on an individual’s ability to comprehend what he or she reads. “More and more L2 classrooms are engaging learners in online learning tasks (Bikowski & Kessler, 2002; Dudeney, 2000; laonnou-Georgiou, 2002; Sutherland-Smith, 2002; Warschauer, 1997, 1999, 2002).

Perceptive second/foreign language (L2) readers are those who are aware of and use appropriate strategies for learning and communicating in an L2. The purpose of strategy use is to improve performance in the use of ones’ L2.

Strategies are the conscious actions that learners take to improve their language learning. Strategies may be observable, such as observing someone take notes during an academic lecture and then comparing the lecture notes with a chapter in a textbook in order to understand and remember information better, or they may be mental, such as thinking about what one already knows on a topic before reading a passage in a textbook. Because strategies

are conscious, there is active involvement of the L2 learner in their selection and use. Strategies are not an isolated action, but rather a process of orchestrating more than one action to accomplish an L2 task. Although we can identify individual strategies, rarely will one strategy be used in isolation. Strategies are related to each other and must be viewed as a process and not as a single action.

The seventh annual international reading association survey of key topics in reading research and practice for 2003 includes ESL reading as a hot topic (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2003). Perhaps of even more importance is that the judges rated this as a topic that should be hotter. Also included on the list of hot research topics for 2003 was technology. There is an increased interest in L2 reading research and how technology influences reading in various parts of the world.

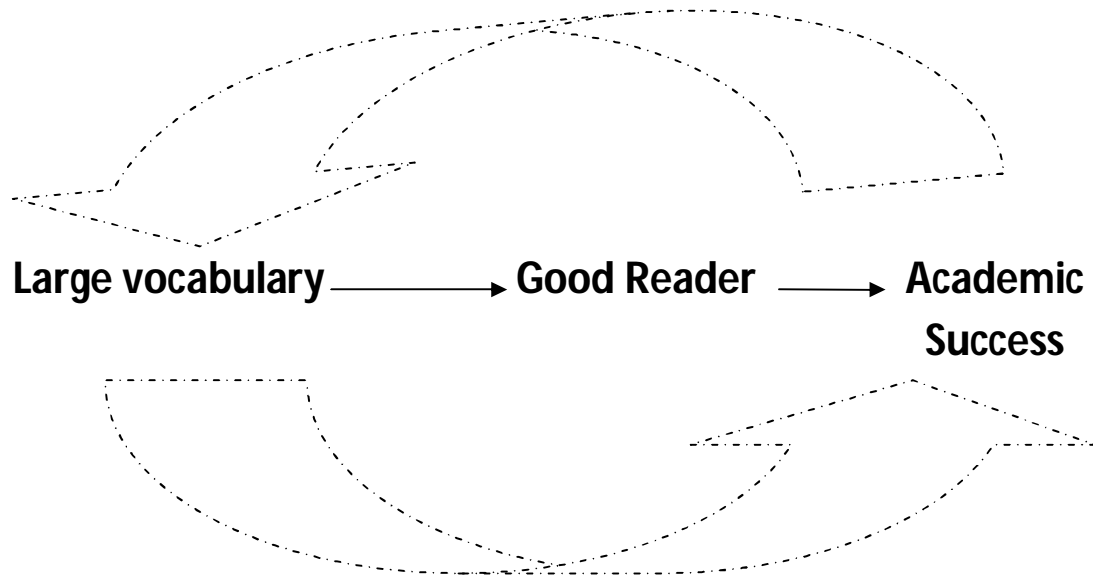
On many of the other pages of advice on this site I have emphasized how important reading is as far as learning English is concerned. However, there is a further, very important reason why ESL students should try to develop their reading skills: Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader.

Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. They know most of the words in the text already, but they can also determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context-failing this, they can use their dictionary effectively to do so.

In summary, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are employed in and they can do it quickly!

Educational researchers have also found a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. In other words, students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. This is not very surprising, since the best way to acquire a large vocabulary is to read extensively, and if you read extensively you are likely to be or become a good reader! So if you want your child to be successful at school encourage him or her to read. Reading non-fiction in English is probably the most important, but English fiction and any reading in the mother tongue-if done extensively-will help your child develop the reading competence that is essential for academic achievement.

**The graphic(1.1) below illustrates the interdependence of vocabulary, reading ability and academic success.**



\* Research findings in applied linguistics and reading research consistently show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages, from the primary school right through to university level: students who read a lot and who understand what they read usually attain good grades.

Through reading and comprehending, humans acquire knowledge and understanding of the world around them. This allows us to cooperate and accomplish tasks that we would not be able to do without instructions and/or examples. We are able to apply knowledge gained from past experiences and progress further than those who have gone before because we can read about, and thereby avoid repeating, mistakes made in the past.

Reading allows humans to gain understanding of different experiences and viewpoints from other cultures and times in history, creating appreciation for the variety of possibilities in life and opening opportunities for new adventures and creations. Reading allows for sharing of data that can further research and support development of technology and/or practices that may preserve or improve life for future generation. On a purely individual level, reading allows each of us to expand our personal horizons of awareness through vicarious experiences and through encountering knowledge and situations we would not otherwise have.

Reading is imperative for each individual and can be used by each individual differently. Each of us must be able to read in order to fill out basic forms, understand road signs, and know which door to use. Reading can also be used to understand history and cultures. By reading we are not left to what others tell us about subjects, but we are given the ability to research and using primary sources develop our own conclusions. Reading also allows us to gain knowledge on any number of subjects that we find interesting. Reading can also be a magical experience that allows us to use our imagination to “see” what authors want us to see. For lovers of fiction writing, reading is the great escape. Whether we enjoy

science fiction or romance, reading gives us the ability to create worlds in our head based on authors writings.

The **shared book** activity is a very popular reading activity in New Zealand pre-schools and primary school. It was developed by a New Zealand. Don Hold away, and is such a normal part of a primary teacher's repertoire that published now print blown-up versions of popular children's books.

The purpose of the shared book activity is to get the learners to see the fun element in reading in the activity , this fun come from the interesting story, the interaction between the teacher and the learners in predicting and commenting on the story, and the reading of favorite stories.

Teachers can make blown-up books. Although a blown-up book takes some time to make, it will be used and re-used and well repays the effort of making it or the cost of buying it. The books also make attractive displays in the classroom. The shared book activity was used in one of the experimental groups in the Elley and Mangubhai (1981) Book Flood experiment

Blown-up books can be bought from the following publishers: Nelson Price Milburn (<http://www.newhouse.co.nz/>), Giltedge Publishing (<http://www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz/>). Titles include Where Do Monsters Live?; Bears, Bears Everywhere, Mr Noisy;



What Do You See?; Pirate Pete; William's Wet Week, The Sunflower Tree.

#### **2.1.4 Reading As a way to success**

As teachers we all hope for classrooms filled with students who are "book-bats". These are the kind of readers who don't think we're crazy when we arrive on Monday morning raving about the great book we read over the week end. They are voracious, self-motivated, addicted, and self-sustaining. While that is our dream and our goal, we often find our classrooms filled with students like Derek, whose experience of reading is the very opposite of Harper Jessup's "book bat" relationship with reading.

When I have to read, I punch a hole. To me books are dumb. I like to read about agriculture and I'd rather read than write. When I read, I don't read, I only pretend to. I would read more if everything I read was only a sentence or two.

I recently saw a poster reading "We put the fun in dysfunctional," and reluctant readers can certainly do that. Students who come to us as reluctant readers may be challenging, but they also can bring an incredible amount of joy into our teaching. Part of the challenge and the joy occur as we try to fit puzzle pieces together for students who have had years of academic failure. Marie Clay calls these readers "tangled readers," and they are indeed tangled if they have had to spend years trying to survive without a reading foundation in an academic system built on literacy. Students who struggle to find success and students who appear to have abandoned the struggle each have a unique set of experiences that has brought them to this point in their lives.

In *Reluctant Readers*, Jobe and Dayton-Sakari characterize readers' stances toward reading with four different descriptive labels: I Can't, I Don't know How, I'd Rather, and I Don't Care. They describe each of these groups, I want to use their categories to talk about the unique qualities each reluctant reader brings and the ways in which we must adapt our teaching to meet the needs of those students. I also want to use these categories as a reminder that not all reluctant readers are struggling readers, and not all struggling readers are reluctant.

#### **2.1.5 "I Can't" Readers:**

In my years in the classroom I encountered hundreds of students I would characterize as "I Can't" readers. In fact, I would probably call them "I Can't Right Now" readers. Jobe and Dayton-Sakari say these readers "come in two versions: those that act out and those that hide out". When it was time for reading in our classroom, these students had a long list of reasons why they couldn't read right then. They were quick to tell me they didn't have any reading problems; they just couldn't read right that minute. When we started our Literacy Workshop classes for the most struggling readers, these students always told me their membership in the class was a mistake. Their reasons for not reading will probably sound familiar to you: Reading gives me a headache. I think I might need glasses; I'm having my eyes checked soon. I need to go to the bathroom. My neck/back hurts. I'm too tired to read. Reading always makes me sleepy.

At the end of our first month of Literacy Workshop, the principal asked if I had developed any great theories about reading instruction. I told him I had. In fact, I said, I could save the district lots of money being spent on testing if my theory could get accepted. After baiting him a bit more, I told him I thought there was a direct correlation between struggling readers

and urinary problems: "Every time I ask these students to read, someone has to go to the bathroom. I think we should get rid of the reading test and just put all the eighth graders in a room together and ask them to read. Those who ask to go to the bathroom probably need an intervention program." We laughed over the idea, but I'm convinced there are behavioral signs that are good indicators of reading reluctance or struggles: inability to choose books for independent reading; frequent requests for bathroom or office breaks; sleeping during reading; winding and rewinding of tapes if using recorded book; and class disruption or digressions at the beginning of reading times.

With "I Can't" readers, it is difficult to tell if they are choosing not to read or if they truly don't know how to read. In order to figure that out, I had to get them reading started and staying with reading. They often need to choose from among three to four book titles I've selected for them based on their stated interests prior to independent reading time rather than from the shelves with hundreds of books. Sometimes they need *shorter works*-*Stone Fox* (Gardner), *Drive-By* (Ewing), *The Wild Kid* (Mazer)-so they can feel the immediate success of completing a book. If a longer novel is chosen, success in finishing short chapters such as those in Sachar's *Holes* often will keep them reading. I used to keep a box of short stories, high-interest news articles, and short nonfiction on a shelf behind my desk just for these students. I would acknowledge their eye/back/sleep difficulties and say, "I've got something here that is short/really interesting/has lots of pictures/large print. Why don't you just try and get through this today, and then you can choose a novel tomorrow when you're feeling better."

### **2.1.6 "I Don't Know How" Readers:**

Many struggling and reluctant readers do not know that reading is supposed to make sense. Older readers may have become dependent on someone's telling them what the text means. They may have learned to pay scant attention to reading because they see no value for it in their lives. Or, in content area classrooms, they may have discovered that textbooks could not be read in the same way as narratives and therefore developed coping habits rather than reading habits. During my last year of teaching I was listening to one of my students read. I had put Robbie on my check-in list because I had noted a significant change in the number of pages he was reading each day. When he started reading Paulsen's *Hatchet*, I noted he was reading only two or three pages a day. As I sat beside Robbie listening to his halting reading of *Hatchet*, I was shocked. Each time he came to a word he didn't know, he substituted a "letter of the alphabet has a character name: T=Tall teeth; A=Miss Achoo, R=Ripping Rubber Bands.) having never heard of "letter people," I could not imagine what Robbie was doing. I thought he was on drugs or something. I asked him to go back and reread the sentence, and he read it the same way. I looked at him and said, "What are you doing? Does this make any sense to you?" He said, "It's not supposed to make sense, Mrs. Allen. It's sounding out." I told him that I didn't know all the intricate parts of sounding out but that I did know reading was supposed to make sense. Robbie was not unique; his view of reading only exemplified the missing or inaccurate pieces many older students bring to us. Even some students who are enrolled in college preparatory classes really do not know that reading is supposed to make sense, or they would not be so quick to tell us, "I read all of chapter three but I didn't get a thing out of it." For many students, the broad problem is their belief that reading is a passive activity.

They don't engage, as fluent readers do, in an active reading process: activating background knowledge, predicting, confirming or rejecting predictions, inferring, questioning, monitoring, clarifying, strategizing, rereading, making connections, synthesizing, analyzing, and criticizing. With so little reading process work on their parts, no wonder they have so much energy left at the end of the school day! Many struggling readers come to us not knowing the importance of questioning. A critical difference between struggling and fluent readers is their ability to question before, during, and after reading a text. Struggling readers often believe that good readers are better at answering questions. Sometimes they are. More critical to reading, however, is their ability to question themselves, the author, and the text during the reading experience. Fluent readers question themselves by putting themselves into the text and asking what they would do in that situation or context. They question the author by wondering why the work was titled that way or why the story ended the way it did. They question the text by asking the purpose of things like bold and italic type, extra white space, charts and graphs. This questioning leads them to higher levels of fluency as they transfer the newly gained insights to further reading.

Struggling readers may also not know how to monitor their reading. Even if they know that reading should make sense, they often "read" several pages or an entire chapter even after they are totally lost or distracted. Reading is usually tedious enough for them that if they actually stopped every time it did not make sense, they would feel they were never making any progress. Another difficulty for many struggling readers is in the area of fix-up-strategies. They often have only one way to try to make sense out of a failed or confused reading and that is rereading the same way they read it the first time. They haven't learned that if you do what you've always done,

you'll get what you have always gotten. In this case, readers reread and are still left confused.

Finally, many "I Don't Know How" readers do not know how to communicate learning or demonstrate personal response, text connections, or new understandings from their reading. In the absence of teacher questions or textbook assignments, these struggling readers have a difficult time showing a personal connection or demonstrating learning after reading. In Caine and Caine's *Making Connections*, the authors highlight a reason for learners' dependence on teacher-or text-constructed ways of demonstrating learning. "An essential problem is that almost all our testing and evaluation is geared toward recognizing surface knowledge" (8). Adolescents have had so much experience with someone else telling them how to demonstrate they learned something in school, they struggle when asked to show learning in the absence of a template. This is one of the reasons "I Don't Know How" readers will often make an attempt when given worksheets, sentence completions, fill in the blanks, or sentence starters but will leave the page blank when asked to respond, summarize, create, analyze, or apply what they have read. The good news is that once students become adept at choosing how they will show they have learned something from their reading, they are shocked they ever needed such support. Andrea, one of the students in my Directed Studies class, said, "For a few years I was in English classes that did everything together-they read the same books, watched the same movies, and everyone even took the same test!". "I Don't Know How" readers need more direct instructional time than other reluctant readers. They often need the support of a tape so they can be successful reading the books of their choice.

### **2.1.7 "I'd Rather" Readers**

Students I would characterize as "I'd Rather" Readers would always rather do something else other than reading. Typically, these students come to us having been fairly successful in school.

On standardized reading tests, they score some-where near grade level. They are, however, reluctant to read for sustained periods of time. Instead, they offer to do art-related projects, writing, computer searches, video analyses, and communication tasks such as interviews. They don't tend to get labeled as struggling readers and in fact they aren't. They are, however, reluctant readers. Our mentoring role with these students differ significantly from the role we take with "I Don't know how" readers. One of the ways I could usually draw these students into sustained reading was with nonfiction, especially non fiction that would lead them into a project. Informational texts such as *Macauley's the New way things work*, *plats Stephen Bietsy's incredible cross sections*, are the type of books these students tend to read and reread. I also found they enjoyed novels and short stories if these involved projects, games, or informational quests such as Cleary's *Dear Mr. Hensbaw*, scieszka's time warp trio books; these were sometimes the most difficult students if they couldn't find the right book. If however, the right book was found, they could become totally absorbed to the point of ignoring all other classroom activities.

### **2.1.8 "I Don't Care" Readers**

"I Don't Care" readers were often the most difficult students in our classroom. They presented themselves with well-shored-up walls that were tough to overcome, especially in whole-class reading activities.

Their body language and words reminded me each day that they were there only because someone was forcing them to come to school. Sometimes they

were there because of court orders, and other times they were students who had suffered so much academic failure that they had lost any energy to a temps success. Rather than admitting: they didn't know or risking failure, they often just stated they didn't care. They said they didn't care about school or grades, about which classes they got or who taught those classes. They refused to take standardized tests in spite of pizza offers, and they refused to be lured with reading contests or prizes. These were not the students who complained that the work was boring but then finally got involved anyway, they sat in class absolutely refusing to take part in any class activity. In fact, it was unusual for me to have more than one or two students at this extreme in any single class. But when teaching five classes I might have five or six of them a day, enough to make question desperately whether there were any way to change these behaviors.

During my least three years of teaching I started conducting interviews with each of my students. It was while I was interviewing students I would have characterized as "I don't Care" readers that I made an interesting discovery. My assumption with these students had usually been that they were struggling readers who had given up on school. (As I interviewed them, however, I found that many of them were actually avid readers). They just weren't school readers. In fact a large number of them were science fiction/fantasy readers. When I asked Derek why he didn't at least read during independent. Reading when he could choose his own books, he said "I'm not going to bring my book to school like some stupid school kid and tell you or anyone else how many pages I've read. How would you like to do that? Besides, I'm not reading for you or for the school. I'm reading for me. The stuff we read in school is a waste of time.



So, how do we work with "I Don't Care" readers? I don't know and I don't think anyone else either. I do know that no one plan will work for all the students in this extreme category. I can relate what worked with Derek and what might work with other students with Derek and what might work with other students with similar characteristics, but it didn't work with all such students. Derek and I met every Friday afternoon for fifteen minutes and planned his "curriculum" for the following week. His curriculum included reading of his choice that would exceed the amount of reading that I would have assigned my other students. He also had to show me he was learning something from the reading, and he had to complete a piece of writing each week. Since all students were being asked to learn to use computers at the time, Derek had to demonstrate that he was using the computer. Finally, Derek had to write a reflection each week related to what he was learning and where he thought he should go next for new challenges.

Initially, I worried because I hadn't asked him to keep any kind of vocabulary list. One day, another student asked him why he wasn't doing what everyone else was doing. Derek plied, "I've had a dispensation from the pipette". No need for a vocabulary list for him. The emphasis here is on shared responsibility for deciding what gets learned and how the learning takes place. That negotiation can become a lesson in itself-an opportunity to make arguments, solve problems, anticipate consequences, and take other people's needs into account-as well as a powerful contribution to motivation". I'm not sure what I taught Derek-perhaps that some adults are willing to negotiate-but I know that he taught me a great deal about the importance of choice with all student

### **2.1.9 Developing Reading Activities**

Developing reading activities involves more than identifying a text that is “at the right level,” writing a set of comprehension questions for students to answer after reading, handing out the assignment and sending students away to do it. A fully – developed reading activity supports students as readers through rereading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

As you design reading tasks, keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in a text is an unrealistic expectation even for native speakers.

Reading activities that are meant to increase communicative competence should be success oriented and build up students’ confidence in their reading ability.

### **2.1.10 Construct the reading activity around a purpose that has significance for the students:**

Make sure students understand what the purpose for reading is: to get the main idea, obtain specific information, understand most or all of the message, enjoy a story, or decide whether or not to read more.

Recognizing the purpose for reading will help students select appropriate reading strategies.

### **2.1.11 Define the activity's instructional goal and the appropriate type of response:**

In addition to the main purpose for reading, an activity can also have one or more instructional purposes, such as practicing or reviewing specific grammatical constructions, introducing new vocabulary, or familiarizing students with the typical structure of a certain type of text.

### **2.1.12 Check the level of difficulty of the text:**

The factors listed below can help you judge the relative ease or difficulty of a reading text for a particular purpose and a particular group of students.

- How is the information organized? Does the story line, narrative, or instruction conform to familiar expectations? Texts in which the events are presented in natural chronological order, which have an informative title, and which present the information following an obvious organization (main ideas first, details and examples second) are easier to follow.
- How familiar are the students with the topic? Remember that misapplication of background knowledge due to cultural differences can create major comprehension difficulties.
- Does the text contain redundancy? At the lower levels of proficiency, listeners may find short, simple messages easier

to process, but students with higher proficiency benefit from the natural redundancy of authentic language.

- Does the text offer visual support to aid in reading comprehension? Visual aids such as photographs, maps, and diagrams help students preview the content of the text, guess the meanings of unknown words, and check comprehension while reading.

Remember that the level of difficulty of a text is not the same as the level of difficulty of a reading task.

Students who lack the vocabulary to identify all of the items on a menu can still determine whether the restaurant serves steak and whether they can afford to order one.

### **2.1.13 Use pre-reading activities to prepare students for reading:**

The activities you use during pre-reading may serve as preparation in several ways. During pre-reading you may:

- Assess students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text.
- Give students the background knowledge necessary for comprehension of the text, or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess.
- Clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage.

- Make students aware of the type of text they will be reading and the purpose(s) for reading.
- Provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for class discussion activities.

#### **2.1.14 Sample Post Reading activities:**

- Using the title, subtitles, and divisions within the text to predict content and organization or sequence of information.
- Looking at pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs and their captions.
- Talking about the author's background, writing style, and usual topics.
- Skimming to find the theme or main idea and eliciting related prior knowledge.
- Reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures.
- Reading over the comprehension questions to focus attention on finding that information while reading.
- Constructing semantic webs (a graphic arrangement of concepts or words showing how they are related).
- Doing guided practice with guessing meaning from context or checking comprehension while reading.

Pre-reading activities are most important at lower levels of language proficiency and at earlier stages of reading instruction. As students become more proficient at using reading strategies,

you will be able to reduce the amount of guided pre-reading and allow students to do these activities themselves.

### **2.1.15 Match while – reading activities to the purpose for reading:**

In while-reading activities, students check their comprehension as they read. The purpose for reading determines the appropriate type and level of comprehension.

- When reading for specific information, students need to ask themselves, have I obtained the information I was looking for?
- When reading for pleasure, students need to ask themselves, do I understand the story line/sequence of ideas well enough to enjoy reading this?
- When reading for thorough understanding (intensive reading), students need to ask themselves, do I understand each main idea and how the author supports it? Does what I'm reading agree with my predictions, and, if not, how does it differ? To check comprehension in this situation, students may.
- Stop at the end of each section to review and check their predictions, restate the main idea and summarize the section.
- Use the comprehension questions as guides to the text, stopping to answer them as they read.

## **2. Part Two:INDEPENDENT READING**

### **2.1 What is independent reading? Why is it important**

#### **2.2 Introduction**

Naturally ,when reading a text we feel tedious,bored,and even sleepy,this because we do not communicate and understand what is the text is about,due to the difficulties of vocabulary,Grammatical complexes,phonology,phonics...etc,that emerge all through the text.to get ride of this tediousness,boredom,and sleepiness,we have to choose our topic and read it with interest,pleasure,willingness and fun,and this is the function of independent reading.

Independent reading is the reading students choose to do on their own. It reflects the reader's personal choice of the material to be read as well as the time and place to read it. Independent reading is done for information or for pleasure. No one assigns it, no one requires a report, no one checks on comprehension. Independent reading is also called voluntary reading (Krashen 1993, Short 1995, Morrow 1991). Leisure reading (Greaney 1980), spare time reading (Searls 1985) recreational reading (Manzo and Manzo 1995), and reading outside of school (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding 1988).

Voluntary reading involves personal choice, reading widely from a variety of sources, and choosing what one reads. Alliterates, people who have the ability to read but choose not to, miss just as

much as those who cannot read at all. Individuals read to live life to its fullest, to earn a living, to understand what is going on in the world, and to benefit from the accumulated knowledge of civilization. Even the benefits of democracy and the capacity to govern ourselves successfully depend on reading. Thomas Jefferson believed that informed citizens are the best safeguard against tyranny. He believed that every citizen must know how to read, that it is the public's responsibility to support the teaching of reading, and that children should be taught to read during the earliest years of schooling. In a letter to Colonel Edward Carrington, Jefferson (1787) wrote: "The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right, and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter".

Research indicates, however, that many students do not choose to read often or in great quantities. In recent years scholars from a variety of disciplines have studied the amount of time students choose to read and the effect of literacy on cognitive functions. In a series of studies involving hundreds of students, Morrow and Weinstein (1986) found that very few preschool and primary grade children chose to look at books during free-choice time at school free time engaged in reading, and 23 percent of



them chose not to read at all. Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson (1988) found that students spend less than 2 percent of their free time reading. Furthermore, as students get older, the amount of reading they do decreases.

The premise that literacy is associated with school achievement, participation in a democracy, and self-fulfillment is widely held. Why then don't students read more? Some suggest that the way reading is taught is not conducive producing students who love to read. In a study for UNESCO, Irving (1980) found that most respondents made no association whatsoever between reading and pleasure.

Many teachers of language arts, recognizing the value of independent reading, immerse students in real literature from their earliest encounters with print and establish sustained silent reading time in their classrooms. According to Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson (1988), students who begin reading a book in school are more likely to continue to read outside of school than students who do not begin a book in school. However, research also suggests that some teachers are not knowledgeable about children's literature, they are not able to introduce students to the wealth of books available, and they may not recognize the effects of their teaching methods on students' attitude toward reading (Short and Pierce 1990).

The common sense notion that students who do a substantial amount of voluntary reading demonstrate a positive attitude toward reading is upheld in both qualitative and quantitative research (Long and Henderson 1973; Greaney 1980; Hepler and Hickman 1982; Greaney and Hegarty 1987; Reutzel and Hollingsworth 1991; Shapiro and White 1991; Mathewson 1994; Barbieri 1995; Short 1995). Students' reading achievement has been shown to correlate with success in school and the amount of independent reading they do (Greaney 1980; Anderson, Fielding and Wilson 1988). This affirms the predictability of a success cycle: we become more proficient at what we practice (Cullinan 1992).

### **2.3 Essential Components of Independent Reading:**

An important outcome of this study has been an identification of factors considered to be essential to the practice of highly effective teachers' utilization of independent reading. Some reading scholars have participated in work attempting to identify the elements of independent reading that allow it to be most effective (Kamil, 2008; Reutzel et al., 2010). Findings regarding the fundamental components of independent reading, grounded in the perspectives and practices of highly effective teachers, encourage a focused conceptualization of independent reading as it is understood and used by skilled practitioners. Better awareness of these essential components may provide a clearer understanding of

independent reading and prompt more effective utilization of independent reading with elementary students.

### **2.3.1 Student Empowerment and Teacher Support:**

The finding that teachers enact independent reading opportunities with a shared eye toward empowering students' choices while monitoring their decision-making prompts an understanding of independent reading that belies its independent label. These teachers are committed to enabling students to make choices within independent reading events. They base this decision on their beliefs in the motivational impact that making choices provides (Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998; Zahorik, 1996; Flowerday & Schraw, 2000). Studies confirm that providing elementary students with opportunities to make choices on various aspects of reading activities increases their motivation to participate (McLloyd, 1979; Reynolds & Symons, 2001).

However, these teachers are also convinced that their oversight is required to allow independent reading to be utilized to its fullest potential for student reading growth. Other scholars also identify the importance of teacher guidance of student independent reading behaviors (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008). Hairrell, Edmonds, Vaughn, and Simmons (2010) are convinced that teacher support during independent reading is of special importance for struggling

readers, who may lack the structures to fully engage in independent reading events.

**2.3.2 Book choice.** One element of independent reading that teachers view as an occasion for students to exercise guided choices is in book selection. The tendency of the teacher participants in this study to provide their students with many opportunities to read books of students' own choosing is consistent with literacy scholarship that demonstrates the motivational advantages of this approach. As Turner found (1995), students who choose their reading materials and use them during reading times are more motivated to engage in reading. Students are also more likely to engage in reading even when not required to do so when allowed to read books of personal interest to them (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Morrow, 1992). The meta-analysis of Guthrie and Humenick (2004) demonstrates a powerful impact of book choice on student motivation and comprehension.

Permitting students self-selection of books does not mean, however, that teachers don't closely monitor book choices to ensure that students are reading books of appropriate difficulty levels. Reutzel et al. (2010) point out that "unguided choice can become a negative force" (P. 133) when students spend much of their time with reading materials that are too easy or too hard.

Students who spend most of their reading practice in books that are too easy (Baker & Wigfield, 1999) or books that are too difficult (Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster, 1985) fail to make the reading gains possible when reading books that are appropriately challenging. Studies demonstrate the importance of students practicing with texts that they can read with high levels of fluency, accuracy, and comprehension (i.e. Gambrell, Wilson, & Gant, 1981; Juel, 1994; O'Connor et al, 2002; Kuhn et al, 2006).

A landmark study by Betts (1946) established three levels of text difficulty that are still used today: independent, instructional, and frustration. These levels provide criteria for selecting appropriate student reading materials. Texts at an independent reading level are those considered most appropriate for students receiving little or no assistance, a circumstance most likely to be found in independent reading episodes. It is of most significance during independent reading events, when students have less direct oversight by teachers, that students practice with texts that they can read accurately without teacher support (Stahl & Heubach, 2006). Teachers in this study agree that their students need to be reading books that are at their independent reading levels, which they typically label just-right books.

Understanding the joint significance of enabling students' book self-selection and ensuring reading practice in appropriately

leveled materials has implications for literacy practitioners who utilize independent reading as a support for their students' reading growth. In the example set by these teachers, students receive many opportunities to select books in which they have interest and that will ensure their engagement. This choice of books is coupled with providing books at a wide range of reading levels and supporting students in selecting books that hold promise for advancing their reading growth.

**2.3.3 Classroom libraries.** To address the joint needs of their students to read books of interest that are also at appropriate difficulty levels, these teachers create extensive classroom libraries.

Within existing research, many scholars demonstrate the positive effects of sufficient access to books on student literacy (Chambliss & McKillop, 2000; Morrow, 1991; Neuman & Celano, 2001). In order to accommodate the multiple reading levels and varied interests of elementary readers, even within a single classroom, teachers need to accumulate and display hundreds of books in their own classrooms. The teachers in this study refuse to rely solely on resources that might be available in school or neighborhood libraries or in students' homes. Their commitment to adequate reading materials necessitates the creation of extensive libraries in their own classrooms to ensure that students of all

abilities will be able to find books of interest among those available.

**2.3.4 Guided choice.** For these teachers, enabling students to make book choices that benefit their students' reading needs goes beyond the mere provision of reading materials. They provide direct instruction on topics of book selection and then monitor students' choices on a regular basis. As other scholars note, students who lack guidance in book selection often choose books that are too easy or too hard (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Stahl, 2004). Difficulty choosing appropriately leveled materials is especially prevalent among struggling readers (Donovan, Smolkin, & Lomax, 2000; Fresch, 1995). Teacher guidance of book choices allows independent reading to prompt reading growth in numerous other ways such as exposing them to unfamiliar genres or previously undiscovered topics, in addition to helping them understand the importance of attending to book levels (Reutzel et al., 2008; Trudel, 2007). Consistent with literacy research, the teachers in this study consider it vital to their independent reading programs to teach students how to make appropriate book selections based on interests and reading levels and to guide students' subsequent reading choices.

**2.3.5 Behavior management.** Encouraging students' self-management around reading events is a goal of the teachers'

independent reading programs. However, they acknowledge that providing students with unsupervised reading time may not create the learning opportunities they envision for independent reading events. A number of researchers have noted the need for teachers to monitor students' independent reading behavior as students develop abilities to engage with reading in ways that prompt reading growth (Chua, 2008; Parr & Maguiness, 2005).

Other studies have exposed the limited time some students spend actually engaged in reading activities during independent reading events (Stahl, Suttles, & Pagnucco, 1996; Garan & De Voogd, 2008; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006).

Even with the seemingly tight control most of the teachers in this study maintained on student behavior, students in all classrooms were occasionally observed to be off-task during independent reading times. Time spent in engaged reading has been implicated in positively affecting reading achievement (Fisher & Berliner, 1985; Keisling, 1978; Taylor et al., 1990).

Thus, the establishment of procedures that aid in ensuring that students spend the majority of their independent reading time actively engaged with reading tasks is of utmost importance to its potential for student reading growth.

**2.3.6 Practical implication: Guided independent reading.** Based on an integration of findings regarding the perspectives and



practices of the teacher participants in this study with those from existing scholarship, independent reading is considered most beneficial to student reading growth when conducted under the guidance of expert teachers. though the label independent has often been applied to the practice of providing students with time with text without direct teacher oversight, true student autonomy appears to apply only in limited circumstances and in limited degrees. Independent reading is a time for students to participate in reading choices and to exert control over their reading processes. However, agreement seems to exist that the independent component of independent reading is actually a developmental process that occurs most beneficially under the guidance of expert adults who can monitor, support, and encourage students as they learn how to self-manage their reading actions and behaviors. It has been the lack of guidance and oversight inherent in some independent reading practices that have caused scholars to question its effectiveness as a literacy practice (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Reutzel, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Stahl, 2004). Therefore, enacting independent reading fully embedded with teacher support might allow teachers to use independent reading with greater confidence in its ability to prompt student reading progress.

### **2.3.7 Focus on Student Growth:**

Contrary to a view of independent reading as a recreational activity for students' enjoyment, independent reading as it is conducted by the teachers in this study is a learning endeavor with many elements enacted specifically for the instructional possibilities they hold.

The way it is understood and used by these teachers is far removed from the model of independent reading known as sustained silent reading (SSR) that was introduced by Hunt at the International Reading Association Annual Convention in 1966. Manning, Lewis, and Lewis (2010) explain that the primary goal of SSR was the development of a positive attitude toward reading; measures of accountability and assessment were carefully avoided so that students could focus on the enjoyment of the reading experience. While the teacher participants hold student motivation for reading in high regard, they move far beyond mere enjoyment of reading in their goals for student participation. They cite both external and internal factors for ensuring that the time students spend reading in the classrooms is used for purposes of increasing students' reading abilities, and they articulate beliefs and exhibit efforts aimed at meeting that objective.

**2.3.8 Student accountability.** In order to view independent reading events as opportunities for student growth, these teachers

provide intentional instruction, assign related tasks, and hold students accountable for demonstrating their learning. Reutzel et al. (2010) point out that failing to hold students accountable for their reading may result in students who don't actively engage in independent reading events. Stahl (2004) agrees, pointing out the importance of ongoing teacher monitoring of student activity and progress while engaged in independent reading. A number of the accountability options exercised by these teachers mimic those advocated by others, including reading logs, story summaries, reader responses, and anecdotal records (Garan & De Voogd, 2008; Reutzel et al. 2008; Trudel, 2007). The advantages for student reading growth appear worthy of the daily accountability efforts that teachers carry out to ensure students' engagement with their reading.

### **2.3.9 Affective Factors**

There are affective considerations that influence these teachers' use of independent reading in their classrooms. Few of the teachers openly discussed their own feelings about reading. More frequently they talked about a desire to open up the world of reading to their students because of their belief its importance and their conviction that independent reading is a way to achieve that goal.

## **2.4 Understanding Independent Reading:**

Lacking a definition of independent reading that is consistent and accepted across the literacy field, I paid special attention to the ways the teacher participants spoke about and enacted independent reading events for their students. When I asked them what the term independent reading means to them and what it looks like in their classrooms, their responses were often similar, sharing some common ideas regarding students interacting with text on their own. Tammy stated that “it means kids reading and making meaning from what they’re reading, without other people solving their problems for them” (interview, November2,2010). Naomi answered that an independent reader is someone who is able to go and they’ll be able to choose a just right book on their own and be able to sit there and read it, and then when I go to them and ask them questions, or “tell me about what you’ve read,” they can do it. (interview, November10,2010).

Jennifer and Sara were more specific, mentioning the use of the Accelerated Reader program as an integral part of their independent reading. Amanda referred to a segment of the Daily 5 program, saying that in her room it was “the whole Read to Self part, independent reading. Away from the basal. A book that’s a good fit book for that student. That’s independent reading to me” (interview, October25,2010).

The teachers went on to describe some components that demonstrated their shared beliefs about what independent reading contains in elementary classrooms. These included opportunities for students to be given choices in a variety of areas, to work at their own levels, and to interact with text without depending on adults to solve reading problems. However, the teachers were united in their belief about the necessity of adult support for their students' efforts at every stage of the independent reading experience. All agreed that while independent reading was an opportunity for young readers to test their reading wings, they felt responsible for providing the ongoing assistance necessary to ensure their students' independent reading success. These dual objectives were reflected in the ways teachers conducted independent reading activities with an eye toward enabling students' independence under the careful guidance of expert adults.

## **2.5 Factors Influencing Teachers' Use of Independent Reading:**

The eight highly effective teacher participants in this study hold knowledge and views regarding independent reading that are exhibited in their classroom practices. In interviews and informed conversations they discuss a variety of factors that influence the ways that they implement independent reading events with their students. Some of these factors include the knowledge and beliefs

they have acquired, influences from outside as well as inside the classroom, and affective components.

**2.5.1 Classroom library.** Every teacher participant in this study agrees that an ample classroom library is essential to the success of their students' independent reading, and this is exemplified in the abundant libraries found in each of their classrooms. The eight teachers average over 1400 books in each of their rooms, with a low of about 500 and a high of over 3000. The lower grade levels classroom libraries, with a preponderance of picture books have, not surprisingly, more books than the upper grade level libraries with their emphasis on chapter books. Penni points out some important aspects of student having direct access to books in the classroom:

You have to have a classroom library because they need to be able to choose, they need to be able to change out their books frequently. There's just something about them shopping for their books in the classroom, it's just different than the [school] library, these belong to all of us, these are our books. These are for all of us to use and share and love and recommend to each other and talk about and get excited about. (interview, February 8, 2011).

Jennifer states that having enough books for students to practice reading has always been a challenge. It was such a priority

for her, however, that at the beginning of her teaching career she used her own funds to create a classroom library:

I think I began in the very beginning, I realized that practice reading was important, and the more that they read the more they learned, and this was a long time ago, before we had programs like Accelerated Reader, and I would just buy tons and tons of those easy readers and, that was back in the days of Troll. And I would just...Troll, and 700 dollars a month of salary. So you would get whatever you could and I just collected and collected and collected bonus points, and every bonus point I got would go for these little books. And I tried to build a library so kids could practice read. (interview, November3,2010).

She adds that she and her teaching partners have now combined their personal collections to create greater choices for their students, and she talks excitedly about the options this opens up for student reading. This reflects the views of the other teachers, all of whom use their own resources in purchasing books to supplement district provisions.

Tammy explains that their school benefitted from a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided many books that were gathered in a school book room that she relies on to stock the library in her classroom. She states that as a result of the expansion of her school's reading materials "we're getting

some really good resources; the book shopping and the book choice has gone so much more smoothly because kids really have so much deeper choice, number of choices to make” (interview, November 2, 2010). She adds that she relies on online resources to aid in levelling books to provide guidance for students’ reading choices.

Specific reading programs are named by a number of the teachers in this study as a resource in their independent reading programs. While all of the eight teacher participants use a basal reading series to provide at least some of their instruction, each of them stated their basal series does not include explicit independent reading components. Some of them mentioned using components of the basal such as stories from the student anthologies to support independent reading. However, a number of them rely on other programs, including Accelerated Reader, Reading Counts, and The Daily 5 to support their students’ independent reading.

### **2.5.2 Conducting Independent Reading:**

Each teacher participant in this study utilized independent reading somewhat differently than the others. However, there were numerous commonalities that became apparent after observing their classroom practices and listening to teacher and student perspectives, including ways that the teachers maintained a



focus on student growth and ways that they utilized activities in pursuit of literacy learning.

### **2.5.3 Focus on student's growth:**

Most of the teachers indicate that they would love to provide opportunities for their students to read for the mere pleasure of the experience. All of the teachers emphasize that one of their primary goals for independent reading is prompting their students' love for reading.

*Amanda's explanation echoes that of the other teachers on this issue:*

I think with the independent reading, having children learn to love to read. Really I hope that we in still that they want to be reading, that they know how to find a good book that's one that they're going to love to read, that they're going to want to read. I think that's my main goal, is to really create students who are lifetime readers and learners. (interview, February9,2011).

Several of the teachers believe that for many of their students, the independent reading experiences itself motivates their students toward that love of reading that the teachers desire for them. I overheard numerous comments from students expressing a love of reading or books in my classroom visits, often accompanying requests to their teachers for extending independent reading time.

In spite of their belief in independent reading to prompt reading interest, however, all of the teachers agree that the independent reading in which their students actually participate is a purposeful event structured to promote student literacy learning. They indicate multiple goals toward which their students are expected to strive during reading times, but they hold in common the idea that the focus of independent reading time in their classrooms goes beyond mere enjoyment to advancing student reading growth. In fact, Tammy explains that it would be nice if you could not evaluate anything and you could only have kids reading for pleasure but I think they're only going to derive pleasure from it if they're successful and if they see themselves as readers. (interview, February 11, 2011). Amanda explains that when she was in school she participated in reading done merely for pleasure and she didn't get as much out of the experience as she could have:

I can remember independent reading in school; we'd drop everything and read and there was no accountability. I didn't know what I should be doing while I was reading. I wasn't asking questions, so I didn't have that structure as a student. So it's really teaching children how to read; the reading piece has become so important. It's just, it's huge. (interview, November 16, 2010). Elizabeth agrees, stating that the message she

would send to other teachers about independent reading is the importance of a purpose for every reading event:

I would make sure there's a point, make sure there's some kind of outcome to it. I think our time is too valuable just to have that 25 to 30 minutes without some kind of result that you're looking for. Whether or not they're practicing what they've been doing throughout the day or...I think there needs to be some connection. So I would say, make sure that there's something that you're asking them to look for. I think there should be some kind of a point to it. Time is just too valuable. (interview, February 15, 2011).

While keeping the purpose of reading events uppermost in their own minds, the teachers also emphasize that they frequently communicate the purpose of reading events to their students as well. These purposes often include practicing reading skills and strategies including decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. These purposes require teachers to carefully structure independent reading times to meet the goals they have for their students. As Tammy explained, I think it's just all the emphasis anymore on intentionality, on being intentional. That's always at the forefront, that things aren't just lucky. That we choreograph and orchestrate to have an end result, and the end result would be better readers, so we have to be very thoughtful about what we ask

kids to do and how they do it. and be very intentional about how we teach it. (interview, November2,2010).

This intentionality is reflected in the efforts the teachers make to hold students accountable for their reading.

## **2.6 The need for independent reading:**

Children and young adults learn to read and write by having meaningful, authentic reading and writing experiences and by getting support from more experienced individuals. In order for students to become expert readers and writers, they must have time to practice and apply what they are learning-reading and writing. Therefore, it is essential that the literacy-centered classroom provide time for students to read independently in self-selected books and to engage in self-initiated writing.

## **2.7 The effects of independent reading on reading achievement:**

Research clearly shows that the reading of meaningful, connected text results in improved reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Ingham, 1981; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990).

In one of the most extensive studies of independent reading yet conducted, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) investigated a broad array of activities and their relationship to reading

achievement and growth in reading. They found that the amount of time students spent in independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and also the best predictor of the amount of gain in reading achievement made by students between second and fifth grade.

## **2.8 The following are of the Benefits of independent Reading:**

### **2.8.1 Builds Fluency:**

Independent reading builds fluency. There is substantial evidence that unless students can accurately and effortlessly deal with the word-identification demands of reading, difficulties will result in comprehension and overall reading achievement (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). There is also evidence that unless children read substantial amounts of print, their reading will remain laborious and limited in effectiveness (Allington, 1984; Stanovich, 1991). Finally, evidence exists which shows that when students do read substantial amounts of text, their reading performance improves (Bridge, Wingrad, & Haley, 1983; Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985).

### **2.8.2 Increasing Vocabulary:**

Independent reading leads to increased vocabulary development. One of the best-established relationships in the field of reading is the very significant relationship between vocabulary development and achievement in reading (Baumann & Kameenui,

1991; Nagy, 1988). There is also evidence that shows that independent reading is probably the major source of vocabulary acquisition beyond the beginning stages of learning to read (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). This same research shows that while the probability of acquiring the meaning of any specific word simply through reading it in the context in which it appears in independent reading materials is not high, students who read widely can learn the meanings of thousands of new words each year.

### **2.8.3 Builds Background:**

Independent reading builds background knowledge, or schema. Another extremely well-established research finding is that students' reading ability is dramatically influenced by the amount of interrelated information (schema) they have about the topic about which they are reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Ausubel & Robinson, 1969; Bartlett, 1932). By reading widely, students are exposed to diverse topics and information which they can then use in future reading.

### **2.9 Out-of-School Independent Reading:**

Several studies point to the importance of out-of-school reading (Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980). The Commission on Reading, based on its review of these studies, concluded: "Research also shows that the amount of reading done out of

school is consistently related to gains in reading achievement” (Anderson et al., 1985, p.7). That same review suggested that there was extremely wide variability in the amount of independent reading that students did at home.

However, it was determined that most students spent very little time reading at home. About half of the students read for only four minutes or less per day. Clearly there is substantial reason to try to increase the amount of reading that students do outside of school.

Since availability of books is associated with the amount of independent reading students do (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986) and since the availability of a personal library is associated with increased achievement (Crowell & Klein, 1981), parents should be encouraged to take their children to libraries and to purchase books for them if they can afford to do so. Efforts should be made to find ways to send books to the homes of all students, and especially to the homes of students whose families cannot afford to purchase them.

### **2.10 In – School Independent Reading:**

The studies cited above establish the importance of out-of-school reading. A study by Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) suggested that the amount of time students are engaged in silent reading in school may be even more important. The importance of

in-school independent reading is also supported by major reviews such as Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkerson, 1985, and Adams, 1990. Anderson et al. concluded: “Research suggests that the amount of independent, silent reading that children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement” (p.76). However, these researchers go on to note that most students spend very little school time engaged in silent reading – an average of only about seven minutes a day in the primary grades and about fifteen minutes in the intermediate grades. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the amount of time students read independently in school needs to be significantly increased.

### **2.11 Time should be allocated for independent reading**

The research reviewed above suggests that time for independent reading is not a “frill” but an essential ingredient in an effective reading program. Scheduling time for independent reading should be a high priority.

Research also suggests that some classroom teachers may be spending considerable amounts of time on activities that do not promote growth in reading. Durkin (1978-1979) found that teachers spent large amounts of time asking questions that had little or no instructional value; that is, questions that tested but did not promote reading comprehension. The amount of time devoted to such questions could productively be reduced.



Anderson et al. (1985) indicated that students spent up to 70% of the time allotted to reading instruction doing “seat work,” which usually involved completing workbook or worksheet exercises – activities that the researchers found were unrelated to growth in reading.

Ford (1991) concludes that many teachers overuse worksheets, which are of questionable value as a way of occupying student time. He suggests that, based on research, independent reading and writing that lead to improved reading achievement could productively replace worksheet activities.

### **2.12 Independent reading activities:**

Based on the practices and perspectives of the eight teachers in this study, independent reading is far more than just students reading books. In these classrooms, independent reading is conducted in a number of different forms and occurs individually and socially. The teachers in this study provide instructional support around independent reading directly and through the use of reading-related tasks; they consider all of these varied elements to be essential in promoting students’ reading growth in the context of independent reading events.

**2.13 Forms of independent reading.** All of the teachers in this study schedule a time during the school day that is designated as independent reading time, though it carries a variety of labels in

the different classrooms and consists of each individual teacher's unique collection of activities. Independent reading time is sometimes an event unto itself, sometimes occurs as one of a number of instructional activities, or is sometimes a transitional episode set between other parts of the schedule. Regardless of the form it takes, all of the teachers agree that, it is an essential part of every school day.

**2.14 Independent reading as the focus.** In some classrooms this time is devoted strictly to independent reading pursuits and all students are expected to participate. During classroom observations with more than half of the teachers, I witnessed periods of time devoted to whole-class independent reading, when teachers directed all students to read their student-chosen materials. The focus remains on reading text, though in most of the classrooms students are expected to combine reading with some activity directly related to the independent reading material, such as taking accelerated reader (AR) quizzes related to the text, marking their thinking with sticky notes, or completing reading logs. The teachers' usual responsibilities consisted of working with individual students around their reading and in providing behavioural support. Sara calls this period of time DIRT (Daily Independent Reading Time) and it usually occurs in her classroom for 15 to 20 minutes right after lunch recess. Three students each

day are permitted to read “any book, anywhere,” (field notes, November 9, 2010) in which they select books without regard for reading level and choose a spot anywhere in the room to read. The others get their just-right books from the bags in their desks and read at their seats. On the three occasions that I observed this activity in Sara’s classroom, the atmosphere varied from calm and quiet to more hectic. Few students remained in their places the entire time; there was a lot of movement as a result of some students going to computers at the back of the room to take AR quizzes and some students selecting books. There was rarely a time when the room was quiet as students asked Sara for permission to take an AR quiz, reported back to her after it was completed, discussed their books with one another, or whisper-read their books. Sara sometimes conducted individual conferences with students about their books and more often provided help with the AR quizzes and monitored student behaviour. The movement and noise occasionally appeared to distract students from their reading as they often looked up as students passed them or as Sara called to other students about behaviour or other issues. A few students stayed focused on reading the entire time while others were focused periodically.

### **2.15 Teaching Independent Reading:**

Based on the observations that I conducted, the amount of direct instruction related to independent reading that occurs in these classrooms varies. Several of the teachers mentioned that they often conduct mini lessons related to independent reading strategies prior to the independent reading itself, through formal mini lessons were infrequent during my observations. Elizabeth explains that the direct instruction she conducts before independent reading is planned to better enable students to carry on with their reading during times when they are expected to be independent:

I would say that most of the lessons are designed so that they hopefully apply those strategies when they go back and do it. So for example when we read expository, we've had lessons on that you're supposed to read the title, you read the heading, you read the subheading, you read the pictures, you read the title, you read the heading, you read the subheading, you read the pictures, you read captions, you read the first sentence...I've taught them how to skim. So hopefully my instruction allows them to be better readers when they are doing the independent reading. (interview, February15,2011).

Before independent reading on one occasion, I witnessed Penni conduct a mini lesson about zooming in on details when reading nonfiction, which she told them they would use while reading

nonfiction during their independent reading time. I observed Amanda teaching a new comprehension strategy of asking questions while you read and then discussing how the students could apply that in their subsequent reading time.

More common than pre-independent reading instruction in these classrooms were unscripted comments made by teachers regarding strategies students could use or lessons at other times of the day that included information that could be applied to independent reading. For example, during a read-aloud Naomi stopped at the name Emilio and asked her students, “What if I was reading by myself? What would I do?” (field notes, October 6, 2010). Jennifer taught a lesson on predicting and said to her students, “You were thinking about what would happen next.

That is predicting. Good readers, think about what is going to happen next” (field notes, October 11, 2010).

Half of the teachers conduct regular one-on-one student conferences during independent reading time. In the conferences the teachers keep the focus on the book the child is reading but use the time to provide instruction on skills or strategies that will extend the learning. For Amanda and Tammy these conferences are a major component of their reading instruction and occur almost daily. Amanda explains that in her student conferences, it’s that checking back and conferencing independently with students,

having them pick a spot and read to me and be talking about strategies, so it really comes back to that. And that also gives them tools, “Okay, what do I do next? What can I be working on?” So that is a continual process. (interview, February9,2011).

During one independent reading session in Amanda’s classroom I observe her as she calls students back individually to discuss the books they are reading. To one student she says, “Let’s talk about what you’re reading right now” (field notes, January11,2011). The girl tells a little about the story and Amanda asks about what happened at the beginning. Amanda asks her to predict what will happen. Amanda takes notes throughout the session. She asks the student to read aloud. When she can’t pronounce a word, Amanda says “What should we do?” The girl suggests looking in a dictionary; she finds the definition and they discuss it. Amanda reminds the student about adding words to her personal dictionary and other ideas in her reading journal.

Throughout the interaction the focus is on the book the student is reading, with Amanda providing support that extends the learning to include instruction about word identification and comprehension strategies that she can use in future reading experiences.

Another teaching opportunity that a few of the teachers utilize is to follow the independent reading exercise with a group discussion about their books, often called a share circle. There is usually a

specific focus for the conversation, such as a comprehension strategy that students were instructed to attend to as they read. One such episode in Penni's room occurred following an independent reading event in which students were instructed to mark questions they had as they read their books. In response to students' discussion, some of Penni's comments were:

It's okay if you don't have a question this round. Who thinks they have a really good question that's helping them understand their story? Who do you think they did that?" you probably have a connection to that. What do you think? (field notes, November 8, 2010).

She allowed students to talk about the books in a focused way that extended their understanding about the comprehension strategy under discussion.

**2.15.1 Assessment.** Though the teachers appear to perform ongoing monitoring of their students' reading and adjust their instruction accordingly, I observed several of the teachers explicitly assessing their students' independent reading skills and behaviours. For Jennifer and Sara this occurred in large part through Accelerated Reader (AR) quizzes that students completed after reading AR books each day. These teachers monitor accumulated quiz scores, setting reading goals and advancing students into higher-level books as they pass the quizzes. Amanda and Tammy, on the other

hand, keep written records of their student conferences, noting students' reading behaviours, talking to students about their current reading goals, and discussing possibilities for future reading objectives. I also observed Tammy conducting running record assessments with students on one occasion. For the other four teachers I didn't observe assessment being conducted strictly on the basis of independent reading activities, though I did see several assessing in other ways such as through the use of informal reading inventories.

**2.16 Efforts to overcome classroom impediments:** Teachers mention a number of classroom factors that pose potential roadblocks to their use of independent reading, including a lack of necessary resources, complicated management issues, and adverse student characteristics. In nearly every case, however, teachers explain how they have found ways to offset these potential impediments in order to continue to provide independent reading in ways they believe are most advantageous for their students' learning. Teachers describe buying their own materials or advocating for independent reading resources, restructuring independent reading to accommodate challenging time and behavioural concerns, and reorganizing independent reading to allow it to better meet their students' individual needs. The first-grade teachers were especially adamant regarding their confidence



in using their own forms of independent reading that they believe are most beneficial for the unique needs of their young learners. The evidence demonstrates that all of the teachers in this study have taken great strides to ensure that they are able to continue to offer independent reading opportunities to their students and will not be waylaid by the sometimes significant challenges that exist in its implementation.

**2.17 Teachers' perspectives of independent reading:** Integrating the teachers' perspectives and practices provides insight into the elements of independent reading that they consider essential for classroom use. As demonstrated in descriptions of the independent reading events conducted by each teacher, there is no blueprint that illustrates independent reading across these elementary classrooms; all carry the stamp of the teachers' individual understandings, perspectives, and contexts. However, even within the individuality exemplified in these programs, the evidence demonstrates significant commonalities that allow conclusions to be drawn regarding optimal components of independent reading as conducted in these elementary classrooms.

### **2.18 Motivating Students' Independent Reading:**

A number of publications outline strategies for motivating readers to increase the amount of independent reading they do (Center for the Study of Reading, 1989; Manning & Manning,

1984; Manley & Simon, 1980; Morrow, 1985; Morrow & Weinstein, 1986; Reed, 1977; Rosler, 1979; Spiegel, 1981).

### **2.18.1 Ways to Motivate Independent Reading:**

- Scheduling special school events that focus on reading, such as “reading campaigns,” “reading awareness week,” and “reading celebrations”.
- Becoming involved in community and library programs sponsored by federal and state governments, such as Reading is Fundamental (RIF).
- Distributing reading certificates at awards day ceremonies.
- Ensuring that students have ready access to books through school libraries and class libraries, and by sending books home.
- To ensure access to books, teachers may need to do the following: work with public and PTO groups as well as local businesses and corporations so that books can be purchased for school use.
- Scheduling time for sustained periods of silent reading.
- Providing in-school time during which students can choose to read by reducing the amount of time devoted to activities that do not promote reading growth, such as completing worksheets.

- Reading aloud to students. Reading an entire book to students allows them to experience how positive reading can be. Reading part of a book may motivate students to complete the reading of that book.
- Introducing and displaying interesting, engaging texts.
- Getting students “hooked” on favorite authors, topics, or genres (e.g, mysteries, fables, poetry, biography).

Independent reading is a term used in educational settings, where students are involved in choosing and reading material (fiction books, non-fiction, magazine, other media) for their independent consumption and enjoyment. People choose to read independently. It gives student the right to be creative in what they want to read. Usually independent reading is conducted alongside the ongoing curriculum in the classroom. Independent reading can be tied to assessment and evaluation or remain as an activity in itself.

## **2.19 More Names for Independent Reading:**

- SSR: Sustained Silent Reading.
- DEAR: Drop Everything and Read.
- Voluntary Reading.

## **2.20 Some Aims of Independent Reading:**

### **2.20.1 Students will:**

- Read more willingly and more often.

- Become more interested in the printed word in general, including their own writing.
- Become more receptive to enrichment activities related to their reading.
- Discover that they can think and write in a meaningful way about their reading.
- Learn that literature can enrich their lives.
- Expand their vocabulary.
- Receive higher test scores.

## **2.21 How to include Independent Reading into a Routine:**

### **2.21.1 Teachers can:**

- Allot time each to independent, where student will choose a book and read for that amount of time.
- Set a number of pages that students have to read by the end of a specific timeframe.
- Have a book report due and the student have to choose and read a book of their choice and explain it to the class.

### **2.21.2 Parents Can:**

- Set a certain amount of time that their child has to read.

Have their children read them books of their choice.

Whilst research cited in the National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000) suggests that there are “literally hundreds of

correlation studies that find that the best readers read the most and the poor readers read the least”, it also suggests that there is not enough sufficient data “from well-designed studies capable of testing questions of causation” to substantiate claims of the positive influence of SSR.

However, Garan & De Voogd (2008) suggest this hypothesis may in fact be due to a poor choice of methodology coupled with the selective use of data, for example dismissing findings such as that of the National Assessment for Educational progress (NAEP), that proved “the more you read the better your vocabulary, your knowledge of the work, your ability to read and so on” (NICHHD, 2000). Overall, it appears that “the body of evidence on SSR reveals an alignment of research with what the professional judgment of many teachers has determined-Sustained Silent Reading benefits students” (Garan & DeVoogd, 2008).

### **2.21.3 Impact of Attitudes Towards Reading:**

A six-month quasi-experimental study found that “more time spent reading had a significant effect on achievement compared to a control condition where less time was allocated for independent reading” (Wu & Samuels, 2004). In addition, a twelve month analysis examining the effects of SSR on “cultivating students’ habits and attitudes regarding reading books for leisure both during the SSR period and after school”, found that students who “always

or sometimes read books for leisure actively during the SSR period” increased from 76.85 percent, to 87.92 percent, and finally to 88.74 percent (Chua, 2008). The study also revealed that “the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that reading books for leisure was pleasurable and enjoyable increased”, suggesting that SSR had a positive impact on attitudes and habits towards reading for fun. If the practice of SSR can increase the amount and enjoyment of reading, can it also have positive impacts on achievement?

#### **2.21.4 Impact on Reading Scores:**

In Reading and Writing Habits of Students, a report produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1994), the conclusion was that 9-,13-, and 17-year-old who “reported reading for fun at least once a week had higher average reading proficiency scores than students who reported never or hardly ever reading for fun”. Focuses on data for 13 year-olds and displays the reading proficiency scores of those who read for fun either daily, weekly, monthly or never, in 1984, 1994 and 2004. What is clearly evident is that over the course of twenty years, what remains consistent is that the learners who read daily for fun score most highly, whilst those who never read for fun score lowest.

Equally, the scores for those who read on a daily basis are quite a bit higher than those who read only monthly or weekly. In 1984,

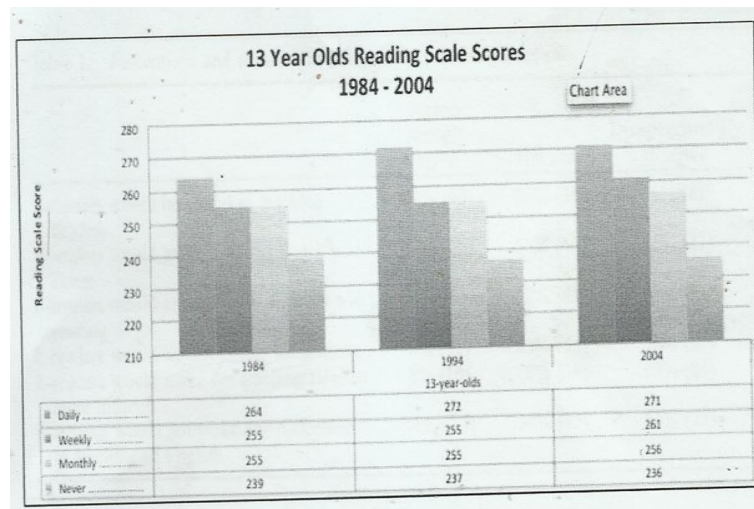
there is a difference of 9 points, from 255 (monthly) and 255 (weekly), to 264 (daily). This is highest in 1994, increasing by 17 points from 255 (monthly) and 255 (weekly), to 272 for daily reading. In 2004, there was a slight general increase in scores; monthly to 256, weekly to 261, with a drop of 1 mark in the daily score to 271. There was still an increase in scores for those reading daily however: 15 points from monthly scores, and 10 points from weekly scores, leading to the conclusion that daily reading for fun is certainly beneficial in terms of reading scale scores-but what about other areas of the curriculum?

Reading has been “shown to improve students’ writing and grammar” (Elley, 1991, in Krashen, 2004), and the 2013 University of London study concluded that reading not only affects attainment in all subjects, improving results in spelling, vocabulary and math, but also that a “strong reading ability will enable children to absorb and understand new information” (Battye & Rainsberry, 2013). This is backed up by further analysis of data from the NCES, which suggests that reading for just twenty minutes a day can also significantly help improve a child’s ability to search for information, interrelate ideas, make generalizations, and explain relatively complicated information. Looking again at the data from, learners who score 200 on the reading scale possess the necessary skills to “understand, combine ideas, and make

inferences” (NCES, 2006). This score appears to be the norm for 13 year olds, as even those who ‘never’ read for fun scored over 200. However, those who ‘never’ read for fun will be at a particular disadvantage, as they all score below 250. Scoring at or above 250 means learners possess the ability to “search for specific information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations about literature, science, and social studies materials” (NCES, 2006), therefore moving beyond simple understanding into higher order thinking skills that span the curriculum. The chart in shows however, that those who read for fun monthly and weekly, rather than every day, are only just scoring within this skill-set. What is most significant is that the scores for those who read daily for fun across all time periods, (264,272and 271) respectively), are creeping towards the 300 mark. Learners scoring 300 are able to utilize a wide-variety of higher-order skills such as the ability to “find”, understand, summarize, and explain relatively complicated literary and informational material” (NCES, 2006). In short, not only can daily reading for enjoyment help a child across all areas of the curriculum, it also has a huge impact on their ability to understand the world and operate successfully in the future.



### Graphic. (2.21.5 ):



Average reading scale score, by age and amount of time spent on reading and homework: Selected years, 1984 through 2004. Data from Table 112 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

#### 2.21.6 The Impact of Choice:

This research backs up the hypothesis that a healthy reading habit can positively affect overall achievement in middle school learners. However, problems arise when middle school readers are unable to reconcile their out of school reading choices with what is expected of them in school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Educators need to establish reading as a life-long habit and have learners “embrace reading as a worthwhile pursuit outside of school” (Miller, 2009). “Readers are made, not born” (Miller, 2009) and it is essential to cultivate the value of reading to “promote students’ reading habits beyond the classroom” (Chua, 2008). This is where autonomy, motivation and the use of technology may help. Young adolescents “can and want to participate in literature activities” but

are lacking the appropriate support or motivation to do so in school, there is also incongruence between what middle school readers prefer and the choices offered at school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

#### **2.21.7 Impact on Achievement in Other Areas:**

There is general concern about lack of reading habits and the impact it is having on achievement in middle school, “particularly among students from culturally diverse backgrounds in economically disadvantaged urban areas” (Lewis, Hancock, James, & Hill-Jackson, 2008, cited in Little, McCoach, & Reis, 2014). In a study conducted by the University of London’s Institute of Education in 2013, the “reading behavior of approximately 6,000 young people” in the UK was analyzed. It compared how often they read as children with test results in vocabulary, spelling and math at age 16. Focusing on the “effect of reading for pleasure on cognitive development”, the conclusion was that “children who read for pleasure are likely to do significantly better at school than their peers” who “rarely read” (Battye & Rainsberry, 2013).

The results found that those who read often “gained higher results in all three tests”-including math-than those who read less regularly (Batty & Rainsberry, 2013). The study concluded that reading for pleasure is “more important for children’s cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parents’ level of

education” (Battye & Rainsberry, 2013), suggesting that socioeconomic factors should not necessarily affect overall attainment if a healthy reading habit can be instilled.

## **2.22 Teachers’ Classroom Independent Reading practices**

This article describes a yearlong qualitative study (Sandent, 2012) exploring how highly effective teachers understand and implement independent reading in their classrooms. In spite of a call by the NRP (2000) for further inquiry, little research consideration of independent reading has occurred in more than a decade. Attention to the ways that highly effective classroom teachers perceive independent reading and utilize it with their students seems to be especially lacking. Therefore, this inquiry began with this overarching question: What are highly effective teachers’ understandings and perspectives regarding independent reading, and how are those exemplified in classroom practice?

This study was a result of my concern, reflected in the literacy field (e.g., Allington, 2005; Edmondson & Shannon, 2002; Krashen, 2001, 2005), over the far-reaching impact of the NRP conclusions on the classroom use of independent reading.

**2.22.1 What is needed is a more complete picture of how teachers understand and implement independent reading.** This expanded knowledge might prompt exploration of the possibilities for promoting students’ reading achievement with versions of

independent reading that differ from SSR. Backed with this knowledge, teachers using independent reading as a classroom practice may be better positioned to reclaim its credibility in elementary literacy instruction.

**Table (2.22.2) Comparison of SSR practices VS. practices of teacher participants in this study:**

<b>Eight factors for SSR success (Pilgreen, 2000)</b>	<b>Independent reading practices of teacher participants in current study</b>
Access to books and classroom reading materials	Access to books through extensive and organized classroom libraries
Reading materials that appeal to students, including self selection “regardless of the teacher’s preferences” (p.9)	Reading materials that appeal to students and are appropriately leveled
Quiet and uninterrupted environment Encouragement to read that includes follow-up activities and/or “adult modeling of reading” (p.13)	Conducive environment that includes teacher and peer interactions and reading-related noise and movement
Staff training Students read freely without an emphasis on assessment (p.15)	Encouragement to read that includes before-during-and after-reading interactions with teachers and peers Professional learning opportunities Accountability for reading, such as written requirements or follow-up discussion
Follow-up activities that engage readers in creative, thoughtful, and non-evaluative ways	Before-during-and after-reading activities with purposeful learning objectives that generate enthusiasm for reading
Distributed and regular time to read	Reading time offered on a daily basis

### **2.22.3 Inquiry Methods:**

This inquiry reflected a practitioner-based epistemology that honored and utilized teacher knowledge to form conclusions regarding classroom independent reading practices. I identified expert practitioners, observed their actions, and asked them to explain their methods. My teacher background allowed me. To place the activities I viewed in a context that promoted understanding of the practitioner experience in my role as a university-based researcher, I was careful in all phases of this study to demonstrate my respect for teachers' classroom authority and expertise and to acknowledge that it was their perspectives on which I was basing my investigations. My goal was to utilize my former-teacher and current researcher perspectives to gain greater clarity of teacher viewpoints and classroom situations and to privilege teacher knowledge in creating reasonable and useful implications from the results. Snow (2001) and Ruddell (2004) emphasized the possibilities for expanding the educational research base with the wealth of knowledge possessed by teacher practitioners. Collins Block, Oakar, and Hurt (2002) pointed out that examining "the processes of expertise in action" (p.179) in the form of the practices of highly effective classroom teachers holds great promise for increasing professional knowledge. Honoring and making use of the expertise held by skilled classroom

practitioners prompted a clearer understanding of independent reading in their classrooms.

### **2.23 Teacher participants:**

This study relied on the collective knowledge of eight in service elementary teachers who were designated as “highly effective” through a multi-phase, purposeful selection process. To choose the participating teachers, principals from 99 elementary schools located within two driving hours of a major metropolitan area in the northwestern United States were asked to complete a form nominating teachers whom they would label as highly effective in teaching literacy. The form contained a checklist with attributes, drawn from previous studies (e.g, Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998). That might cause them to consider a teacher highly effective, such as: a) observed teacher behaviors, b) teacher enthusiasm for reading, c) students’ reading achievement at the end of the year, d) teacher involvement in improving his or her own practice, e) students’ enthusiasm for reading, f) the desire to have their own child (i.e, the supervisor’s child) placed in these classrooms, g) the teacher’s ability to reach students with a wide range of abilities and backgrounds, and h) positive feedback from parents.

Similar to Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998), administrator nominations were a starting point for determining teacher

effectiveness. I developed an evaluation guide that identified attributes of highly effective literacy teachers using common principles from recent scholarship (e.g. Mohan, Lundeberg, & Reffitt, 2008; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2000; Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998). I compiled the characteristics recognized by these researchers, identified commonalities, and consolidated them to form a list of practices demonstrated by highly effective teachers of literacy. These principles included: 1) excellent classroom management, 2) balanced literacy instruction, 3) implementation of instructional density and higher-order thinking activities, 4) extensive use of scaffolding, 5) encouragement of self-regulation of literacy skills & strategies, and 6) high expectations for all students. During a full-day observation in each classroom, I used the guide to record components of the nominated teachers' literacy instruction. Of the 12 nominated teachers who agreed to participate, eight displayed behaviors in their classrooms that corresponded to this list of practices and subsequently agreed to continue as study participant.

#### **2.24 Classroom Independent Reading:**

Following a final analysis of the data, commonalities surfaced in the ways these teachers understood and used independent reading, leading me to three major conclusions about the essential

components of independent reading in the classrooms of the teacher participants:

- Teacher participant supported students reading independence.
- They focused on students reading growth; and
- They were committed to student-centered practices.

In the following sections, I outline these elements and provide representative evidence from the classroom data that supports my conclusions. I also offer examples of ways that teacher participants implemented these components in their classrooms and reference information from scholarship, allowing these elements to be considered in the context of established literacy understandings.

### **2.25 Student Independence and Teacher Support:**

One consistent finding was a desire among teachers to empower students' choices while monitoring their decision making. Each of the teachers agreed that student autonomy was a cornerstone of independent reading, and their practices often reflected opportunities for students to exercise control over their reading. However, data indicated that in conjunction with a belief in student independence, teachers assumed responsibility for students conducting activities in ways that the teachers believed were most advantageous to learning. Students' selection of reading materials was one way this balance occurred. All of the teacher participants held a dual belief in providing students with



opportunities to choose books of interest to them while at the same time expecting students to spend their time with texts at an appropriate reading level. On one hand, teachers were convinced that motivation and engagement most likely occurred when students were able to read self-selected materials. One teacher, Amanda, stated that one goal for her third graders was “freedom to choose” and learning what books they liked as readers. Penni, also a third-grade teacher, explained, “I want them to love to read, and if they’re not reading what they want to read, I don’t think they’re gonna love it.” Other researchers confirm that student were more motivated to engage in reading when provided the opportunity to select and use their own materials (e.g., Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002).

In addition, the teachers shared a belief in the importance of students reading books at appropriate levels. The majority of the teacher used a commercial system such as Accelerated Reader (Renaissance Learning, 2013) or Fountas and Pinnell leveled Books (2012) to level their texts, but relied on these systems to varying degrees when matching books to students. Several of the teachers taught students more independent means of determining text appropriateness, such as using the “five-finger rule” to assess a book’s compatibility, in which teachers prompted students to read a single page of text and count the number of unknown words on

their fingers. If the reader reached five unknown words by the end of the page, it was deemed too difficult for independent reading. Regardless of how they matched readers with books, all of the participants demonstrated a concern for ensuring that students read books the teachers considered an appropriate fit. Reflecting the views of the other teachers, Tammy explained that her students were most successful when they were choosing their own books but “there’s monitoring of that choice, and you’re checking up on them”. Her first graders chose new books weekly in a flurry of activity they called book shopping. Students moved throughout the room among numerous bins labeled with Fountas and Pinnell (2012) text levels, choosing new books that they would use during daily independent reading the called BOB (Bag of Books) time.

### **2.26 Intentional Instruction:**

For independent reading to contribute to students’ reading achievement, teacher understood that they must be purposeful in their instruction. I witnessed few scheduled independent reading events conducted merely for reading pleasure. Rather, the independent reading in these teachers’ classrooms was deliberately aimed at increasing students’ abilities. For instance, I observed Penni using the wordless book *Zoom* (Banyai, 1998) and the analogy of a camera to teach her students about zooming in on details when reading nonfiction text. As she sent her students off to

read independently, she reminded them to “think about zooming in on things in your own books”. Penni followed up this mini-lesson with individual reading conferences and another whole-class session, during which students discussed finding elements such as captions, photographs, and diagrams in their own nonfiction books and magazines.

Similar to activities observed in many of the teachers’ classrooms, Pennit’s lesson linked independent reading and discussion with a specific instructional purpose. Reading scholars have advocated the approach of embedding instruction in independent reading events (e.g., Worthy & Broaddus, 2001), and parr and Maguiness (2005) have pointed out the specific advantages of this strategy for reluctant readers. While all of the teachers appeared to value reading for its own sake, observations reflected their commitment to providing focused literacy instruction connected to independent reading.

Teachers utilized the instructional possibilities of independent reading in a number of ways. Sometimes they acted as exemplars of reading behaviors, modeling their own actions in rereading or asking questions. Often they required during-or after reading activities, such as marking comprehension strategies with sticky notes, writing chapter summaries, recording elements of story grammar, or noting challenging vocabulary. On numerous

occasions, I observed teachers conducting mini-lessons before students' independent reading, commenting during individual reading conferences, or hosting small-group conferences that included information or strategies that could be applied to independent reading. For these teachers, independent reading was an integral part of their reading instruction as they created linked opportunities

### **2.27 The power of independent reading**

we want our students to grow to appreciate literature, we need to give them a say in decisions about the literature they will read. (Atwell, 1998, p.36). Now, more than ever, teachers are challenged to negotiate multiple and contradictory demands on their time. Across the nation, schools have been required to raise their standards for student achievement and make "adequate yearly progress". This is just a sample of the abundant evidence that the complex work of teaching described two decades ago by Apple (1986) has intensified. Teachers have had to adopt curricula, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques that undermine their ability to conduct authentic, engaging activities and contradict their professional beliefs about effective teaching, learning, and schooling.

Pressured to comply with state and district mandates, teachers may follow scripted, back-to-basics lessons and, as a

result, feel frustrated about the assaults on their professionalism and the prevalence of “test-prep pedagogy” (McNeil, 2000).

As they experience relentless pressure to improve test scores, teachers face a constant challenge to maintain their commitment to student-centered pedagogy-though we do not suggest the two are mutually exclusive and lack correlation (e.g., Tatum, 2006).

Our main argument in this paper is that, despite the aforementioned challenges, literacy educators should keep independent, self-selected reading at the center of the middle grades language arts curriculum. We believe that a literacy-rich classroom environment grounded in student-centered pedagogy offers possibilities for engaging all learners and encouraging them to be lifelong readers. After outlining a rationale for independent reading in a reading workshop classroom environment, we describe how these practices were enacted in an eighth-grade classroom in Maine. We share students’ reactions to these practices, which remind us how influential books can be when students are given the opportunity to choose what they read in a classroom environment that values reading.

### **2.27.1 Self-selected reading:**

Independent, self-selected reading is widely supported in the empirical and practitioner-oriented literature. In a recent review of the literature, concluded that the amount of time children spend

reading is correlated with reading achievement, that teachers play a critical role in influencing students' attitudes toward reading, and that immediate access to books and an inviting atmosphere are important in promoting reading. Similarly, flood, lap, and fisher (2003) reported that "the effectiveness of voluntary reading programs, in which classrooms were filled with high-quality trade books, reported success in overall reading comprehension as well as improved attitudes toward reading" (p.938). Studies that have focused specifically on middle school students further support independent, self-selected reading (Broaddus & Ivey, 2002; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Pflaum & Bishop, 2004), and studies that have focused on increasing boys' motivation to read and improving attitudes about reading (Horton, 2005; Weih, 2008). Even a study of graduate students who were allowed to choose their reading revealed 93% felt selecting their reading was more meaningful than being assigned reading by the instructor (Ho & Choie, 2005). It is clear that independent, self-selected reading is a research-based practice beneficial for all students.

## **2.28.The in direct Effect of Independent Reading:**

“The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to related to growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information. Students who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in All subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not. -Reseaech journal of the American Association of School Librarians The indirect effects of independent reading are well documented and, in some ways, almost obvious. You can split the effect into two categories: direct and indirect. The direct effect are perhaps the most obvious. The more you read, the more information you’ll accumulate about a variety of topics .If you read about finance, you’ll learn finance. If you read history, You’ll learn more history. If you aren’t great public speaker, obviously reading a public speaking book Can help you improve .In addition, your vocabulary naturally expands, regardless of what you’re reading. Even if are only reading fiction, you’ll still learn about people, places, concepts, ideas, etc. that apply in the real world.

The indirect effects of increased are less obvious, but perhaps more important. By reading more, even more fiction, you naturally will improve your command of the English language(spelling, grammar, usage, etc.),reading comprehension skills, ability to apply logic, understanding of cause and effect, and more. In fact, the benefits of reading independently can be downright surprising. According to the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges ,there is a strong correlation between independent reading and mathematics achievement. studies show reading and writing skills not only lead to general academic success, but are also directly valued by colleges and employers as high as almost any other factor. at the same

time, we see the average 12th grade reading scores declining in the U.S. between 1992 and 2005.

The most surprising study I've found was conducted by Dr Alice Sullivan and Matt Brown, who analyzed the reading behavior of approximately 6,000 young people being followed by the 1970 British Cohort Study, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. According to the Institute of Education University of London's review of that report, "reading for pleasure was found to be more important for children's cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parent's level of education. The combined effect on children's progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at 16 was four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree'.

### **2.29 Vocabulary growth through independent reading:**

A young child sits quietly reading a storybook. The book tells the story of a little boy's adventures on a very snowy day. The child reads, "He pretended he was a mountain climber. He climbed up a great big tall heaping mountain of snow-and slid all the way down.

"The child pauses in reading to think about what he just read. He rereads the words "pretended," "mountain-climber," "climbed," "heaping," and "slid." He takes a minute to look at the pictures and consider the meaning of these words before reading on, "He picked up a handful of snow-and another and still another. He packed it round and firm and put the snowball in his pocket for tomorrow.



Then he went into his warm house. “ Again the child stops to consider a few more unfamiliar words: “handful,” and “firm,” and he notices that he has never seen the word “packed” used in this way before. After deciding that he understands what the little boy is doing, he continues to read.

As this child struggles to read the text, he encounters many new words. These are words for which he may or may not know the meaning. Yet in order to comprehend the text, the child is forced to learn the meaning of the unfamiliar words and incorporate them into his lexicon.

The situation described is not unique. Children are constantly learning the meaning of words through their encounters with text. Vocabulary instruction also plays a central role in vocabulary growth in school-age children (e.g., Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). However, across the life span, most researchers would agree that the bulk of vocabulary growth occurs incidentally through exposure to language. This process of vocabulary acquisition occurs via two primary mechanisms: exposure to oral language and to written language.

### **2.30 Choice During Independent Reading: What's a Teacher to Do?**

I want to create conditions where students are at their peak level of engagement during independent reading, and allowing children to choose what they read has been shown to boost engagement. I also regard independent reading time as an important instructional time where I'm conferring with students, helping them to select goals, and equipping them with strategies to support them with their goals, while students who aren't meeting with me are independently practicing. Choice is important because it helps if the books they want to get better at reading are ones they chose themselves. That said, I think it's dangerous to allow kids to choose anything they want if what they gravitate toward are too-hard texts. (Hear me out, librarians!) In my two-year pilot study for my whole-book assessment and teaching system called independent reading assessment, I sent books with comprehension questions replanted to schools all over the United States. I asked kids to answer questions as they were reading and, at the end, to rate whether they felt the book was "easy" "just right," or "too hard". Countless kids responded that the book was "easy" while answering all or most of the questions incorrectly. This tells me that kids aren't as good at monitoring their own comprehension as I'd hoped and that many consider just getting the gist to be good enough.

I want kids to have experience with texts that are highly comprehensible so they are able to do deeper thinking work. I want them to feel the joy of truly understanding. It's no fun to be confused. That said, there are a number of variables that determine text appropriateness, and a "just-right level" is rarely a fixed letter

or number for most kids. Factors such as motivation, higher or lower levels of background knowledge, and more come into play when matching children with books being too rigid and allowing a child to choose only within a single level all the time doesn't sit well with me, either. If once in a while a child chooses a book you think is a stretch, but you're willing to provide some extra support, or she's reading it with a book club who will support her, or the child has incredible background knowledge about the topic, then maybe it would be fine.

On the other end of the spectrum, if a child wants to read easy books, I'm Ok with that, as long as there is some just-right reading in his or her weekly "diet" of reading as well. So, for independent reading, I'd tend to guide students' choosing toward books that are "just right" (96% or higher accuracy, with fluency and comprehension) or "easy" with a rare exception for a book that's a bit more of a stretch, in which I'm willing to provide extra support. My opinion is largely shaped by Richard Allington's research that has convinced me a high volume of high-success reading is crucial for readers to grow. So, what happens when a child chooses a book you know is too hard for independent reading? Well, I would never snatch a book from a child's hand. One thing I would do is to invite the child to take it home to read after their regularly assigned independent reading minutes in school and at home, or suggest it would make a good bedtime book with a parent or older sibling. Another thing I'd do is to find out what it is about the book

that the child is really excited about, and then see if there is another book that fits the same topic/theme/character type/ genre that is a better fit in regards to complexity. I often find that it's the "hot new books" kids want to read, in part because it seems like everyone else is reading it, but also partly because the publisher's marketing is so good! I think it's a teacher's responsibility to do book talks for the unsung heroes of the classroom library to make them seem as enticing as the latest YA novel that's getting all the buzz, especially choosing to talk up the books that will be more within the reach of the readers in their class.

### **2.31 Reading for Pleasure**

What we mean by "reading for pleasure"? Although we use the phrase frequently and liberally in everyday or even our working life, it is surprisingly hard to define. Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading .it also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it. it typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us.

According to Nell (1988),reading for pleasure is a form of play that allows as to experience other worlds and roles in our imagination. Holden(2004) also conceived of reading as "creative activity" that is far removed from the passive pursuit it is frequently perceived to be.

Others have described reading for pleasure as a hermeneutic, interpretative activity, which is shaped by the reader's expectations and

experiences as well as by the social contexts in which it takes place(e.g.Graff,1992).

But reading for pleasure is so much more than just a form of play or escapism-it is also a way of connecting with text. According to Pullman (2004),writing on the features that make reading pleasurable:

*Consider the nature of what happens when we read a book....It isn't like a lecture: it's like a conversation. there's aback-and-forthness about it. The book proposes, the reader questions, the book responds, the reader considers.*

*And we are active about the process....we can skim or we can read it slowly; we can read every word, or we can skip long passages; we can read it in the order it presents itself, or we can read it in any order we please; we can look at the last page first, or decide to wait for it ;we can put the book down and ....we can assent or we can disagree.*

Research from the organization for Economic co-operation and development(OECD)showed that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Reading for pleasure could therefore be one important way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards. According to Krashen(1993,P.85)who is a major proponent of the value of reading for pleasure.

*When children read for pleasure ,when they get" hooked on books" ,they acquire ,involuntarily and Conscious efforts, nearly all of the so-called" language skills" many people are so concerned about; they with become adequate readers ,acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex Grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect Spellers.*

*Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level, without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance.*

Although the cornerstone for lifelong reading is laid in the early years, we also know that it is never too late to start reading for pleasure (Sheldrick-Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer, 2005).

### **2.31.1 *The benefit of reading for pleasure:***

Becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading (Sana core, 2002). Although reading for pleasure has not been a research priority, studies are accumulating that emphasize the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational as well as personal development. These studies show that promoting reading can have a major impact on children, young people and adults and their future.

For example, research with children has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with the following literacy-related benefits:

- Reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000) for reading that is done both in school and out of school (Krashen, 1993; Anderson et al, 1988, but also see Taylor et al, 1990)
- Text comprehension and grammar (Cipielewski and Stanovich 1992; Cox and Guthrie, 2001), even after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for (Elley, 1994).
- Breadth of vocabulary (Angelos and McGriff, 2002), even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for (Cunningham and Stanovich 1998).
- Positive reading attitudes (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999) which are linked to achievement in reading (McKenna and Kear, 1990).

- Greater self-confidence as a reader (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999).
- Pleasure reading in later life (Anrnoutse and van leeuwe 1998).

The above relationships hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults (Krashen, 2004).

Correlation studies have also consistently shown that those who read more are better readers. Indeed reading amount and reading achievement are thought to be reciprocally related to each other-as reading amount increases, reading achievement increases, which in turn increases reading amount (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998). According to Pressley (2000, P.56) "the frequent admonition for children to 'Read, read, read' makes sense in that extensive reading promotes fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge".

There is also evidence that reading for pleasure not only impacts on reading achievement but also increases:

- general knowledge (e.g. Cunningham and Stanovich 1998);
- a better understanding of other cultures (Meek, 1991);
- community participation (e.g. Bus, Van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995)
- a greater insight into human nature and decision-making (Bruner, 1996)

Events focusing on reading for pleasure can also promote or enhance social skills in children (e.g. Allan, Ellis and Pearson, 2005; The Reading Agency, 2006). It has also been shown to combat feelings of loneliness in adults (Rane-Szostak and Herth, 1995).

Overall, when individuals read for pleasure frequently, "they experience the value of reading as efferent and aesthetic processes. thus, they are more likely, to read with a sense of purpose, which further supports their developing reading habit" (Sana core, 2002, P 68).

### ***2.31.2 Why is reading for fun important for students academically?***

**Judy Newman:** The most critical skill for success in school or in life is the ability to read well. Reading is the only way to build usable vocabulary because in books, words are written in a context, with meaning and nuance. You need to build your vocabulary over time by reading. Once you have a strong, dynamic vocabulary you can translate your thoughts and ideas (and hopes and dreams), and communicate them to others.

However, I'd like us to consider changing the way we speak about "reading for fun." Professionals familiar with the benefits of reading understand that "fun" reading is critical to kids' learning and development, but not everyone shares that understanding. We should define "reading for fun," as "enjoyable independent reading," which means letting kids choose books they will enjoy reading. And when they enjoy what they are reading, they will finish the book and learn and absorb whatever that book is about.

### **2.32 What can schools do to create more opportunities for daily independent reading?**

JN: Most teachers I know crave the time and freedom in their daily schedules to allow kids to do more independent reading. But often that is really difficult because of the pressures educators are under to cover extensive curriculum, develop specific skills and measure student gains. The gains achieved by independent reading will be apparent over the long-term but not necessarily on a weekly or quarterly test.

It seems to me that we have three key specific opportunities to drive more independent reading:

One, be sure that schools and districts build at least 20 minutes of independent reading time into each child's day whether in school or at home. We would hope more kids would have this opportunity during the school day as our research shows that lower income students are more likely to rely on in-school independent reading time than their higher income peers.

Two, re-focus on school libraries and make them a vital part of the curriculum—something the author James Patterson is doing so brilliantly



with his donation of \$1.75 million to support school libraries. Then get students of all ages into the library.

Three, make reading “cool” and easy to do. With competition from YouTube, on-demand-anything-you-want-to-watch-anytime TV, video games, and a whole host of other activities, educators and parents need to find creative ways for kids to share books with one another (through video projects, book talks, starting a book club, etc.) to generate more interest in favorite books and make reading a “social” event for kids—giving them the same excitement they get through other media.

### **2.33 A parent’s Part in Motivating Independent Reading**

Independent reading is a key factor in reading success. But what exactly does independent reading mean? Independent reading is when a child is reading for pleasure at his/her comfort level. It is not reading textbooks to study for the next test. It is not reading for the 10 point comprehension exam to follow. Independent reading is reading for the love of reading. There are more research studies showing the benefits of independent reading than I have space to list. Here are a few examples:

*Independent reading leads to increased vocabulary development. One of the best-established relationships in the field of reading is the very significant relationship between vocabulary development and achievement in reading (Baumann & Kameenui, 1991; Nagy, 1988). Research clearly shows that the reading of meaningful, connected text results in improved reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Ingham, 1981; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). In one of the most extensive studies of independent reading yet conducted, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) investigated a broad array of activities and their relationship to reading achievement and growth in reading. They found that the amount of time students spent in*

*independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and also the best predictor of the amount of gain in reading achievement made by students between second and fifth grade.*

So the questions become, how do we promote reading in the home and what can parents do to help increase their children's independent reading time? First, the child needs to understand the importance of reading a good book. They have to be drawn to good literature that they will find interesting and engaging. If you tell your child to read something they do not find interesting, that defeats the purpose. Go to the public library, ask the experts for guidance to find that perfect book, or go to Scholastic and use the free resources there to find good literature at your child's comfort level. Let them read graphic novels. It can be a door that opens them up to reading more traditional books in the future. Send them to your school's book fair and tell them to get a good book to read at home. Second, finding the time to read can be challenging if you do not prioritize reading. It is actually quite easy to find time to read. Any time your child goes to soccer practice, drama club, etc., suggest that they read in the car on the way to and from the event. Instead of their playing a video game for an hour, split the time and have them read for half an hour (See Common Core Standards for Parents). Have the students read 10 minutes before they go to bed.

The one part of the equation that is difficult for students to understand is why they never see adults reading. As a parent, think about the last time you took ten minutes to read a good book. Typically even if you get some time to read, it is after the kids are in bed already. Let's think about the other adults in their lives. What about teachers? Do they read for pleasure in front of the

kids? Probably not. So who is modeling this good practice for them? The answer is no one. They are told by every adult in their lives that reading is so important and the ability to read will help them get everything they want in their life. The message is confusing when they don't see adults reading. Al thought our children don't come with a manual, there are a few proven parenting practices that result in reading success. Reading to your child, reading with your child, and family reading time have all been proven to raise student achievement. You can choose to make a change in your life and schedule and prioritize reading, or you can let them go at it alone and hope for the best. I prefer to know that I am doing right by my kids and I am giving them the best start possible. That means our kids must read independently and hopefully this independent reading will grow into a love of reading that will last a lifetime.

### **2.34 Plan for and monitor independent reading:**

One august, I received a phone call from a colleague and friend who teachers fourth grade “confidentially, my students proficiency test scores weren't as good as I expected. I have some questions about my reading program”. She went on to tell that the students of the teacher down the hall had received the similar test scores. “I can't figure that out” she wailed. “you know I do a much better job with guided reading.

My students test scores should have been higher”. My friend is one of the best teachers of reading I know. I've watched her conduct superb small – group guided reading lessons; she has occasional

literature conversations, she assigns meaningful independent work. “when do they read?” when do they get to read books they can choose?” “well, the other stuff takes so much time, we only have ten or fifteen minutes a day for independent reading”.

Aha. Here was the critical difference the teacher down the hall started off each morning with an independent reading program, thirty to forty minutes in which the students read books of their own choosing and the teacher monitored how they were doing. I knew exactly what was going on in that classroom because I had demonstrated for and coached that teacher for a year. Even though she was a less skilled teacher of guided reading-and in fact was inconsistent about meeting with small groups-she had an excellent, carefully monitored independent reading program in place, fully supported by an ample classroom library and daily reading conferences. I suggested to my friend that she consider reallocating her reading time to include at least thirty minutes a day for independent reading. Just as important, I strongly suggested she think about putting a classroom library in place. Even though she had lots of books in her room, they were not organized so students could get at them easily.

Let me be very clear. Just adding more time and space for independent reading is not enough. I’m advocating a carefully designed structured reading program that includes demonstrating,

teaching, guiding, monitoring, evaluating, and goal setting a long with voluntary reading of books students choose.

### **2.34.1 Students need to do more reading:**

My friend's story is not unique. Other teachers and principals have shared similar stories about doing lots of comprehension instruction and whole-class and small-group work with less-successful-than-expected results. I generally hear these stories after the test scores come in. always, I suggest, "They need to be doing more reading" when an independent reading component is added, test scores go up. Tragically, many intermediate-grade teachers are dropping independent reading as a regularly scheduled part of their instructional reading program. And even when time is allotted to independent reading, increasingly a computerized reading-incentive program is in charge, not the classroom teacher- additionally, many of our struggling readers lose their independent reading time, because this is often when they leave the classroom for supplemental reading instruction. Any reading program that substantially increases the amount of reading students do will impact their reading achievement, indeed, this is the main reason those computerized reading-Incentive programs seem to work: students are required to read for long blocks of time-you can easily do the same thing without an expensive program. In fact you can

do better, because there is no teaching component in those incentive programs.

There is a caution here, however. Not all students automatically improve their reading just because we give them time to read. If students are reading mostly difficult books, if they don't understand what they read, if no one is monitoring their progress, not much changes. I have been in far too many classrooms where students are starting at books they cannot and do not read and where sustained silent independent reading is largely a waste of time.

### **2.35 What do we mean by an independent reading program?**

Although I use the terms sustained silent read and independent reading interchangeably and do so throughout this book some educators see sustained silent reading and independent reading as two separate entities.

Therefore, let me explain the differences as I see them. However, my definition of independent reading is the one I will be referring to when even I use either term.

**Table(2.36)**

Sustained silent reading	Independent reading
Students choose any book to read	Student chooses any book to read
Daily time to read, 10-30 minutes	Teacher may guide selection daily time to read
Optional classroom library	Excellent classroom library essential
Book may be above reading level	Students reads mostly “just right” books
No checking by teacher	Teacher monitors comprehension
No writing involved	Student, keeps a reading record
No teaching involved	Teaching occurs during a conference
No reading goals set	Teacher and student set reading goals

**2.37 Research strongly support independent reading:**

Alongstanding, highly respected body of research definitively shows that students who read more, read better, and have higher reading achievement. You need to familiarize yourself with this research, because the value of free-choice voluntary reading in classrooms has recently been called into question. In order to maintain this critical practice, you may well need to cite research

linking independent reading with achievement, and to share this information with administrators and parents.

### **2.38 Connect Independent Reading with Teaching and Evaluating:**

Common sense tells that if we want to get good of an activity, regardless of what that activity is, we have to practice it. Practice without feedback, however, is not as efficient as monitored practice.

There is a delicate balance here. We need to set the learner up with just enough of a challenge so he can work out problems for himself and become self-monitoring, self regulating, and independent. Too much challenge will lead to frustration, too little will eventually lead to boredom. In my thirty five years of teaching, I have always maintained an independent reading program, but it has never been just “take out your book and read” it has always meant making sure students are:

- Matched with a book (or other reading material) they can read and understand.
- Reading a text they enjoy.
- Practicing and trying out strategies we’ve been demonstrating and working on in class.
- Being monitored, assessed and evaluated on the books they are reading.



- Being taught strategies and how to apply them to problem solve and read independently.
- Setting and working on goals to further improve their reading competency.

My years in the classroom have shown me that when a daily sustained silent reading program includes not only careful monitoring of students, progress but teaching what the student needs to know to be able to move forward, reading comprehension improves, this is not necessarily true when students are just given time to read. For example, with a computerized reading-Incentive program, students do lots of reading and move through levels, but they may or may not be reading for understanding.

### **2.39 An independent reading program is essential:**

Ironically, when teachers are pressed for time, independent reading is usually the first thing to be cut. Yet a carefully monitored independent reading program is the single most important part of your reading instructional program. What's more, it's fun, it's easy to implement and manage, and kids love it. They get to choose books. They are interested in, to talk about those books with their friends, and to have uninterrupted time in school to read! There's nothing better, you get to read, too, if you choose to. I like to read one or two days a week and show students what I'm reading and thinking about. The other days I use for individual

conferences. The exception is at the beginning of the school year, when I use each day to get to know students as readers both through interviews and reading conferences.

#### **2.40 Components of An Independent Reading Program:**

- A well designed and well stocked classroom library, one that has been set up with and by students, includes their interests and preferences, and provides comfortable seating areas.
- Sustained time each day in which to read.
- “Just – right” books.
- An array of genres.
- Time for sharing and book talks.
- One - to – one student - teacher conferences (to include teaching, assessing and evaluations on the spot, and goal setting).
- Well maintained reading records.
- Procedures that have been developed in connection with the students, then modeled and understood, and that are followed by everyone.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE METHODOLOGY**

## **Chapter three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.Introduction**

This chapter will provide a full description of the research methodology adopted as well as the research instruments employed. Moreover, the validity and reliability of these instruments will be confirmed.

#### **3.1 The study methodology:**

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach: the descriptive analytical and experimental methods. This allows the research instruments to complement each other. Hence, an experiment, questionnaires, and class program were used to address the research questions and objectives. The (SPSS) program version 17 was used for data analysis.

#### **3.2 The study population:**

The study population was undergraduates at the Sudan university of science and technology and the teaching staffs of English, at different Sudanese universities. This experiment was conducted at Sudan university of science and technology.

It is known that, all students in Sudan enter university after they have spent seven years studies English at the basic and secondary schools. They all speak Arabic as their first language, and all of them have studied English for 7 years at school. All the

students who took part in the study experiment were males and females.

As many as 30 students from the Sudan university of science and technology took part in the present study. They are semester 3, second year, they studied an interesting and enjoyable topic in independent reading, namely “*the story of a little boy’s adventures on a very snow day*” to be divided into the traditional dichotomous categories of control-experiment groups, they were subjected to a pre-test. The experiment group which was constituted of 25 students was favoured with a relatively different type of attention to prepare them to the final post-test. Definitely their standards and performance have improved in quite a number of ways which was reflected by their scores in the post –test.

### **3.3 Questionnaire sample:**

As they are expected to be well placed to respond to the questions, a questionnaire has been designed only for the tutors. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements divided into three distinct categories it was distributed to as many as 30 tutors. Copies were collected a few days later.

**Part one:** included 5 statements surveying the kind of English syllabus adopted at the undergraduate level. The statements have fully surveyed the syllabus right from its validity, weaknesses and points of strengths. One statement attributed the failure of the

syllabus to realize its intended goal to the fact that it was being designed by national expertise.

**Part two:** This part is dedicated to the students as to how they respond to the syllabus, the number of years thus studied English language before they started their undergraduate program.

**Part three:** Tutors and their training is discussed in this part, tutors training is essential for the success of the learning operation as they are expected to provide the hospitable environment.

For learning all through the up lively doses, spirits and motivation.

**Table (3.1 ) summary of the questionnaire:**

<b>Variable measured</b>	<b>Measured by</b>
Validity of the syllabus, effectiveness and communicative value	1,2,5
Students response to the syllabus and how far they make use of	3,6,7
Tutors training and their classroom performance	8,9,10

**Table (3.2 ) shows teachers’ numbers and their distribution according to sex:**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Males	25	25%
Females	30	30%
Total	55	55%

The table above reflects that female respondents are more than males, a fact justified by a number of variables, most importantly is the male teachers’ immigration to gulf countries or simply the job of teaching at universities is no longer attractive. Many of those who have joined the teaching, operation have come without any prior training, the thing which affected quite considerably their classroom performance.

**Table (3.3) shows tutors’ years of experience:**

<b>Tutors’ experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1-5	20	20%
6-10	15	15%
More than 10	15	15%
Total	50	50%

Table(3.3) indicates that most of those handling the job of teaching at universities are novice recruits. Definitely they were exposed to small and limited training.

### **3.4 Research instruments:**

The data for the present study was obtained through two instruments, firstly a test and then a questionnaire for the teachers.

### **3.5 Reliability of the questionnaire:**

This simply means the questionnaire should give the same result if applied in similar situations. It is one of the criteria through which a test can be evaluated. Brown (1988) defines reliability as “the extent to which results can be considered consistent and stable”. To calculate the reliability of the questionnaires, the researcher randomly selected a group of (10) English teachers and (25) students. They were given copies of questionnaire as a pilot test. Two weeks later, they were given the questionnaires for the second time. Accordingly, the reliability of the questionnaires was achieved when the researcher compared the pre- test of the questionnaires to the second test to make sure that the items of the questionnaires are relevant to the particular area of study.

### **3.6 Validity of the questionnaire:**

The following steps were taken to testify to the validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were seen by a jury comprising four members who are university lectures with long experienced in the field of ELT. They are Prof. Mahmoud Ali Ahmed (Sudan university of science and technology). Dr. Mohamad alamin Ashingeeti, (National Ribat university), and Dr. Yassir Hassan



(Omdurman Islamic university). Dr. Tawheeda Osman Hadra Dr Sarra Osman Etom (The Ribat National University).

1-The revised and evaluated final versions of the questionnaires were distributed to teachers.

2-The questionnaires were distributed personally and directly to the subjects of the study.

3-The total number of the questionnaires that the researcher has received from the respondents was (50).

The questionnaires were then subjected to the different types of analysis to check the data.

This process of analysis will appear at chapter 4 which is mainly devoted for this purpose.

### **3.7 Reliability and validity of the teachers questionnaire:**

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

The researcher calculated then reliability coefficient of the scale used in the questionnaire by alpha equation and the results were as follows:

**Table (3.4 ) reliability and validity:**

<b>Reliability coefficient</b>	<b>Validity coefficient</b>
0.80	0.88

The results table above shows that all reliability and validity coefficients for questionnaire are greater than (50%) and dose to the one.

This indicates that the questionnaire is characterized by high reliability and validity, and makes statistical analysis acceptable.

### **3.8 Statements of the questionnaire:**

The questionnaire contains (15) phrases. A lengthy questionnaire beyond 15 could have the effect of being responded to inattentively. Respondents were asked kindly to study the questionnaire and give their remarks liker scale which consists of five levels (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) has adopted in the present research. These phrases have been distributed on four hypotheses as follows:

The first hypothesis includes phrases (1-5).

The second hypothesis includes (6-10).

The third hypothesis includes phrases (11-15).

### **3.9 Statistical methods:**

To achieve the objectives of the study and to verity hypotheses, statistical methods were used the following:

1-Charts

2-Freueny distribution of the answers

3-Percentages

4-Alpha equation, to calculate the reliability coefficient

5-Median

6-Chi-square test for the significance of differences between the answers

To get results as accurate as possible the researcher used SPSS statistical software.

### **3.10 Pilot study:**

Piloting phase is very essential for the success of any research. Bell (1993) points out that all data gathering instruments should have to be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instruments are clear and enable them to remove any them which does not produce usable data before conducting this study all the questions in the instruments were piloted with a small sample of subjects (20 students, 10 teachers).

This pilot phase was done so as to make sure that the selected questions yield the required information and to revise and drop any question which may be confusing and ambiguous. The questionnaire was agreed upon by all subjects.

### **3.11 Validity and reliability of the test:**

The tests are believed to have content validity as they aimed at assessing the students achievement in reading comprehension and in this study to assess their classroom independent reading.

The tasks required in the tests were comparable to those covered in the book and practiced in class. In addition, the test instructions were written clearly in English, and the examinees task required was defined. Furthermore, the tests were validated by a group of

experts who suggested some valuable remarks about the tests and the researcher responded to that for the test reliability, the study used the test-retest method: The test-retest method of estimating a tests reliability involves administering the test to the same group of people at least twice. Then the first set of scores is correlated with the second set of scores.

Correlation ranges between 0 (low reliability) to and 1 (high reliability) (highly unlikely they will be negative!). The coefficient correlation formula was used to calculate the correlation:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum XY) - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][n \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

The results shown that there was strong positive correlation between pre-test and post-test:

Pre-test: 775 post-test: 645s furthermore, to increase the validity and reliability of the test, the researcher gave two tests as pre-test and post-test at different interval of time. Taking more than one sample of students work, according to weir (1993: 134) “can help reduce the variation in performance that might occur from one task to task”. Thus, we decided to take at least two samples.

### **3.12 Summary of the chapter:**

This chapter described the methodology employed for gathering the data of the present study. Research instruments were described; instruments reliability and validity were confirmed having finished with the methodology of the study, the next chapter will present data analysis, results and discussion.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND**  
**DISCUSSION/S**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4 Data Analysis, Results And Discussions**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected by the instruments discussed in chapter three. It will also discuss the results of the analyses with the purpose of answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. The data informing the present study can be categorized into two types:

- Input data
- Intake data

#### **4.1 Input data**

The input data is connected with the different discourse markers and cohesive devices. This also includes

1. Data from the class observation during the semester observed and registered by the tutor of his students' behavior towards the employment or use of the cohesive devices in response to questions they were presented with during classes.
2. Tutors response to the questionnaire
3. Students' performance over the tests that is administered tests to collect data. The tests, besides translation included: diagnostic, where two tests were administered, namely:
  - (i) composition and,
  - (ii) multiple-choice questions

## **4.2 Analysis of the questionnaire**

To answer the study's questions and hence verify its hypotheses, the median will be computed for each question from the pre-test and post-test as well as the questionnaire that shows the opinions of the study respondents about the problem in question, namely expanding classroom interaction to reinforce communicative competence through paying special attention to the explicit teaching of independent reading programs. Now, let us turn to analyze the teachers' questionnaire. All Tables show the scores assigned to each of the 15 statements by the 50 respondents. The hypotheses to be confirmed are:

1. Through independent reading students believe that reading different kinds of books can enrich their knowledge and enhance their ability to read.
2. Voluntary reading enhances students' achievement, build fluency and it is a major source of vocabulary acquisition.
3. Students think that independent reading promotes their reading skill which helps them scores higher marks in tests.



**The first 5 statements of the questionnaire touch on reading and how vocabulary can be developed.**

**Table (4.1)**

No.	Phrases	Frequency and percentages				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Reading independently, with pleasure, willingness and interest does not make the reader feel sleepy, tedious and bored while reading.	61 50.8 %	36 30%	3 2.5%	9 7.5%	11 9.2%
2	Reading independently encourage students to read different kinds of books and promote their reading ability	54 45%	34 28.3%	8 6.7%	18 15%	6 5.0%
3	Reading different kinds of books helps develop knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure as well.	66 55%	37 30.8%	9 7.5%	4 3.6%	4 3.6%
4	As the reader gains knowledge of vocabulary and grammar his level of achievement shall be improved remarkably.	57 47.5 %	37 30.8%	8 6.7%	13 10.8%	5 4.7%
5	Lack of basic vocabulary affects students' comprehension and their level of achievement negatively.	60 50%	36 30%	11 9.2%	10 8.3%	3 2.5%
Hypothesis		298 49.7 %	180 30%	39 6.5%	54 9.0%	29 4.8%

As reflected in table (4.2) item (1) the majority of the respondents (50.8%) strongly agree that reading independently, with pleasure, willingness and interest does not make the reader feel sleepy, tedious and bored while reading. (30%) agree, (2.5%) not sure, (7.5%) are disagree, while 9.2% are strongly disagree.

This could be attributed to the fact that the element of freedom would allow the students to make their choices to the texts that interest them and hence make the maximum benefit from what they read. This will not only develop their vocabulary but will also directly affect the four skills as they develop considerably due to the broadly gained vocabulary. Their written and oral delivery will particularly be remarkably improved owing to the progressively growing vocabulary.

Item (2) demonstrates clearly that the majority of the respondents (45%) strongly agree that reading independently encourage students to read different kinds of books and promote their reading ability (28.3%) agree, (6.7%) not sure, (15%) disagree while (5%) are strongly disagree.

The above result gives clear evidence that the students' vocabulary and overall mastery of the four skills will be improved due to freedom of choice. The freedom to choose whatever kind of book will considerably broaden the students' choice and hence affect positively their newly gained vocabulary.

Concerning item (3) it is clear that the majority of the subjects (55%) strongly agree that reading different kinds of books helps develop knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure as well. (30.8%) agree, (7.5%) not sure, (3.3%) disagree while (3.4%) are strongly disagree.

This result indicates that most of the students are in the opinion that the independent reading can help promote their knowledge quite remarkably and positively be reflected on their performance.

As for item (4) it is obvious that the majority of the respondents (47.5%) strongly that as the readers gain knowledge of vocabulary and grammar their level of achievement shall be improved remarkably. (30.8%) agree (6.7%) not sure, (10.8%) disagree, while (4.7%) strongly disagree with the statement.

This result confirms that most of the students think that reading independently can positively affect their overall knowledge and that the English language syllabus does not provide enough authentic material needed to improve the students' levels in the designated areas in question.

As regards of item (5) the majority of the subjects (50%) strongly agree that Lack of basic vocabulary affects students' comprehension and their level of achievement negatively. (30%) agree, (9.2%) not sure, (8.3%) disagree while (2.5%) strongly disagree with the statement.

This result could be attributed to the fact that the content of the syllabus does favor the students' linguistic competence. Very poor demonstration and use of the cohesive devices can be felt across the syllabus. Very little attention is paid to the language tasks that reinforce the use of the linking devices.

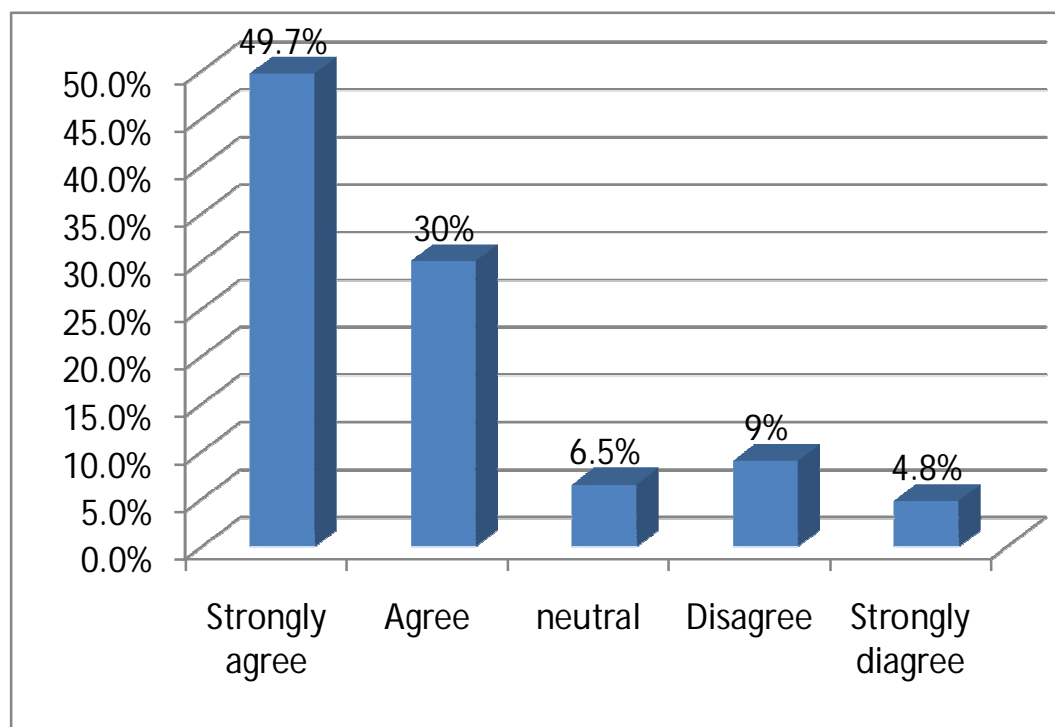


Figure (4.2): Percentages distribution of the first hypothesis phrases:

Table (4.2.2): Chi-square test results:

No	Phrases	Chi-square value	P-value	Median	Trend
1	Reading independently, with pleasure, willingness and interest does not make the reader feel sleepy, tedious and bored while reading.	97.833	0.000	5	To strongly agree
2	Reading different kinds of books quite voluntarily helps develop knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure as well.	67.333	0.000	4	To agree
3	As the reader gains knowledge of vocabulary and grammar his level of achievement shall be improved remarkably.	123.250	0.000	5	To strongly agree
4	Lack of basic vocabulary affects students' comprehension and their level of achievement negatively.	83.167	0.000	4	To agree
5	Reading independently encourage students to read different kinds of books and promote their reading ability	93.583	0.000	5	To strongly agree
Hypothesis		454.017	0.000	4	To agree

From the tables above:

- The value of chi-square for the first phrase is (97.833) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the second phrase is (67.333) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of agree.
- The value of chi-square for the third phrase is (123.250) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the fourth phrase is (83.167) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of agree.
- The value of chi-square for the fifth phrase is (93.583) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

The value of chi-square for all phrases in the first hypothesis is (454.017), with (p-value =0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4.2.2) and figure (4.1), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between the answers of study individuals and in favor of agree.

The researcher concludes from the above analysis that the first hypothesis Reading independently, with pleasure, willingness and interest does not make the reader feel sleepy, tedious and bored while reading. “has been achieved and in favor of strongly agree.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the tutors: and the overall learning environment.

**Table (4.3)**

No	Phrases	Frequency and percentages				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	Tutor should always be in favor of their students. Understanding their emotions and estimating their needs	68 56.7%	29 24.2%	12 10%	4 3.3%	7 5.8%
7	Tutors have to encourage their students to read independently	61 50.8%	37 30.8%	3 2.5%	11 9.2%	8 6.7%
8	The overall environment at the undergraduate level is not advantageous to develop independent reading program.	65 54.2%	18 15%	5 4.2%	16 13.3%	16 13.3%
9	Generally ,reading with interest and willingness develops students overall linguistic competence	64 53.3%	35 29.2%	3 2.5%	13 10.8%	5 4.2%
10	The English syllabus is not given enough weight along the lines of other syllabuses	84 70%	24 20%	5 4.2%	2 1.7%	5 4.2%
Hypothesis		342 57%	143 23.8%	28 4.7%	46 7.7%	41 6.8%

Judging by the above table (4.2.3) (item 6) the majority of the respondents (56.7%) strongly agree that the overall environment at the undergraduate



level is not advantageous to develop independent reading program. (24.3) agree (10%) not sure, (3.4%) disagree and (5.8%) strongly agree with the statement.

This result reflects that most of the students see that the overall environment is not hospitable to learning. Varying reading activities with interesting content can be very constructive in helping the students' reading independently and enhances their reading tasks. They also help in developing in the other skills.

Item (7) explains that the majority of the study sample (50.8%) strongly agrees that Tutors have to encourage their students to read independently (30.8%) agree, (2.5%) not sure, (9.2%) disagree, while (6.7%) of the study sample disagree with the statements.

The above result confirms that the teacher does not give the students even a reasonable time to practice independent reading inside the classroom because they were not trained to allocate time to practicing. Teacher training is one of the most important factors in the success of the teaching learning operation. A good teacher can make the best out of even a bad syllabus, whereas an untrained teacher can reduce a good syllabus to a heap of trash.

Concerning item (8) it is obvious that the majority of the study sample (54.2%) strongly agree that the overall environment at the undergraduate level is not advantageous to develop independent reading program. . (15%) agree (4.2%) not sure, (13.3%) disagree and the same percentage strongly agrees with the statements.

This result indicates that inclusion of extra authentic material is essential for the students to make up for the missing arts in the syllabus. The teachers do

not add extra material.

As for item (9) it is clear that the majority of the respondents (53.3%) strongly agree that generally ,reading with interest and willingness develops students overall linguistic competence (29.2%) agree (2.5%) not sure, (10.8%) disagree, and (4.2%) strongly disagree with the statements.

This result shows that they should plan to bring into their classes more material to help their students cater for the missing parts. The syllabus definitely cannot provide enough material to cover all the important aspects, so it is the tutors' duty to provide their students with adequate material to fill the gap.

In relation to item (10) the researcher finds that the majority of the subjects (70%) strongly agree that The English syllabus is not given enough weight along the lines of other syllabuses. (20%) agree, (1.6%) disagree, (4.2%) not sure and the same percentage strongly disagree with the statement.

This result indicates beyond doubt that the syllabus both at university and secondary level does not have enough interesting material that helps develop the students' linguistic and communicative competence.

Figure (4.2.2): Percentages distribution of the second hypothesis phrases:

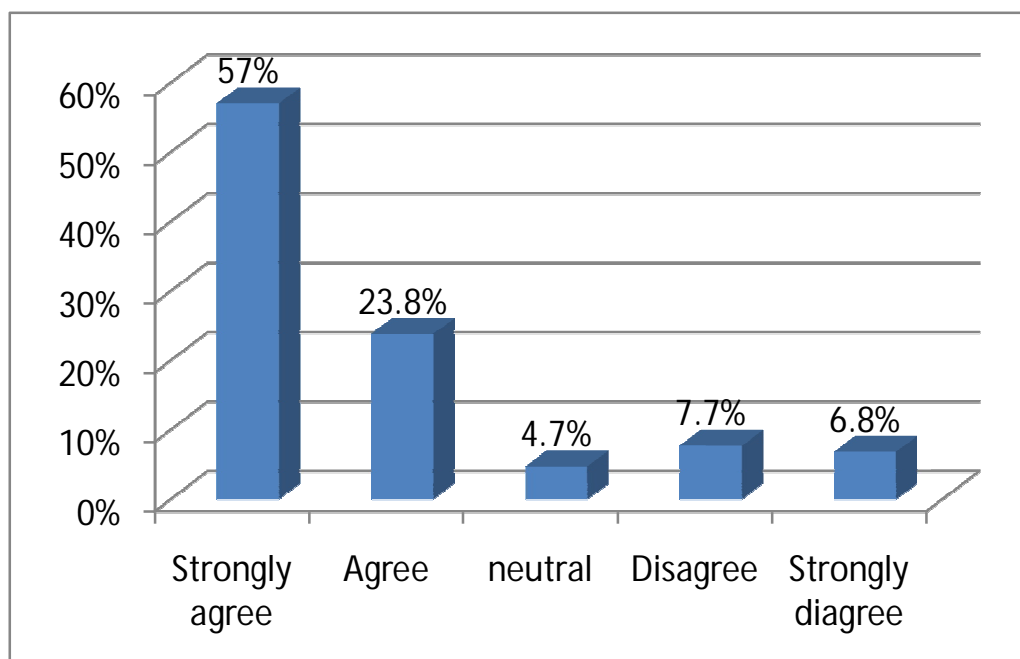


Table (4.4): Chi-square test results:

No	Phrases	Chi-square value	P-value	Median	Trend
6	Tutor should always be in favor of their students. Understanding their emotions and estimating their needs	116.417	0.000	5	To strongly agree
7	Tutors have to encourage their students to read independently	100.167	0.000	5	To strongly agree
8	The overall environment at the undergraduate level is not advantageous to develop independent reading program.	91.917	0.000	5	To strongly agree
9	Generally ,reading with interest and willingness develops students overall linguistic competence	110.167	0.000	5	To strongly agree
10	The English syllabus is not given enough weight along the lines of other syllabuses	200.250	0.000	5	To strongly agree
Hypothesis		583.283	0.000	5	To strongly agree

From the table above:

- The value of chi-square for the first phrase is (116.417) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.4), this indicates

that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

- The value of chi-square for the second phrase is (100.167) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.4), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the third phrase is (91.917) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4-4), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the fourth phrase is (110.167) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.4), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the fifth phrase is (200.250) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.4), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

The value of chi-square for all phrases in the second hypothesis is (583.283), with (p-value =0.000 < 0.05), and depending on the table (4.2.4) and figure (4.2.2), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

**Category (3) Effect of independent reading and selection of reading texts by the tutor**

Table (4.5)

No.	Phrases	Frequency and Percentages				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	Presenting students with tailored reading texts deprives them from creativity and introduces boredom that they may consequently abandon reading	84 70%	21 17.5%	4 3.3%	5 4.2%	6 5.0%
12	The teaching of English at lower undergraduate levels is entrusted to barely trained tutors who are not equipped with right ways of teaching	71 59.2%	38 31.7%	5 4.2%	5 4.2%	1 0.8%
13	Almost all syllabuses are designed by local Sudanese expertise and assigned to staff with inadequate knowledge of independent reading	80 66.7%	31 25.8%	4 3.3%	2 1.7%	3 2.5%
14	Not all the parts of the syllabus share time and weight evenly have the same weight. So independent reading program is neglected	74 61.7%	38 31.7%	3 2.5%	3 2.5%	2 1.7%
15	Inclusion of literature as part of the syllabus enriches the syllabus and helps increase the students' vocabulary	60 50%	34 28.3%	17 14.2%	2 1.7%	7 5.8%
Hypothesis		369 61.5%	162 27%	33 5.5%	17 2.8%	19 3.2%

As demonstrated by table (4.5) item (11) the majority of the subjects (70%) strongly agree that presenting students with tailored reading texts deprives them from creativity and introduces boredom that they may consequently abandon reading. (17.5%) agree, (3.3%) not sure, (4.2%) disagree, whereas (5%) strongly disagree with the statement.

This result shows clearly that most of the students believe in the importance of independent reading and how it affects their overall knowledge quite considerably.

Item (12) shows that the majority of the study sample (59.25%) is strongly agree that The teaching of English at lower undergraduate levels is entrusted to barely trained tutors who are not equipped with right ways of teaching (31.7%) agree, (4.2%) not sure, the same percentage are disagree whereas only (0.8%) strongly disagree.

This result shows that most of the students see the importance of dedicating time by tutors to teaching of independent reading and that tutors who handle tertiary classes should have adequate knowledge of teaching.

Item (13) reflects that the majority of the respondents (66.7%) strongly agree that Almost all syllabuses are designed by local Sudanese expertise and assigned to staff with inadequate knowledge of independent reading (25.8%) agree, (3.3%) not sure, (1.7%) disagree and (2.5%) strongly disagree.

This result reflects clearly that good training on the part of the tutors is essential for the success of the teaching learning operation. Moreover syllabuses should be developed by native speakers' expertise.

As concerns item (14) it is obvious that the majority of the subjects (61.7%) strongly agree that not all the parts of the syllabus share time and weight evenly have the same weight. So independent reading program is neglected. (31.7%) agree, (2.5%) not sure, the same percentage goes for disagree, while (1.7%) strongly disagree with the statement.

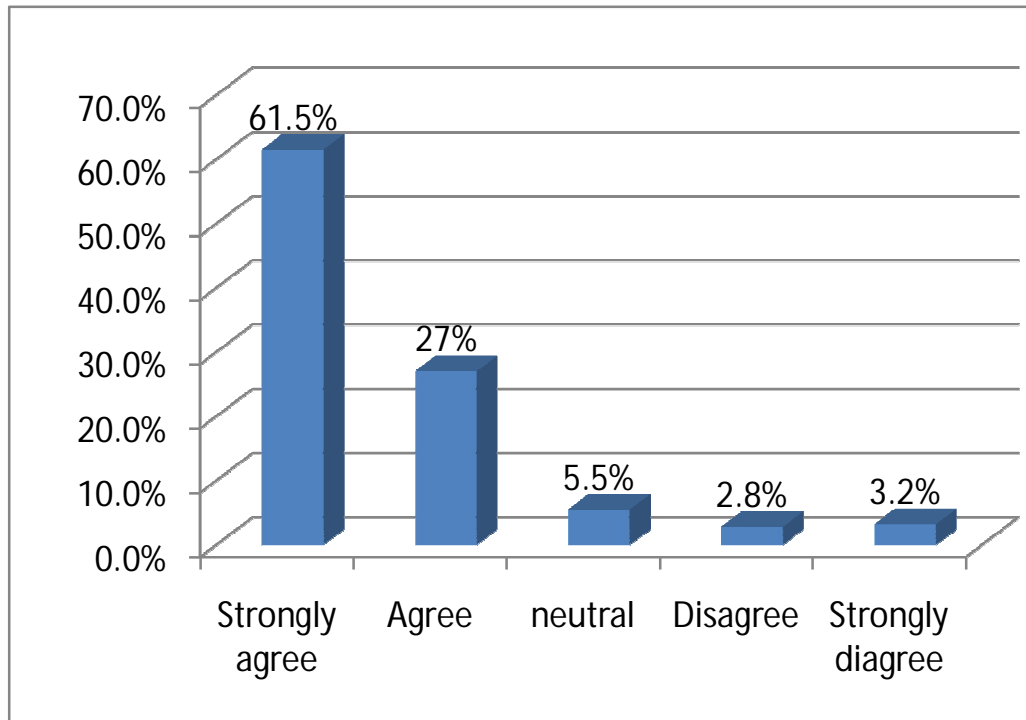
This result indicates that most of the students believe that the syllabus hardly ever caters for independent reading program as important in narrowing the cultural gap and helping students gain more insights.

As regards item (50) we can see that the majority of the study sample (15%) strongly agree that Inclusion of literature as part of the syllabus enriches the syllabus and helps increase the students' vocabulary Learning about the culture of native speakers can encourage reading and implants the idea of reading independently because it narrows the gap of understanding Students studied discourse markers at the secondary schools and there is no need to bother about at university. (28.3%) agree, (14.2%) not sure, (1.7%) disagree whereas (5.8%) strongly disagree.

This result shows that the students are willing to learn about the culture of the native speakers in order to have a good grasp of their ways of life and further help them understand English language perfectly well.

Figure (4.2.3): Percentage distribution of the third hypothesis phrases:





From the table above:

- The value of chi-square for the first phrase is (195.583) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4-6), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the second phrase is (152.333) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4-6), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the third phrase is (187.917) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4-6), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

- The value of chi-square for the fourth phrase is (169.250) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4-6), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.
- The value of chi-square for the fifth phrase is (92.417) with (p-value=0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4-6), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

The value of chi-square for all phrases in the third hypothesis is (767.867), with (p-value =0.000 < 0.05) and depending on the table (4.2.6) and figure (4.2.3), this indicates that there is significant differences at the level (5%) between answers of study individuals and in favor of strongly agree.

The researcher concludes from the above analysis that the third hypothesis “Inclusion of literature books within the English syllabus affects positively the students’ oral communication” has been achieved and in favor of strongly agree.

### 4.3 Testing Hypotheses

It is safely to admit that the 5<sup>th</sup> statement confirms the first hypothesis which states: reading independently encourages students to read different kinds of books and hence promote their reading ability. The first hypothesis as stated as follows *through independent reading students believe that reading different kinds of books can enrich their knowledge and enhance their ability to read* is fully confirmed by fifth statement above.

The second statement of the questionnaire which states that *reading different kinds of books quite voluntarily helps develop knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure as well* confirms readily the second hypothesis postulating that **voluntary reading enhances students' achievement, build fluency and it is a major source of vocabulary acquisition.**

The last statement, statement fifteen confirms the third hypothesis. Statement number fifteen demonstrates that inclusion of literature as part of the syllabus enriches the syllabus and helps increase the students' vocabulary confirms the third hypothesis which indicates that *students think that inclusion of literature as a reading component enriches the syllabus and help improve their vocabulary.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

**Main Findings, Conclusion/s**

**Recommendation/s And Suggetions**

**For Further Studies**

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations And Suggestions For Further Studies**

#### **5.1 Main Findings and Conclusions**

This study is an attempt to investigate the possibility of exploiting independent reading as a strategy with the aim of improving students overall knowledge, enhancing their vocabulary and acquainting them with the native speakers' culture. Moreover, it helps increase classroom independent reading with the aim of enhancing the learner's level of achievement and communicative skills. It aimed at investigating possible ways to boost students' communicative competence via classroom interaction. It also surveyed tutors' views on the issue in question. This study is set out to answer the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs of the students about independent reading and in relation to their overall knowledge and ability to read?
2. What are the benefits students think independent reading can give them?
3. In what ways can the inclusion of literature as part of the syllabus help improve the students' standard and promote their level of achievement?

In order to realize the objectives of the study the study adopted a mixed-methods approach: the descriptive analytical and experimental methods. This allowed the research instruments to complement each other. Hence, an experiment, questionnaires, was used to address the research questions and objectives. The (SPSS) program version 20 was used for data analysis.

As many as 100 pupils participated in the study experiment, 50 teachers completed the questionnaires. The study found out that there are certain factors which can be used to maximize the use of linking devices and hence improves the students' reading skills. The study also found out that the syllabuses pursued at undergraduate level are highly responsible for the inadequacy in using the right way of teaching reading. All the hypotheses have been adequately confirmed each in its proper place.

It was also found that when they are exposed to an additional dose of teaching in the experiment group the students' demonstration has been remarkably improved. They scored higher marks than those on the pre-test. The researcher can take care of this area by injecting a further dose to consolidate it. For people learning English as a second or foreign language, pronouns and the tenses can be difficult because they are expressed differently in their native language. "It" doesn't exist in many languages, reflexive verbs are formed differently, and some languages only have one relative pronoun. Mastering English pronouns takes a lot of time and practice. So, some of the things to be taken care of are those areas which will then have positive effect on the standard of the students and increase their accurate use of linking devices.

There are many factors were found to responsible for improving reading. One such factor is the students' interest through the inclusion of literature as a basic component. If the tutors have managed to capture their students' interest, and include an element of literature as an independent reading this would then promote their communicative abilities, narrow the cultural gap and improve their reading abilities and understanding as their vocabulary soars up and send their classroom interaction sky-rocketing.

It was also demonstrated that talking about the students' background in classroom settings can have a negative impact upon their progress and their interaction in the classroom. A good basic principle is never to ask your students in class anything that you would not wish to be asked yourself. Therefore, entrusting them with the choice of the material they seek to read is one way of distancing ourselves of their personal or private affairs.

The study revealed that carefully selected texts can help narrow the cultural gap and help the student to have a better grasp of the subject matter and improve their communicative competence and classroom independent reading and above all they can observe the role played by good employment of linking devices in making the text intelligible. Consequently, tutors have to be selective as to the type of material they seek to handle with their students.

It was found that introducing authentic material can maximize the students' grasp of the language. It is self-evident that vocabulary acquisition for all second language learners is fundamental. It is true that we can describe a few things without the use of grammar, but can express nothing without vocabulary. Good mastery of vocabulary is essential for second language learners who expect to operate at higher levels. Consequently without including this crucial element of authentic material very little and useful vocabulary will be learned. This can further be augmented by means of including simplified patterns of literary texts which have a good effect over the cultural gap and increasing the students' word power.

New classroom techniques and improved physical environment can also help students' have a better understanding of the texts they are dealing with and therefore maximize their interaction in the classroom. Tutors should not

stick to a single technique which will turn after a short time to be insipid and stale and produce very little learning effect.

Teachers should not interfere regularly and at every step to set the students right. This can have a detrimental effect as it increases the student's apprehension and fear of making mistakes. This certainly maximizes the students' stress beyond manageable levels and can stop interaction half way.

Teachers can help their students by developing their social skills, explains to them its importance, and when it should be used. Elias, et al (1997: 68) point out that appropriate academic, social, and behavioral skills allow students to become a part of the class, the school, and the community. Therefore, teacher may need to have a comprehensive and balanced classroom management plan.

Finally, it was shown that the tutors' role in promoting classroom interaction is remarkably great. Unless the students feel that their tutors are interested in their communication and that they are working hard to push it on, they would not be successful communicators. As it was mentioned above that calling students by their names, can generate a friendly relationship with the students as calling one by one's name is the natural way of drawing our attention. It produces a more secure atmosphere hospitable of interaction.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- (i) In order to take full advantage of their students' willingness to get involved, tutors should capture their students' attention and interest



and allow them to make their choices to the texts or books they seek to read.

- (ii) To increase their students' ability to use literary texts or even literature such as light reading or simplified versions of English literature. This has the effect of reducing the cultural gap, too.
- (iii) Carefully selected material can have a positive effect on the students' overall understanding of the language and can increase their communicative skills.
- (iv) Syllabuses of English language should be brought from abroad if we require improving our students' standards.
- (v) Tutors should be trained to handle their classes in a way that promotes their students' communicative competence.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies**

This study puts forward the following suggestions:

- (i) Future study to be carried out on relatively larger scales as to include a number of universities in order to come out with novel insights in the area in question.
- (ii) Much needed research on teacher/students and students/students interaction which can be advantageous to such kind of studies when incorporated.
- (iii) The present study can be further extended by means of a quasi-research to have better and different results.

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# SUDAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

## A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNIVERSITY TUTORS AT SUDANESE UNIVERSITIES

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire will gather data about the learning strategies students use when setting about learning vocabulary intentionally. The analyzed data will help form a better insight about the nature, causes and how the problem can be addressed.

### Part 1: Personal data:

1. Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Highest degree earned:

Bachelor's Degree

☐

Master's Degree

☐

PhD

☐

3 How many years have you been teaching English

1. year

☐

2-5 years

☐

2. 6-10 years

☐

more than 10 year

☐

## Part 2: General statements:

### Instructions:

- Please choose only one answer for every question or statement.

Use the following scales:

*Strongly agree:* (If you strongly agree with the idea stated in the item).

*Agree:* (If you agree with the idea stated in the item).

*Disagree:* (If you disagree with the idea stated in the item).

*Strongly disagree:* (If you strongly disagree with the idea stated in the item).

No.	STATEMENT	RESPONSE			
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1.	Reading independently (with pleasure,willing,and interest)does not make the reader feel sleepy,tedious and boring,while reading.				
2	Reading independently(with interest,willingness and pleasure) encourage students to read different kinds of books and promote their reading ability.				
3	When you read different kinds of books you develop knowledge,vocabulary and grammatical structure as well.				
4.	When the reader gains knowledge of vocabulary and grammar his level of achievement shall be improved remarkably.				
5	Lack of basic vocabulary affects students'comprehension and their level of achievement negatively.				
6.	Reading independently develops fluency,vocabulary and background knowledge.				
7	Tutors have to encourage their students to read independently.				

8.	The overall environment at undergraduate level is not advantageous to develop independent reading programme.				
9.	Generally ,reading with willingness, interest and pleasure develops students reading growth and receive higher test scores.				
10	The English syllabus is not given enough weight along the lines of other syllabuses.				
11	Presenting students with printed teaching material deprives them from creativity and introduces boredom and consequently abandon reading altogether.				
12	The teaching of English at lower under-graduate levels is entrusted to barely trained tutors,who are not even acquainted with the right methodology of teaching.				
13	Almost all syllabuses are designed by local Sudanese expertise but mostly assigned to staff members with relatively inadequate knowledge in independent reading classroom program.				
14	Not all the parts of the syllabus, i.e the skills are given the same time in handling,and so the independent reading program is neglected.				
15	Learning about the culture of the native speakers can encourage reading and implants the idea of reading independently because it narrows the gap of understanding.				



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



**Sudan University of Science & Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies**

**College of languages**

**Examining The Effect of the Independent Reading on  
Enhancing Undergraduate Students' Level of  
Achievement in English**

**أثر القراءة المستقلة في تعزيز مستوى تحصيل الطالب  
الجامعي للغة الإنجليزية**

**(A case study of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year English- Sudan University of  
Science & Technology)**

*A thesis Submitted in fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Ph-D-In English language (Applied  
linguistics)*

**Submitted by: Breima Hussein Kusheib**

**Supervised by: Dr Mahmoud Ali Ahmed**

**2018 AD**

## Quranic Verse

*In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most merciful*

*“ Read! And your lord is the most generous, who has taught (the writing) by the pen, he has taught man that which he knew not”.*

*" أقرأ وربك الأكرم، الذي علم بالقلم، علم الإنسان ما لم يعلم "*

*صدق الله العظيم*

# Dedication

To my dear parents,to the soul of my deceased wife,to my  
children,brothers,sisters and friends

## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise and great thanks are due to Allah the Almighty who bestowed

Me with patience, perseverance and means to make this study.

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed at investigating how can independent reading enhance the students' level of achievement, It also aimed at exposing teachers' beliefs, understandings and practices around the classroom use of independent reading, as well as to implant the idea of independent reading itself in students. While a review of the literacy research reveals numerous studies linking increased reading to gains in various aspects of reading achievement, questions remain regarding specific nature of the relationship between independent reading and student reading success. A number of statistical techniques were adopted to analyze the results which reflected a noticeable improvement on the part of the experiment group. A pre-test exam was adopted to categorize the sample into two distinct groups, namely experiment and control group. The pre-test exam heavily concentrated on exploring the students' knowledge of independent reading. The population of the study was sixty undergraduate students from Sudan University of Science and Technology. The study results revealed that the readers who read independently perform better and score higher marks in tests.

Questionnaire for the tutors was also used as data collection techniques. Judging by the results attained from the pre-and post tests, it could be safely admitted that the three hypotheses drawn out in the present research have been satisfactorily confirmed. The findings revealed that students' level of achievement can be developed through intensive classroom independent reading program. The researcher concluded by some recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

## المستخلص : Abstract (Arabic Version)

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى تقصى إمكانية تعزيز القراءة المستقلة لمستوى الدارسين وهدفت كذلك الى استقرار اراء و فهم وممارسات الاساتذه بشأن استخدام القراءة المستقلة فى قاعات الدراسة. بالاضافه لغرس مفهوم القراءة المستقلة لدى الطلاب. وبما ان المكاسب التى تحققها القراءة فى مجال نجاح الطلاب عديده، الا ان الاسئله لازالت عالقه فيما يتعلق بطبيعته العلاقه بين القراءة المستقلة وتحصيل الطلاب. وقد تبنت هذه الدراسة عددا من الإحصائيات الفنيه لتحليل النتائج التى اثبتت تحسنا ملحوظا فى مستوى المجموعه التجريبيه.

تم اعداد إمتحان مسبق بغرض توزيع وتصنيف العينة الى مجموعتين مميزتين ، مجموعة تجريبية وأخرى ضابطه تم التركيز على الامتحان الابتدائى بشكل دقيق ليبين مدى فهم الطلاب للقراءة المستقلة. وتتالف العينة من ستون طالب جامعي من جامعه السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا، وقد كشفت النتائج ان الطلاب الذين يختارون القراءة المستقلة ،يتحسن مستواهم ويحرزون نتائج عاليه عند الاختبارات.

تم إعداد أستاذة للأستاذة لتستخدم كبيانات يتم جمعها لغرض البحث . وإستشهاداً بالنتائج التى تحققت من خلال الإختبارات الإبتدائى والنهائى ، فإن ذلك يضمن لنا دقة الإفتراضات الثلاثه التى ضمنت فى البحث لتؤكد توجهات الدراسة . هذا وقد كشفت النتائج النهائية انه يمكن تعزيز مستوى الطلاب، من خلال برنامج مكثف للقراءة المستقلة داخل قاعات الدراسة. وفى الختام قدم الباحث عددا من التوصيات والمقترحات للاستفاده منها فى دراسات لاحقه.

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## **List Of Abbrevations**

IR	Independent reading
NRP	National Reading Panel
SSR	Sustained silent reading
DEAR	Drop everything and read
L2	Second language
DIRT	Daily Independent Reading Time
AR	Accelerated reader
RIF	Reading Is Fundamental
NICHHD	National Institute Of Child,Health And Human Development
NCES	National Cenrte For Education Statistics
OECD	Organization For Economic Co-operation and Development
NAEP	National Assessment For Educational Progress