

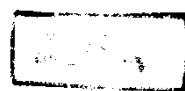
097

a. r.

**A STUDY OF SOME FACTORS AFFECTING
READING COMPREHENSION AMONG STUDENTS**

**AT FACULTY OF EDUCATION
ASSIUT UNIVERSITY**

A Thesis Submitted to The Faculty of Education
Ain Shams University (Curriculum Department)



378.14
S. A

In Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements
For The Degree of Master of Arts in
TEFL

BY
Saber Ahmed Galal



Supervised by
Dr. Abdel Messih Daoud. Dr. Zeinab Ali El-Naggar
Professor of TEFL Lecturer of Curriculum and TEFL

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY



1987

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وعلمك ما لم تكن تعلم وكان فضل الله عليك عظيما
« صدق الله العظيم »



*O, My Lord Increase
Me in Knowledge*

Acknowledgments

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to those who have been instrumental in helping me to achieve a life long goal, i.e. Completion of an M.A degree.

My deepest gratitude is expressed to my advisor professor Abdel Messih Daoud, for his patience and wise counsel throughout the planning and writing of the study and to Dr. Zinab El Naggar, for her help and support throughout the application and writing of the study.

This study could not have been completed without the co-operation of Dr. Jill Scharer who was very patient and offered help and wise counsel in the area of reading throughout the planning and writing of the study.

Many thanks should also be given to Mr. James Pett who helped me in the first stages of the research.

Thanks are also extended to Dr. David Carroll for his assistance in designing the tests.

I am grateful to Mrs. Louise Oppermann for her help in administering the tests and to Mr. Willie Oppermann for typing the thesis.

Last, but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to Bousina Abo-Seif for her generous support of books needed for the study.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

- Background of the problem	1
- Context of the problem	2
- Statement of the problem	3
- The research questions	6
- Rationale for the Research Questions	7
- Need and significance of the study	7
- Definitions of the Terms	10
- Limitations of the study	12
- Organisation of the remaining chapters	13

Chapter 2

- Related Review of Literature	14
- The reading process	15
- Factors affecting reading comprehension	17
- Readability	17
- Syntactic Complexity	19
- Semantic Complexity	20
- Methods of assessing readability	22
- Studies related to readability	26

- Reading Skills	29
- The Effect of Cultural Knowledge on Reading	38
- Summary	41
- <u>Chapter 3</u>	
- Introduction	44
- Research Design	44
- Subjects	44
- Materials and Instruments	45
- The Readability Formula and the Smog Test	48
- The Reading Skills Tests	49
- Questionnaire	62
- Summary	63
- <u>Chapter 4</u>	
- Results and Discussion	64
- The Readability of the Novels	64
- Discussion	72
- Reading Skills Tests Results	76
- Discussion	82
- The Questionnaire Results	84
- Conclusion	101
- Summary	103

- <u>Chapter 5</u>	
- Summary	I06
- Problem	I06-
- Limitations of the Study	I07
- Research Questions	I08
- Sample	I09
- Procedures	I09 -
- Results	III -
- Recommendations	II3
- Suggestions for Further Research	II4
- references	II6 -
- Appendices	I27

Chapter One

The Problem

CHAPTER 1

1 - Background of the Problem

Reading is a very important skill because of its contribution to the development of overall language proficiency. Comprehensible input gained in reading contributes to the general competence that underlies both spoken and written performance. (Krashen, 1983)

Reading is the primary source of acquiring knowledge at the college level (Balser, 1976). In order for students to be successful they must perform satisfactorily on course achievement tests which are usually taken from the material in the course textbook. Thus, an important criterion for success in college involves the ability to read and comprehend textbook materials.

Problems can result from reading difficulties and can lead to failure, rejection and dropping out of school or college. Therefore, the ability of students to understand the material in the course textbook is usually necessary for their success in the course. In this process therefore, the process of choosing college textbooks and reading materials

which have a readability level suitable to the students taking the course is important, and on the other hand, students should have the skills necessary for reading.

Students who are enrolled in teacher education courses are expected to have the abilities and skills necessary to successfully decode and encode printed material in the required textbooks. Another supposition is that textbooks are chosen by professionals who are knowledgeable in the context and readability expectancy levels of materials.

The preceding assumptions are deceptive because it can no longer be assumed that students have the basic reading skills when they enter higher education. The higher education system enables many students with skill deficiencies to enroll in colleges.

Several studies (Crooks 1975; Hafter & Douglas 1958; Major & Collet 1981 ;Cline 1972) have been conducted abroad and indicated that the majority of students have textbooks assigned to them that are above their reading level.

2 - Context of the Problem

Students at the secondary stage have little experience in

reading English as a foreign language (EFL). Their main experience in reading is reading short extracts from Practice and Progress and one short simplified non authentic literary text in each academic year. In the school leaving year, the final exam (which is set by the Ministry of Education) involves comprehension questions which require short answers. When the students join the university, the situation becomes different. Students are exposed to authentic long novels which are not written for instructional purposes but they are written for native speakers of the language or for people who have a good command of the language. Students at this stage get no training in reading skills.

3 - Statement of the Problem

The reading material in current use at the faculty of Education, Assiut University is overloaded with unfamiliar vocabulary. Whatever the purpose of teaching literature is, students will not be able to achieve it unless they can read with tolerable ease. This suggests that the new words in a text should be minimal. Nutall (1982) suggests only one percent of words should be new to the reader, that is about five words per page. Unfortunately, literature books, especially novels, have a much higher per centage than that.

Besides, there are also syntactic and semantic difficulties. The students are thus forced into an activity which can only be a dreary task for them. The laborious deciphering of words and expressions that they often do with the help of a dictionary not only slows down the reading speed but it also interrupts the readers' thought process which should be engaged in following the continued development of thought in the text. (Vid Nutall 1982)

Very often a teacher resorts to paraphrasing to overcome linguistic difficulties. Such a procedure does not only have the effect of misrepresenting the nature of literature but also ⁱⁿ creating a resistance to it in the readers' mind. (Widdowson 1975). The novels used in the faculties of Education were probably recommended with minimal consideration of whether they are linguistically suitable for the level of the students. Pett (1984) in the CDELT Document stresses the importance of measuring the readability of texts for all concerned with text selection.

Furthermore, students seem to lack the reading skills necessary for reading and comprehension. Pett(1984a-b) gives results for reading comprehension using the English Proficiency Examination for Egypt(EPEE) in Faculties of Education throughout Egypt which support this idea.