

## **Pedagogical Techniques Used by ELT Teachers to Develop Reading Skills at Secondary Level**

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### **Abstract**

The present study focuses on investigating pedagogical techniques in relation to developing reading skills at secondary level in the schools of Jaranwala. The researchers have selected the area of reading skills as it is esteemed as mother of all skills. As students learn to pronounce and use new words and the input increases, students can improve other related skills writing and speaking skills. The contextual use of words can evoke an image in the mind of the reader and pave the way for better understanding of the word usage and its definitions rather than mere factual information of a dictionary. The researchers have been teaching English for more than five years and observed that most of the students feel difficulty in reading even after being promoted to the secondary classes. In this vein, an investigation of the students' failure or unable to read correctly at this stage is an interesting avenue which is relatively less explored. For that purpose, the researchers have formulated a questionnaire to collect data from the language learners. The analysis of the collected data has been carried out by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in terms of representation of table of mean, median, mode and standard deviation. The results show that teachers should revise their teaching techniques to improve the reading skills of the students. The present study is significant as it recommends the language teachers to enhance their teaching methodology in the diverse field of ELT.

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical techniques, Reading skills, ELT, Teaching methodologies*

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**Introduction**

The pedagogical techniques to develop reading skills have been one of the disciplines of great importance in English language teaching and learning. There is a very strong relation between pedagogical techniques employed by ELT teachers to develop reading skills and learner's performance.

Urquhart and Weir (1998) define reading as a kind of process through which a reader tries to receive and interpret information presented in written language. Reading is a cognitive process by which a reader decodes the written symbols to construct meanings. It is a mode of acquiring language, communicating information and sharing ideas. Reading is a kind of process in which we look at a continuation of written symbols and try to get the meaning out of them. Reading is a type of 'process' by means of which a reader interprets and understands the meanings of text (Williams, 1996). The reading process involves identification of letters, recognition of meaningful combination of words that helps a reader in developing understanding and comprehension. It has been observed that the process of reading communicates the meaning between the written symbols and its reader. This process of reading comprises of three stages.

**Pre-reading stage:** In this very first stage a reader utilizes his background knowledge, analyzes preview of the text and develops a purpose for reading. It is a useful technique utilized by learners for looking at the title, list of contents and selection of materials for prediction and information. While reading stage incurs when the reader makes predictions of received information and subsequently confirms and revises the predictions. The post-reading stage happens after reading the text and it allows the reader to restate the story. It also discusses the components of the story and answers some of questions which help the readers to draw comparison.

Reading purpose varies from individual to individual because of their personal achievement, experiences, milieu plus schemata (Nuttall, 1982). It can be aimed at multifaceted steps. The learners read for the understanding of written language to give responses. Some of them read for solving the problems of language and to improve their language skills, while, some for seeking pleasure and getting information, and some for decoding message from the written documents. Doff (1994) demonstrates that reading is generally purpose-oriented as sometimes a reader reads to get information and to enrich his knowledge. Additionally, it also imparts clarification of any idea, concept or to interact with the text.

There are various techniques and strategies for improving reading skills of learners at secondary school level. Scanning means a quick reading for the specific information, for example, a list of contacts in a mobile directory. On the other hand, skimming involves extracting a common idea of the text. A reader can skim titles, sub-headings, diagrams or maps. It may allow a reader to read up to 1000 words per minute.

### **Research Questions**

The present study revolves around the following questions:

1. What pedagogical techniques are being practiced by ELT teachers to develop reading skills in Government Boys Secondary Schools of Jaranwala?
2. To what extent the practiced reading syllabi and textual materials are helpful for the secondary level learners in developing reading skills?

### **Significance of the Study**

The present study is a significant contribution to the field of teaching and learning the reading skills for instructors as well as learners. It introduces a range of new techniques and activities that can be executed in the classroom in order to develop reading skills. Moreover, the study focuses on the pedagogical techniques used by ELT teachers at secondary level. Furthermore, it examines the prescribed syllabi for the development of reading skills at the level of secondary schools. In order to cope with the needs of modern times, in which there is plethora of published literature, the ability to read English language text must be cultivated. It has been observed that the reading proficiency of secondary school learners' is usually not up to the mark. Therefore, the study is significant in terms of suggesting effective pedagogical techniques involved in learning of English language.

### **Literature Review**

This section presents the review of literature related to the current study. Reading skills has been an area of great interest of English language teaching. Younas et al. (2019) have explored the role played by teachers and students of ESL in utilizing pedagogical techniques in order to develop reading skills at secondary schools of Lahore. The researchers have examined pedagogical techniques employed in both rural and urban secondary schools by doing quantitative analysis. The study stresses the importance of extensive reading and motivating the students to do that after tracing out the problems faced by the students.

Ninsuwan (2015) has posited that reading aloud is an effective strategy in order to develop reading skills among EFL learners and to teach English in general. The researchers have done a pre-test and post-test study by taking 20 respondents in order to know the effectiveness of reading aloud in developing a language. The study emphasizes self-directed learning and the importance of reading in comprehending vocabulary and techniques involved in the process of learning English.

Nurie (2017) has focused on the pedagogical practices employed by EFL instructors at secondary level in order to teach reading comprehension to the learners. The study examines the teaching strategies utilized by teachers in order to develop reading comprehension among learners and has found that all teachers exhibit similar strategies

which include assigning homework, expecting accurate answers from learners and a brief account of the topics. The research has indicated the needs of teaching reading comprehension in a methodical way.

Phakiti (2006) has highlighted the issues on pedagogical and theoretical levels while teaching strategic reading to ESL learners. The issues on theoretical level are studied on the kinds of automatic and strategic reading, competence of learners and the way human process information. The issues on pedagogical level discusses prior studies done on instructions regarding strategic reading and formulation of reading strategies that will result in reading competence of learners and other techniques of learning.

Ahmed (2019) has recently done an innovative study based on using WhatsApp as a tool of pedagogy to improve the reading as well as writing skills as Second Language learners. The study is based on a pre-test and a post-test where 20 participants were made to chat and comment on news articles in a group which resulted in developing their vocabulary, grammar, skills of reading and writing. The study stresses the importance of using mobile application tools for language learning.

Abbott and Wingard (1981) assert that an effective technique to read something is along with its audio script. It also builds vocabulary and understanding of reading. It is a constructive technique to play audio script for listening while reading English textbooks. The researchers have investigated the interaction between cognitive strategies and different psychosocial variables. Among different variables, the investigation of the interaction between language ability and cognitive thinking process has been a particular interest to some researchers.

The above-mentioned researches have focused on pedagogical techniques used by the teachers to develop reading skills but the problem has not been addressed in ELT context in a remote area for instance, in the schools of Jaranwala. Therefore, the study has investigated the techniques used by school teachers in the area to find out the problems faced by the students and to provide solutions to the identified problems.

## **Methodology**

The present study is quantitative in nature as it explores existing pedagogical techniques and practices used by ELT teachers and the extracts of reading materials available for developing reading skills at the secondary level. The random sampling technique is opted to select the required samples. The researchers have used the questionnaire as a tool of data collection. The questionnaire centralizes the inquiry regarding practiced techniques of reading employed by the teachers in the classrooms. The questionnaires were administered to the students and a total of 240 respondents participated who were studying at secondary schools (both urban and rural) of Jaranwala. After obtaining data, the participants' responses were analyzed through SPSS (statistics 20). Afterwards, the analyzed responses were represented in graphs and tables of mean, median, mode and

standard deviation. Later on, the interpretation of data was been given. In the end, different statistical tests were employed for data analysis to get the results of the study.

### Analysis and Interpretation

This section deals with analysis of the collected data regarding pedagogical techniques used by ELT teachers to nurture reading skill at secondary level. As it has already been mentioned that this study is based on quantitative approach so, it investigates the existing pedagogical practices in the cultivation of reading skills. The data collected through the questionnaire from students is presented in bar and pie graphs. The responses of the questionnaire have been presented in frequencies, percentage and cumulative percentage. Descriptive statistics has been applied to draw out the results through SPSS software (version 20). The frequencies have been shown on bar graph and mean, mode, median and standard deviation is presented in tabulated form.

Table 1:

*Does your teacher test reading skill after taking charge of the class?*

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Valid N        | 240     |
| Missing        | 0       |
| Mean           | 2.5208  |
| Median         | 2.5000  |
| Mode           | 1.00    |
| Std. Deviation | 1.27725 |

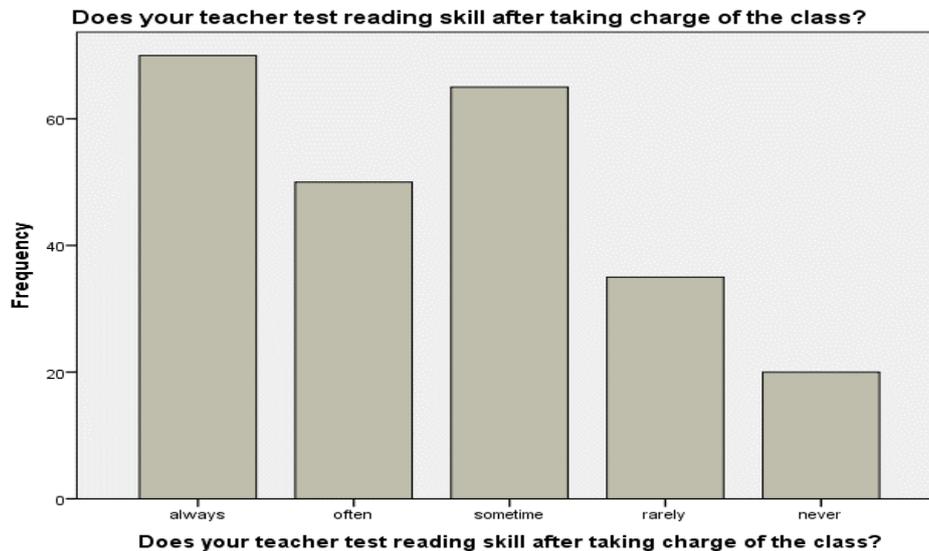


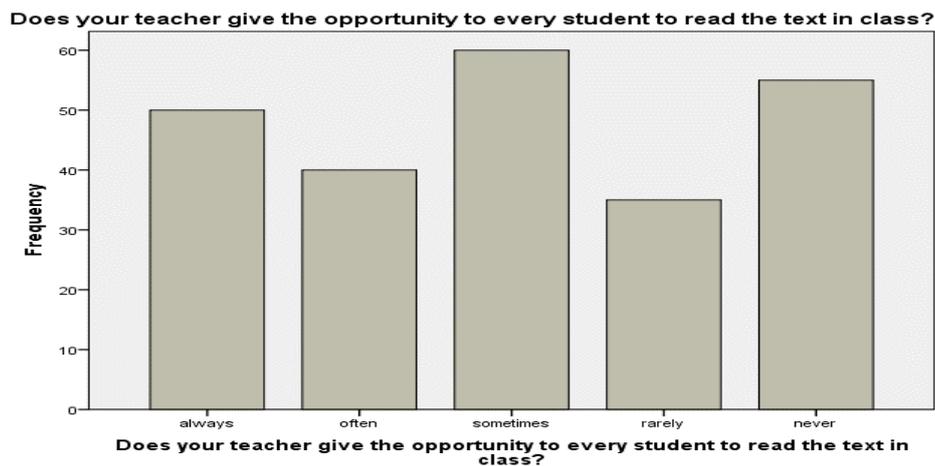
Figure 1: Pre-test of reading skill of the students N=240

Figure 1 shows responses of the students about test of reading skill. 29.1% students responded that their teachers 'always' take pre-test of reading skills of their learners. 20.8% of the respondents replied 'often'. The response rate of students to 'sometimes' remained (27.0%). A small number (14.5%) and (8.3%) of students selected the option 'rarely' and 'never' respectively. Mean score was 2.5.

Table 2:

*Does your teacher give the opportunity to every student to read the text in class?*

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 3.0208  |
| Median         |         | 3.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 3.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.43899 |



*Figure 2: Reading opportunity to every student* N=240

Figure 2 depicts the results about opportunity to read the text by everyone. 50 participants responded to the option 'always'. There were 40 students who told that everyone had 'often' chance to read the text in class. The candidates who chose 'sometimes' were 60 in number. 35 and 55 selected 'rarely' and 'never' respectively. Mean score was 3.0. It is very important to keep in mind that every student must have equal chance to read in the class. It will help in finding out the nature of problems faced by the students.

Table 3:

*Does your teacher make group/pair of the students to read the text in the class?*

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 2.8958  |
| Median         |         | 3.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 3.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.04780 |

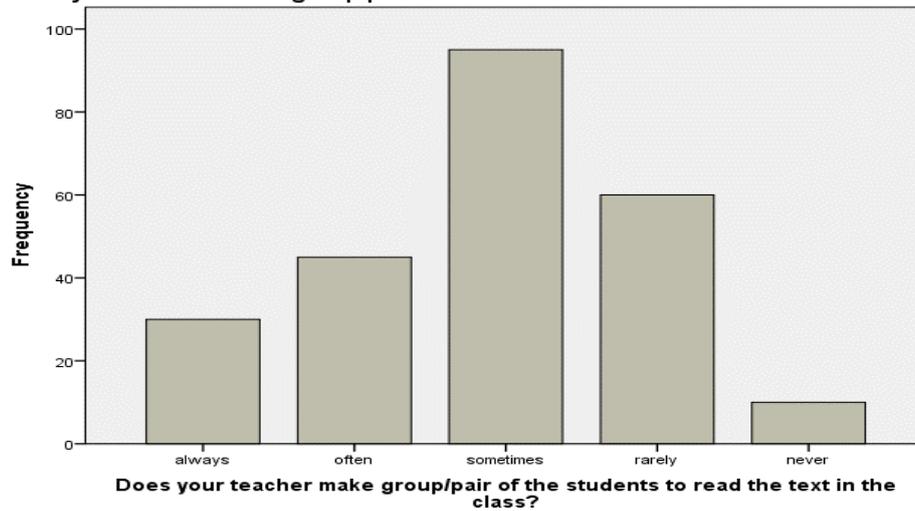
**Does your teacher make group/pair of the students to read the text in the class?***Figure 3: Making group/pair of the students to read the text* N=240

Figure 3 demonstrates that 30 students responded 'always', 45 reported 'often', 95 chose 'sometimes', 60 selected 'rarely' and only 10 replied 'never'. Mean score remained 2.8, median was 3.0 and standard deviation was 1.0.

Table 4: *Does your teacher prefer loud reading of the text in the class?*

|                | Valid N | 240    |
|----------------|---------|--------|
| Mean           |         | 1.3333 |
| Median         |         | 1.0000 |
| Mode           |         | 1.00   |
| Std. Deviation |         | .77442 |

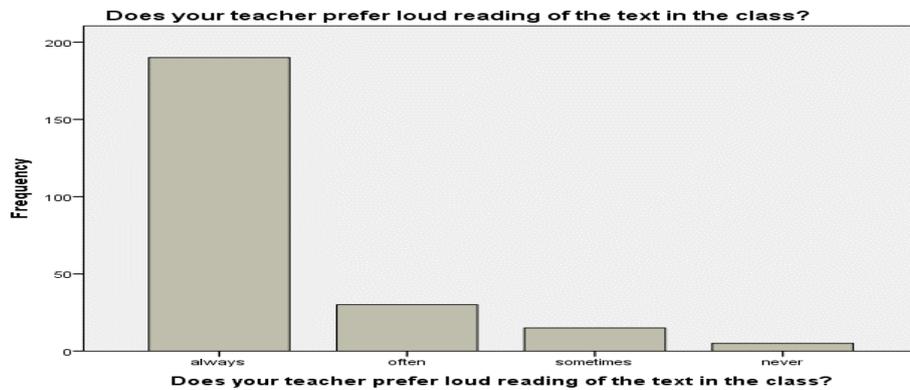


Figure 4: Loud reading of the text N=240

Figure 4 shows that no participant reported about the preference of loud reading of the text in the class. 05 students selected the option 'rarely'. Out of 240 students, 15, 30 and 190 participants replied to 'sometimes', 'often' and 'always' respectively. Mean score remained 1.3.

Table 5:

Does your teacher call the students on the dais to read the text in front of the class?

| Valid N        | 240     |
|----------------|---------|
| Mean           | 3.2875  |
| Median         | 3.0000  |
| Mode           | 4.00    |
| Std. Deviation | 1.28259 |

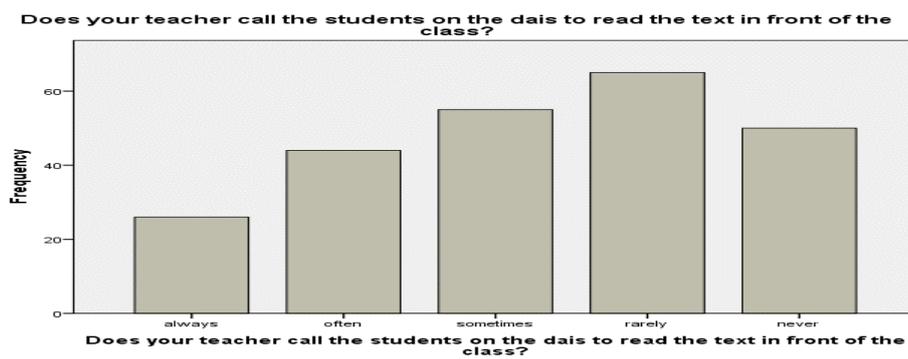


Figure 5: Calling the students on the dais to read the text N=240

Figure 5 shows the outcome that 26 respondents opined to prefer 'always' against the statement. 44 told that their teacher calls the students on the stage to read the text in class. 55, 65 and 50 candidates chose the option 'sometimes', 'rarely' and 'never' respectively. Mean score was 3.2. The students should be encouraged to come in front of the class to read aloud which will minimize their shyness and encourage them to participate in other activities of learning of the class.

Table 6:

*Does your teacher give the meaning of difficult words before starting the lesson?*

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 1.8208  |
| Median         |         | 1.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 1.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.17736 |

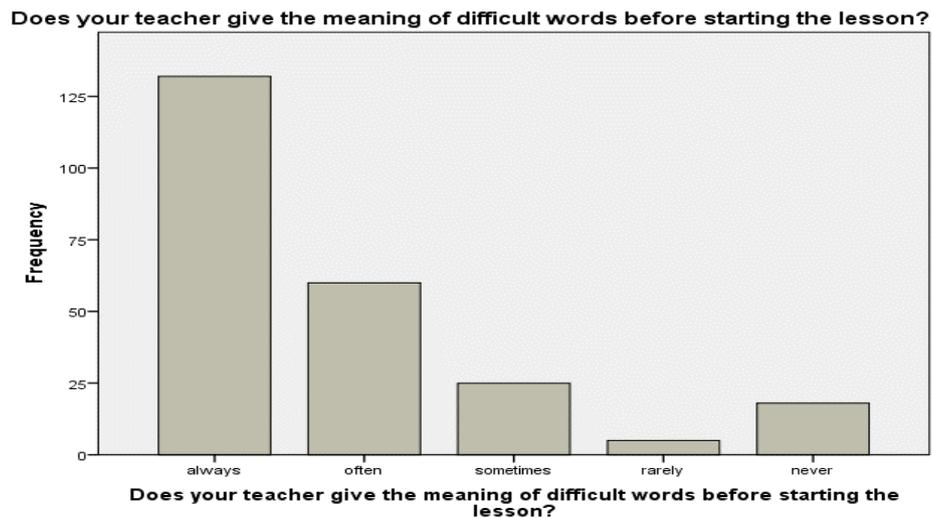


Figure 6: Giving the meaning of difficult words before the lesson N=240

Figure 6 indicates about the statement of giving the meaning of unknown vocabulary before starting the reading text. There are 150 participants who gave their opinion that their teacher 'always' told the meaning of difficult words. 60 reported 'often' while 25 of the total suggested 'sometimes' and only 5 circled 'rarely'. There was none who replied 'never'. Mean score was 1.8. In line with the above-mentioned frequencies, Rehman (2007) discusses that the teacher should facilitate his learner. He must create an environment where learners can learn by doing, acting and participating.

Table 7: Does your teacher give the meaning of difficult words during the lesson?

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 2.8750  |
| Median         |         | 3.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 4.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.23791 |

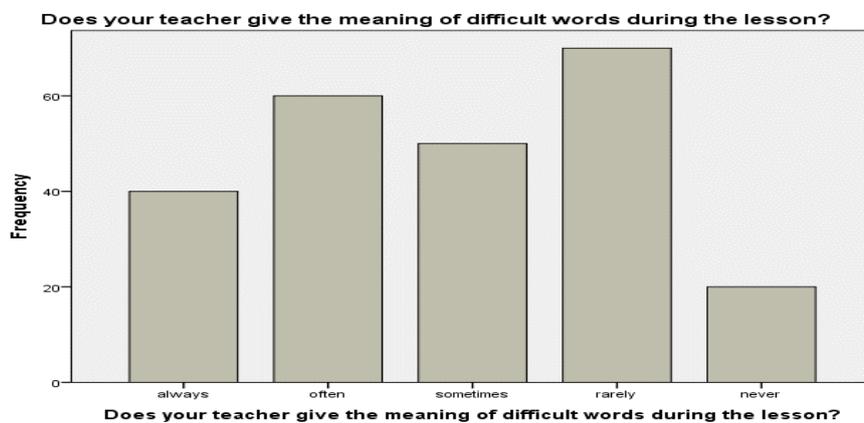


Figure 7: Giving the meaning of difficult words during the lesson N=240

Figure 7 shows the frequencies about the statement of telling the meaning of difficult words during the lesson. 40 students reported that their teacher 'always' told meaning during the lesson. 60 participants expressed their opinion in favor of 'often', while 50 selected the option 'sometimes'. 70 and 20 respondents of the total circled the option 'rarely' and 'never' respectively. Mean score was 2.8. Bukhari (2011) recommends that teacher should employ innovative techniques in reading class.

Table 8: Does your teacher encourage the use of dictionary to your students in the class?

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 3.1292  |
| Median         |         | 4.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 4.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.33350 |

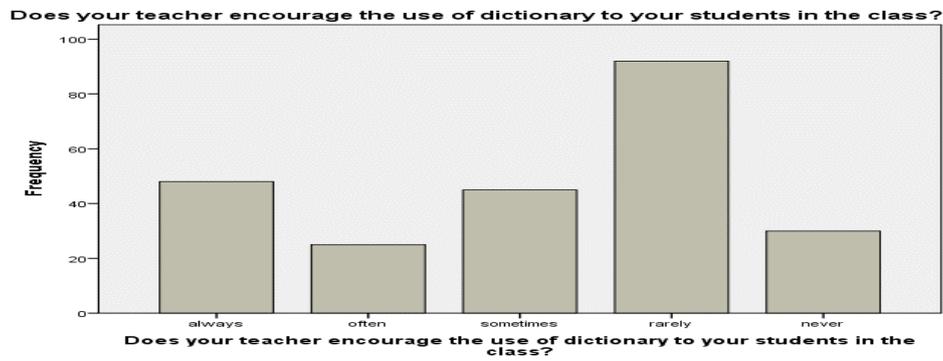


Figure 8: Encouraging students to use dictionary N=240

Figure 8 identifies the frequencies of the responses that only 10 students responded ‘always’ in question of using dictionary in the classroom. 25 of the participants reported ‘often’. A large number 130 of respondents chose ‘rarely’ and the rest of 30 selected ‘never’. Mean score remained 3.1. Students should be provided English dictionaries which can develop the habit of locating and searching the meaning of unknown words personally. Nuttal (1982) makes a teacher responsible for providing all kind of allied material for successful learning.

Table 9: Does your teacher assign homework for the development of reading skill to your students?

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 2.6042  |
| Median         |         | 3.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 3.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.33726 |

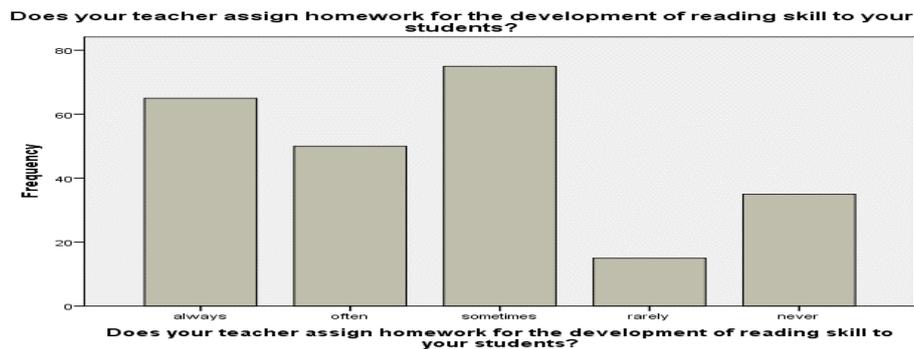


Figure 9: Assignment of reading homework N=240

Figure 9 shows the frequencies that 80 participants reported that their teachers 'always' assign homework for reading. 50 and 70 candidates opted for the option 'often' and 'sometimes' respectively. The respondents who selected 'rarely' and 'never' were 25 and 15 respectively. Mean score was 2.6. For the development of reading skills, the students should be assigned to read different kinds of text at their home. Bukhari (2011) encourages the learners that they should directly think in target language rather than converting it into their own language.

Table 10: Does your teacher help in reading books (short stories or novel) other than the syllabus?

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 3.3333  |
| Median         |         | 4.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 5.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.60195 |

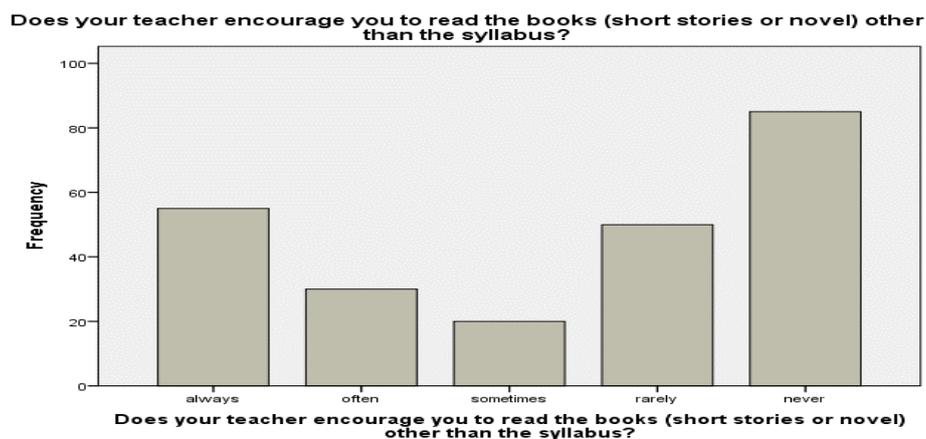


Figure 10: Reading of books other than syllabus N=240

Figure 10 summarizes the results about reading books other than syllabus in which a small number 3, 7 and 20 of students opted for the option 'always', 'often' and 'sometimes' respectively. 50 participants reported to prefer 'rarely'. Most of the respondents selected 'never' which is the largest quantity of the responses. Mean score was 3.3. Bukhari (2011) discusses the role of learners that they should establish co-operative societies and make plans to visit different spots of libraries, participate in

exhibition of books, and share their information about valuable books available in the market.

Table 11 *Does your teacher provide English newspaper to you to read it?*

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 3.8125  |
| Median         |         | 5.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 5.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.52601 |

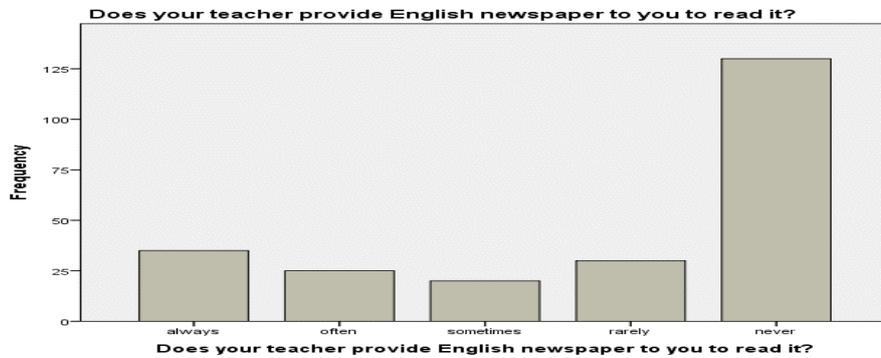


Figure 11: Availability of English Newspaper N=240

Figure 11 demonstrates that there was no student at all who selected the option ‘always’. Only 5 candidates out of 240 chose ‘often’ and 15 said ‘sometimes’ against the statement of providing English newspaper to the students to read it. 40 respondents responded that their teachers ‘rarely’ did this activity. Many students expressed their opinion in favor of the category ‘never’. Mean score was 3.8. English newspaper should be provided to the students to broaden the viewpoints of the students and to strengthen their critical skills.

Table 12: *Does your teacher allow you to visit library for English magazines?*

|                | Valid N | 240     |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Mean           |         | 3.5000  |
| Median         |         | 4.0000  |
| Mode           |         | 5.00    |
| Std. Deviation |         | 1.27742 |

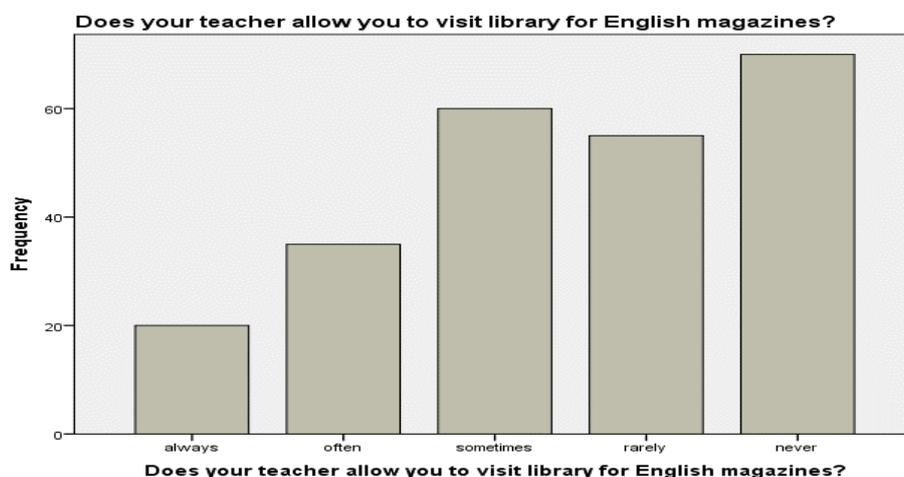


Figure 12: Reading of English magazines N=240

Figure 12 highlights that 20 students told that their teachers 'always' allowed them to visit library for English magazines. 35 candidates reported 'often'. The respondents who selected the option 'sometimes' were 60 in number. 55 and 70 participants expressed their opinion in favor of 'rarely' and 'never' respectively. Mean score remained 3.5. Bukhari (2011) suggests students should make co-operative societies. Knowledge of different kinds of books can be gained by visiting libraries which is a very healthy activity as it promotes confidence among the students.

## Findings

This section deals with the results of the study drawn from students' responses in the questionnaire.

1. Most of the learners responded that their teachers always tested their reading skill after taking charge of the class while, a small number of learners responded that their teachers never do so.
2. In response to the question of giving opportunity to everyone to read the text in the class, half of them replied in affirmation.
3. Most of the candidates replied that their teachers made pair and group for reading practice in the class for the development of reading skill.
4. A large number of the participants replied that their teachers mostly preferred loud reading rather than silent reading.
5. Most of the participants responded that their teachers did not call the students for reading text on the stage while some of them responded positively.
6. A large number of learners expressed their opinion that their teachers always told the meaning of complicated vocabulary before starting the lesson.

7. Most of the students replied that their teachers 'rarely' gave the meaning of difficult words during the lesson while a few of them responded that they 'always' did so.
8. Most of the participants responded in question of assigning reading homework that their teachers always assigned homework for reading while, a few of them responded in negation.
9. A large number of candidates replied that most of the teachers never encouraged reading the books other than syllabus.
10. A great number of participants chose the answer 'never' in response of providing facility of English newspaper to the students.
11. Many of the students responded that their teachers did not allow them to visit library to read English magazines while a little number of them said that they were always allowed to visit library.
12. Most of the students commented that their teachers 'rarely' encouraged the use of dictionary to find meanings of difficult words while the students who responded to 'always' were least in number.

## **Discussion**

The present research investigates the problem of reading skills by exploring the existing pedagogical techniques practiced by the English language teachers to hone the reading skills of the learners. It also endeavors to find what reading components have been made part of syllabus for the development of reading skills of secondary level students.

At first, a detailed introduction of the study is described in which importance of the reading skills is highlighted. Of all the basic four skills, reading skills hold a very important place. The problem of reading skills is faced by many students at the secondary level, as analysis and findings approve that 70 participants agreed that their teachers do not encourage them to visit the library. The text materials are found insufficient for the improvement of the reading skills of the students at the secondary level. Moreover, in question 11, the mean score of 3.8 suggests that teachers did not encourage reading English newspaper among students. Likewise, in question 10, the mean score of 3.3 describes that the participants are not encouraged to read English literature besides their course books. In addition, the pedagogical techniques are also inappropriate to develop reading skills as it is evident that 80 students agreed that their teachers assigned the reading tasks as homework activity.

Question 8 illustrates that the students are not encouraged to open dictionaries in their classrooms as 130 participants agreed to 'rarely'. The mean score of 3.2 in question 5 represents that the technique of calling the students on the dais for reading is not visible in practice. In question 6, the mean score of 1.8 depicts that the teachers provide students the meanings of difficult words.

The study highlights various problems in pedagogical strategies used by teachers including lack of interaction between students and teachers, poor participation of students, no access to libraries or newspaper, less focus on reading material other than the syllabus, insufficient syllabus and less focus on vocabulary and using dictionary.

### **Conclusion**

The present study explores pedagogical techniques employed by ELT teachers for the improvement of reading skills at secondary level schools of Jaranwala. The findings of the research indicate that there is a dire need to work on cultivating reading skills as reading plays a vital role in language acquisition. In Pakistan, English is used as a second language and its proficiency is the utmost requirement as it is the medium used in educational institutions, government sectors, judiciary and other departments, etc. Therefore, learning of English is mandatory in order to excel. It must be incorporated from the very beginning of basic education at school level. The study attempts to overcome the above-mentioned problems related to pedagogical strategies utilized by the teachers. In this regard, the research is significant for researchers who want to explore the reading problems of the learners.

### **Recommendations**

Keeping in view the results of this work, following recommendations are suggested to develop the reading skills:

1. The present study recommends that the secondary level students' reading skills should be tested to know their present ability to read a textbook as Bukhari (2011) suggests that Pre-Entry Test should be conducted for advanced students. The reading components should also be kept in view at the time of designing and development of the syllabus.
2. The technique of repeated reading of the text should be encouraged among the students at the level of secondary classes to build reading capacity as Bukhari (2011) recommends that Repeated Reading Method should be implemented.
3. Working in pairs and groups should be introduced among the students at the secondary schools as it is observed that most of the students learn better from their peers and it also helps in boosting confidence.
4. For slow learners, the remedy is to introduce simple and familiar topics related to their social context with easy vocabulary.
5. The present syllabus of secondary school is not effective for the development of reading skills. Therefore, it must be updated or revised up to the required level of learning.
6. In ELT class, loud reading of the text should be practiced by the learners of secondary school as they would listen the loud reading and it would assist in speaking correct

words. Every learner must have equal chance to read in the class for the development of reading skills.

7. The techniques of skimming (to read a text in the shortest possible time to get an overall idea about it) and scanning (to read a text quickly to get a specific information, name or thing etc.) of a text must be developed as a part of teaching and learning reading ability in the syllabus of the secondary school.

8. English newspapers and magazines should be provided to the students at secondary level and they must have an easy access to visit libraries of their institutions for reading English material other than their syllabus.

9. The selection of text material for the secondary level should be based on all types of writings; narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository and literary etc.

10. The selection of reading text material should encompass interesting task-based activities that must engage every learner in the reading process for the development of reading skills.

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