

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



An Examination of two Approaches to Teaching Reading Comprehension Texts to Middle School Students in Iran

[PP: 69-78]

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ABSTRACT

There are few research studies on the effects of teaching comprehension strategies to teaching reading comprehension to young adults in elementary school (middle school students). By using an experimental design, we evaluated two approaches to teaching reading comprehension texts to young adults in four seventh and eighth grade classrooms: STS and TTS. In plain terms the study was to examine whether it is better and more efficient to teach reading comprehension texts based on the students' topic selection (TTS) or the teacher's topic selection (STS). To achieve this aim, the researcher adopted the experimental approach and employed a sample consisting of 96 male students aged between 16 and 17 studying in the third grade of high school. Based on the scores on their final English exam (i.e., the pre- test), the participants were found to be initially homogeneous, and were then randomly classified into two groups. One group consisting of (45) students as an experimental group where the teacher dictated the topics and the other consisting of (51) students as a control group where the students chose topics of their own interest. An independent t-test run to compare the performance of the two groups revealed that there was a significant difference between the two groups such that the TTS group significantly outperformed the STS group.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Reading Comprehension, Topic Selection, Reading Materials

ARTICLE	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
INFO	20/08/2020	25/09/2020	10/10/2020

Suggested citation:

Tajik, A. (2020). An Examination of Two Approaches to Teaching Reading Comprehension Texts to Middle School Students in Iran. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 8(3). 69-78.

1. Introduction

Every teacher knows all learners have different needs; therefore, it is believed that there will never be one set method that works for each child. Many researchers, however, agree that by considering some components like choice, authenticity, and time into literacy instruction, when implemented naturally, encourage and enable readers to flourish (Guthrie, 2003; Miller, 2002; Rasinski & Padak, 2004). In a commentary from The instructor, Guthrie (2003) supports the component of choice by stating, "when teachers support autonomy by encouraging the free expression of opinions, providing choice for learning tasks, and welcoming students to participate in the higher cognitive process, students increase their commitment to learning" (p. 438). In their book, *Effective Reading Strategies: Teaching Children Who Find Reading Difficult*, Rasinski and Padak (2004) stresses the importance of authenticity in literacy instruction. They believe that irrespective of how literacy instruction is delivered, it'll not connect with

students if it's not meaningful to students. At the start of their book, they state:

We believe that children are possibly to interact in reading once they perceive it as meaningful, instrumental, and/or enjoyable. When students see that reading is beneficial, playful, or interesting, they're more likely to drag out books, newspapers, or other written materials and browse with purpose and fervor. (p. 5)

Research has also suggested fluency and therefore the level at which children enjoy reading are associated with engagement with materials that are interesting to them for extended periods of your time (Smith, 2005). In the *Becoming a Nation of Readers* report, some research studies suggested that, in typical primary grade classrooms, students spend only 7-8 minutes of their school day reading on their own; in typical intermediate grade classrooms, children read independently for less than about quarter-hour throughout the varsity day (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; as reported by Rasinski & Padak, 2004).



The idea that topic choice has an impact on both reading comprehension and learning is not new. Nearly two centuries ago, believed that there is a very close relation between interest and learning arguing that interest is a primary force behind recognition of an object, meaningful learning, long-term storage of knowledge, and motivation for continued learning (Stokes, 2020).

Reading is the method for learning anything one desires. It is an essential tool if one is to continuously increase the level of knowledge throughout his/her lifespan; however, adolescents today are not actively engaged in daily reading by taking advantage of the books at their disposal. According to Torppa, Vasalampi, Eklund, Sulkunen, and Niemi (2020), it appears that most students in senior high schools do not read for enjoyment or for feeding their imaginations. Assignments pertaining to reading comprehension given by teachers and educators confound the problem. Most students detest what they are forced to read, but read it because they have to. In turn, reading becomes more like a chore and constantly a problem is created (Allred & Cena, 2020). According to recent research, there is a link between motivation and achievement. Motivation theorists attempt to understand the choices that individuals make among different activities available to them and their effort and persistence at the activities they choose. Even the reader with the strongest cognitive skills may not get good achievement in reading if he or she is not motivated to read. It is more difficult to get students to read as they move to the middle school level because of lack of interesting reading materials available to them. Thus, the present study intends to examine whether it is better and more efficient to teach reading based on the students' topic choice or the teacher's topic choice. Little attention has been paid to students' interest in reading comprehension classes at Iranian high schools in the past few decades. Readers who are interested in the material and motivated to understand are more likely to demonstrate a level of engagement that promotes deeper levels of comprehension. The influence of affective processes such as interest and motivation on reading comprehension and literacy development has become a central focus in numerous recent studies, and efforts to improve reading instruction. Research questions have been narrowed down and

specified to differentiate the effects of individual or personal interest and situational interest. The affective factor of interest, then seemingly is conducive to L1 reading comprehension. Because of the differences between L1 and L2 reading processes, the next step is to see whether the relationship between interest and reading comprehension obtains in L2 area.

[2. Review of the Related Literature](#)

Teachers have long recognized that lack of motivation contributes to many of the problems we face in teaching young children to read. The value teachers place on motivation is supported by a robust research literature that documents the link between motivation and achievement. Highly motivated readers generate their own learning opportunities, and, in doing so, they begin to determine their own destiny as literacy learners. There is recognition that students need both the cognitive skill and the motivational will to do well, motivation is of two distinct types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation has to do with pleasurable internal feelings or thoughts. Intrinsic motivation refers to being motivated and curious to be engaged in an activity for its own sake, rather than for reasons of reward. Feeling proud or having a sense of accomplishment following an "A" on a test in a difficult class is an example of extrinsic reward. Readers' engagement in reading is greatly facilitated when they are intrinsically motivated to read and find personal meaning in the reading when they do.

In the extrinsic motivation, external factors motivate the individual to do a specific task. For example, adults go to work to get a paycheck, which in turn pays the bills. A common nation-wide method used for providing motivation is rewarding students for reading, and extrinsic motivation. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich put this principle into practice by implementing a program called Learning by Earning. Gingrich paid students in a Washington D. C. classroom two dollars for reading a book and answering questions about it. Similar programs that offered rewards have been implemented elsewhere to motivate students to read. It is argued that schools focus too much on learning in school and not enough on promoting children's continuing motivation to learn outside of the school setting. It is also discussed how the students' ownership of their literacy learning dropped while in

middle school. Once in middle school, students' goal orientations turned more to grades and other extrinsic purposes, rather than to the intrinsic rewards associated with learning. It identified dimensions of intrinsic motivation such as curiosity and preference for the challenge. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated to learn become deeply involved in their activity and devote much time and energy to it. They found that students who were intrinsically motivated to read, as defined by their reading curiosity and preference for challenge, were much more likely to report that they engaged frequently in reading both in and out of school. Intrinsically motivated students seeking to improve their skills and build on what they know. Intrinsic motivation can have strong cognitive as well as motivational benefits. When extrinsically motivated, individuals perform activities to receive some benefits, such as a reward. Their motivation comes from what they receive for performing the activity rather than from the activity itself. Recognition for reading and reading for grades is an important aspect of extrinsic motivation to read. Although extrinsic motivators are powerful forces in children's lives, and often they can be used effectively to engage children in different learning activities, there is a concern that an over-reliance on them can interfere with children's intrinsic motivation under certain conditions (Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999).

As stated by Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012), reading comprehension isn't only comprehending words, sentences, or maybe texts but includes a posh integration of the reader's prior knowledge language proficiency and meta-cognitive strategies. Furthermore, reading comprehension refers to the thinking and constructing meaning before, during, and after reading by integrating the knowledge presented by the author with the reader's background (Etemadfar et al., 2019; Kirmizi, 2010).

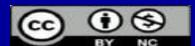
According to Schmidt and Richards (2002), "reading means perceiving a transcription so as to know its contents. This will be done silently (silent reading)" (p. 443). it's a specific way during which the readers understand texts, passages, paragraphs even books and the capability to know and determine the knowledge presented within the sort of transcription (Nasri & Namaziandost, 2019).

Independent reading is children's reading of the text — like books, magazines,

and newspapers — on their own, with minimal to no assistance from adults (Neisi et al., 2019). It can contain reading wiped out or out of faculty, including purely voluntary reading for enjoyment or assigned reading for homework. They believed that there are strong associations between independent reading and reading achievement, and lots of researchers believe that independent reading plays a key role within the development of reading fluency (speed and simple reading), vocabulary, background, and even spelling. Not surprisingly, motivation is also related to independent reading; children who have an interest in and motivated to read tend to try to more independent reading. They maintained that, unfortunately, children with low interest in reading often don't read independently, because they have a tendency to seek out reading effortful, may have trouble obtaining books at their reading level, or may have generally negative attitudes toward reading as a consequence of repeated failure.

Miller and Anderson (2009) focused on how teachers can help students develop a love for reading while interacting with challenging and difficult texts. Student questionnaires were wont to explore students' reading preferences. Supported responses, books congruent with students' reading interests were recommended together with classroom dialogues to expand students' reading choices. A classroom library replete with young adult literature was made available for college kids. Miller and Anderson concluded that this alteration enhanced student motivation to read. Also, they noted that on yearly end-of-grade-level tests, students with reading choice scored above average on comprehension assessments as compared with district and state peers who failed to experience choice. Such scores suggest that student choice engaged participants in being active readers. This finding is very important for teachers who may worry about student academic achievement as measured by such mandated testing.

Ivey and Johnston (2013) conducted a case study on students' perceptions of the outcomes and processes of reading self-selected young adult literature and re-reported that choice helped students read widely and be more engaged in reading, often resulting in greater self-regulation and perception of competence as readers. In consideration of how teachers might implement student choice, Ivey and Johnston highlighted the benefits that come from deliberate teacher



guidance to spot relevance and supply support for college kids as they select and interact with texts, providing regular opportunities for college students to decide on what they read, and facilitating dialogue and student–student engagement about texts.

Gallagher (2009) described how student interest and motivation may end in students shying faraway from teacher-assigned texts and recreational reading, inhibiting them from building lifelong reading habits. Garcia (2018) noted that an absence of reading interest and motivation is exacerbated by gaps between imaginativeness events and students' real-world life experiences. Additional class reading and discussion time around characters and plots are helpful for challenging or reluctant readers who won't have had many positive reading experiences (Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990).

Readers struggle for various reasons which can include short attention spans, inability to watch one's own comprehension, and difficulty applying reading strategies independently. Research conducted within the area of reading was more consistent within the instruction that may make learning to read harder for struggling readers than on the way to teach reading effectively. Reutzel and Smith (2004) reviewed and compared several studies done by experts to search out commonalities among researchers. a number of their instructional recommendations about how to teach reading effectively include teacher read aloud, teacher modeling of explicit strategies, allowing adequate independent reading time daily, engaging and motivating students to read, and providing students with a range of reading materials. Studies reviewed by Reutzel and Smith disagree on the employment of direct or isolated instruction versus integrated reading instruction. Schatmeyer (2007) agrees it's necessary to motivate students to read independently by allowing students to have choice within their reading. However, researchers agree the most effective way become a stronger reader is to read more.

Literacy research has noted that to draw students into reading and ignite their desire for reading enjoyment, there needs to be a shift in focus from teacher-assigned texts to more student-driven reading classroom reading experiences. This concept is not new; however, we feel that teachers and scholars need to reexamine how the ideas from 75 years of reading research can

be implemented today. Supporting this notion is a position statement from the National Council of Teachers of English (2019) that supports models of literacy instruction centered around past research concerning sociocultural and transactional theories. Our purpose here is to provide an example of these ideas in action so readers can consider how to apply the research in their own classroom contexts. To guide our study, we used the transactional theory as a framework for examining student choice, silent sustained reading and literature discussion groups with high school English language arts (ELA) students. We decided that these efforts would be enhanced by developing accountability in conjunction with student choice, silent sustained reading and group literature discussion.

Schiefele (1996) identifies three distinct theories of motivation: Attribution Theory, Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory. In the Attribution Theory, students' perceptions of their educational experiences generally influence their motivation. Students with a history of failure in school have a difficult time sustaining their motivation. Students who believe failure results from factors beyond their control will have difficulty in improvement. Students who take the responsibility, and realize their lack of success is due to poor study habits or lack of important skills (which can be learned), will more likely make some effort to change their situation. In the Goal Theory, students have different reasons or purposes for learning. This theory is broken into a task and goal orientation. Students with a task orientation believe that the purpose of achieving knowledge is personal improvement and understanding. They define success based on their own progress in mastering skills and knowledge. Students with a goal orientation focus on comparing themselves with others. Students with a task orientation seek more help, and demonstrate more positive attitude about school and themselves as learners. The Self-Determination Theory has three categories of needs: a sense of competence, relatedness to others, and autonomy. Self-concept can be defined as the perceptions, knowledge, views, and beliefs that individuals hold about themselves as learners. Sanford was one of the first psychologists to discuss the sense of self, or self-concept. He made the important distinction between the “self as knower” and the “self as object,” with the latter defined as

an individual's self-concept. Recent definitions of the self-concept are similar to James's original definition. Theorists define self-concept as an individual's representation of his or her self-knowledge or thoughts about the self.

In a study conducted by Brantmeier (2003), it was found that students who felt competent were more motivated to pursue school activities, which in turn produced increased academic performance.

Allan, Ellis, and Pearson (2005) investigated interest in the topic of the reading comprehension text among 46 fourth graders. The difference between high – and low – interest comprehension proved to be statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that interest is a potent factor in determining reading comprehension.

Asher (2017) assessed the interests and related reading comprehension of fifth graders. His evidence points overwhelmingly to an overall effect of interest level in topic as well as secondary differential effects discussed below.

Brantmeier (2003) believes that through literature, students can call on their own experience, identify problems, view and criticize character perspectives. These conditions may include social relationships, the way students interact with each other in the classroom, and characteristics of instruction as well as materials or objects that are personally interesting. Oxford and Shearin (1994) found that middle school students with negative attitudes toward reading have some common characteristics. These students with negative attitudes did not place any value on reading. Possibly the students did not have any reading experiences. Students with negative attitudes towards reading often only have reading experiences in a school setting. In turn, they may view reading to be only for learning purposes. According to Guthrie, Klauda, and Morrison (2012), most commonly these students with negative attitudes do not view themselves as readers. Those with negative attitudes need to connect with texts in a personal way.

3. Methodology

The present study was an attempt to see which of the two approaches of students' selected topics vs. teachers' selected topics would yield a higher rate of comprehension in a reading course. The design of the present study was quasi-experimental. The data collected was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In the first phase of the study, a survey was used to collect middle

school students' interests in the topic choice for reading comprehension materials based on the information they provided on a questionnaire. The survey included gathering a list of topics and themes, and also consisted of some questions regarding the students' reading interests in topics and themes. The students were asked to mark their favorite topics and themes of the reading materials.

The participants in this investigation were 96 male students aged between 16 and 17 studying in the third grade of high school. The school was located in the city of Varamin. Based on the scores on their final English exam (i.e., the pre- test), the participants were found to be initially homogeneous, and were then randomly classified into two groups. In order to make sure the assignment to the groups was random, odd numbers on the class list were put in one group while even numbers were put in another. Based on the initial survey conducted, it was discovered that altogether, the participants were interested in six topics including animals, sports, historical figures, musicians, romance, and science fiction. These topics were used to contrast the sample's topics against those ordained by the Ministry of Education. In the next phase of the study, a 12-week reading course was offered to each of the two groups, with one major difference that in the STS group, the teacher took reading passages of his interest to the class, whereas in the other group, i.e., TTS, the students themselves chose topics and passages of their interest for the classroom. As will be shown later, the results indicated that the TTS group significantly outperformed the STS group in reading comprehension. There were other secondary findings as well, which will be presented later. The various data collection instruments are used. These instruments include: a questionnaire and reading comprehension tests. After the data were collected, the interval data obtained from the post-test was plugged into the t-test for comparison of means to decide whether STS or TTS situation had any advantage over the other in terms of successful reading comprehension.

4. Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine whether it is better and more efficient to run a reading comprehension class by allowing students to choose the topics whether it would be more efficient to run a teacher-fronted reading class with options for the students. This study



investigated the quality of reading achievement among 96 middle school students in Varamin across two types of reading passages: the reading passages which are based on free topic choice of the students as opposed to those based on teacher's topic choice. Stating that "there is no difference in the rate of reading comprehension achievement when students choose topics as opposed to when teachers choose topics", an independent t-test was run to compare the teacher-selected and student-selected topics groups' mean scores on the posttest of RC. The t-observed value is 6.03 (Table 1). This amount of value is higher than the critical value of 1.97 at 123 degrees of freedom.

Table 1: Independent t-test Posttest of Reading Comprehension by Groups

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Error Differences	95.0% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								lower	Upper
Equal Variances Assumed	1.156	.285	6.038	123	.000	13.26998	2.19761	8.91994	17.62002
Equal Variances not Assumed			6.034	122.210	.000	13.26998	2.19932	8.91628	17.62368

Based on these results it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the posttest of reading comprehension Table 2 displays the mean scores for the teacher-selected and student-selected topics as 67.65 and 80.92 respectively. The students performed better on the RC test whose topics were selected by the students. Thus the null-hypothesis as there is not any difference in the rate of reading comprehension achievement when students choose topic as opposed to when teachers choose topic is rejected.

Table 2: Posttest of Reading Comprehension by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teacher selected	95	67.6562	12.08785	1.51098
Students selected	91	80.9262	12.48160	1.59810

The two groups enjoy homogenous variances on the pretest of RC. As displayed in Table 3, the probability associated with

the Levine's F of 1.15 is .28. Since the probability is much higher than the significance level of .05, it can be concluded that the two groups enjoy homogenous variances. That is why the first row of Table 1; "Equal variances assumed" is reported. An independent t-test was run at the beginning of the study on both the STS vs. TTS groups to ensure that they were initially homogenous.

Table 3: Independent t-test Pretest of Reading Comprehension by Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Error Differences	95.0% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Equal Variances Assumed	.478	.491	.312	123	.756	.04419	.14156	.23608	.32608
Equal Variances not Assumed			.311	120.360	.756	.04419	.14193	.23682	.32519

Based on these results it can be concluded that there is no any significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the pretest of reading comprehension. Table 4 displays the mean scores for the two groups on the RC test. The mean scores for the two groups are 16.10 and 16.05 respectively.

Table 4: Pretest of Reading Comprehension by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teacher Selected	95	16.1016	.75161	.09395
Students Selected	19	16.0574	.83090	.10639

The two groups enjoy homogenous variances on the pretest of RC. As displayed in Table 1, the probability associated with the Levene's F of .47 is .49. Since the probability is much higher than the significance level of .05, it can be concluded that the two groups enjoy homogenous variances. That is why the first row of Table 1; "Equal variances assumed" is reported.

5. Discussion

In this study, it was revealed that a TTS learning situation is significantly more conducive to better reading comprehension achievement than a STS learning situation.

The findings from the study suggest that educators need to take a deeper look into the topics they choose for their students. This finding confirms Worthy et al. (1999) finding in that motivation and attitudes do improve when students are interested in

what is being taught and have access to the materials. The data obtained in this study also suggest that the assigned reading comprehension topics already introduced to middle school textbooks do not match such students' reading interests. The finding supports Worthy et al. (1999) results, which show that the topic and theme of novels assigned to urban middle school students do not match their reading interests. He suggests that educators should focus more on students' interest when selecting the genres and themes of assigned readings. As can be seen here, this study reached similar results.

Based on the results of the study we can see that by examining the topics that adolescents choose to read in their leisure time, we can help educators provide for preferred reading materials in the class. Based on an initial survey conducted in the present study, it was discovered that altogether, our sample was interested in six topics including animals, sports, historical figures, musicians, romance, and science fiction. The results support the studies by Worthy et al. (1999) and Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) showing a correlation between success in school and the topics that adolescents choose to read in their leisure time. It is widely accepted in educational environments that providing students with choice and control over their reading material enhances their involvement with and enjoyment of reading. Generally, choice has been linked to increased educational outcomes, such as greater levels of intrinsic motivation, better performance, more positive affect and higher satisfaction (e.g. Ryan & Deci, 2000).

5.1 Implications of the Study

Findings from this study are bound to the context of the classroom in which it took place. Yet, evidence from this limited context suggests that students from a wide range of populations may benefit from increased student choice and class restructuring that past research has described well. We maintain that it is crucial that with the adoption of more competency-based standards, seminal motivation and engagement strategies are included with current trends. Gallagher (2015) suggested a 20/80 balance between whole-class, assigned texts and student-selected ones, aligning student activities with the Common Core State Standards or developing literacy competencies that place emphasis on students using texts to determine an author's purpose, develop a critical literacy analysis,

and craft an argument. As an example, students could read two independent books over the course of five or six weeks while engaging in a variety of literary activities. Then, the whole class could read through a classic text together, following a traditional method of reading pedagogy. A subsequent reading unit could enrich students' understanding of the classic novel by having them choose a modern text with a similar theme or main character. This method of alternating back and forth, mixing student choice with teacher-driven reading units, could provide a balance that helps students become better readers who truly enjoy the reading process and engage in leisure reading even when a teacher is not encouraging them. The findings of this project support those of past research: Students find more joy in reading processes when given more freedom of choice in classroom reading (Manning, Aliefendic, Chiarelli, Haas, & Williams, 2011), intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation is enhanced through choice (Krashen, 1993), and corresponding activities provide students with opportunities to grapple with difficult texts while receiving support from the ELA teacher (Miller & Anderson, 2009). Although it is true that incorporating student choice and in-class reading means students are taking more ownership in what they read, the teacher's role is still crucial in the process. The teacher is continually involved in literature circle discussions, interacting with students regarding their reading experiences, and challenging students' thoughts and responses to the texts. This requires teachers to learn more about their students, including their reading abilities, preferences, histories, and challenges. Teachers have so much content to cover that it can be a challenge to dedicate regular time to silent reading. This is a valid argument that needs to be worked out on an individual basis, depending on the classroom, the curriculum, and the teacher's goals for student learning. However, this study shows how one group of students benefited from reading in class: Their desire to read increased, they read more outside of class, and their class discussions became deeper and more significant.

6. Conclusion

The main question behind the current study was how the topics of reading passages assigned to middle school students compare with their reading interests. The purpose of the study was to initiate the investigation of interest in text topic as an



important affective variable in L2 reading comprehension. We tried to ascertain whether or not there is a significant difference in the rate of reading comprehension when students choose topics of their own interest as opposed to when teachers choose them. The study demonstrated that the assigned reading comprehension topics already introduced to high schoolers in their textbooks do not match such students' reading interests. This study supports the argument that educators need to take a deeper look into the topics they choose for their students. In a study of middle school students' reading preferences and the materials available in their school and classrooms, Worthy et al. (1999) noted that learning, motivation, and attitudes will improve when students both are interested in what is being taught and have access to materials. The data obtained in this study also supports the idea that more appropriate topics and interesting books need to be chosen. Realizing that the assigned reading topics do not match the students' reading interests could be a positive corrective step in the right direction to boost reading comprehension. This study could also partially help with the problem of getting students to read more by suggesting allowing the students to choose topics of their own interests. Additionally, it examined reading comprehension in terms of gender differences regardless of the interest level. Our objective in the present work is not to prescribe a middle school reading program, because we do not believe that programs themselves are responsive to the needs of students. Every student is unique, and it is hard to tap their similarities into a robust methodology. Rather, we believe that knowledgeable, reflective teachers can create their own frameworks for instruction. Here we suggest what teachers can do to build a solid foundation for teaching reading to a wide range of middle school readers: First, moving independent reading to the forefront of instruction: This is very important as it forms the foundation of language learning. Without reading, learning cannot occur. Reading is a way of taking in knowledge, and the more you take in, the better. Additionally, the more independently the learners read the better. This is because students do it based on their own free choice, so they are more open to learning. Second, providing access to varied reading materials: This is also important. Students

must not read specific types of text only. Third, learning about individual students as readers: This is also important. Students must be aware of individual differences, and the fact that what interests them particularly might not necessarily interest others. The data from the study indicate that motivation is indeed a contributing factor to L2 reading comprehension. Little or no interest in text topic negatively affects reading comprehension, and high interest facilitates it. Therefore, it is necessary for language teachers to employ individual student interests in the selection of reading materials. This could be easily done by simple personal surveys in class or by permitting students to choose their own reading from time to time. In the present study, subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire relating to the topics of interest of the middle school students. Background knowledge also appears to be tied to L2 reading comprehension for subjects, although it differs wildly among them. Therefore, it is necessary for language teachers to take into consideration the students' background knowledge, and try to fill information gaps between it and the text contents. Moreover, students need to be actively engaged and interested in the subject matter. Students need to read frequently to keep their minds stimulated. Engaged readers not only have acquired reading skills but use them for their own purposes in many contexts; they possess beliefs, desires, and interests that energize the hard work of becoming literate. Research by Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) suggests that the most popular materials of middle school students were limited to classroom and school libraries and that some students seemed to be negatively affected by this limited availability. That is, what students want to read is not available in the school setting. Data retrieved from this study supports their research. As their study shows, the assigned topics do not match middle school students' reading interests. Solutions are possible to remedy the problem of finding middle school students' reading interests. Several limitations may have influenced the present study. First, the subjects' lack of familiarity with this kind of reading method might have had an impact on the results because our high schools' subjects worked on fixed textbooks rather than reading texts of their own choice. Second, the students participating in the research were selected from different classes

and different schools, so the researcher faced problems convincing them to take part in all the briefing sessions. Third, the relatively small size of the classrooms was another problem the researcher encountered. The biggest classroom in the school was chosen and prepared for this purpose. However, it could not accommodate 30 students easily.

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