

Students' Preferences and Engagement Level with Various Traditional Reading Comprehension Strategies: A Quantitative Analysis

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Abstract: This study investigates undergraduate English majors' preferences and engagement levels regarding traditional reading comprehension strategies. It addresses a critical gap in educational research. Also, it emphasizes the importance of reading comprehension for academic achievement and long-term learning retention. Existing literature explores the effectiveness of various strategies. However, there is limited insight into which methods students favor and how these preferences impact their engagement. Without such understanding, instructional approaches risk disconnecting from learners' needs, reducing effectiveness. The primary aim of this research is to bridge this gap by identifying students' preferred comprehension strategies. It assesses their reported engagement and examines the relationship between the two. A quantitative survey was conducted among 72 English majors at a public university. It used a structured questionnaire with demographic details, strategy preference, and engagement measures. The data analysis indicates a strong preference for summarization and questioning strategies. Both of these factors show a positive correlation with higher engagement levels. These findings underscore the importance of aligning instruction with student preferences to enhance academic outcomes. The study offers meaningful insights into adapting traditional reading strategies to support learners better. It highlights the value of integrating student perspectives into instructional design. Ultimately, this research provides educators and curriculum developers with a foundational framework to create more engaging and effective reading instruction. It promotes stronger comprehension and academic success among undergraduates.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a primary and basic skill. According to Elleman and Oslund (2019), reading comprehension is necessary for academic success and lasting learning. It enables us to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts properly. They stated that, despite its significance, many students struggle with reading comprehension. Particularly in higher education, where texts grow increasingly complex, students face more difficulties in reading

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comprehension. Traditional strategies, such as summarization, questioning, and predicting, are widely used to address these challenges. However, their effectiveness depends on how well they align with students' preferences and engagement levels (Forster et al., 2020).

According to Duke and Pearson (2002), effective reading comprehension strategies are vital for helping students search complex texts and develop critical thinking skills. According to Rosenshine (2012), traditional strategies, such as summarization, improve students' comprehension by encouraging students to refine information and identify key concepts. Simultaneously, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) stated that questioning strategies developed active engagement with the text to get students to think judgmentally about the data and make connections to their prior knowledge. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Some studies propose that engagement can meaningfully affect academic success. Some studies have found that questioning strategies can improve engagement and comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2006).

While studies confirm the efficacy of traditional strategies, two critical gaps remain. First, little research explores students' preferred strategies (Schunemann et al., 2017). This gap is problematic because preferred strategies often yield higher engagement and better outcomes (Kissau & Hiller, 2013). Second, although engagement is linked to academic achievement (Fredricks et al., 2019), few studies examine how specific strategies influence behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in real classrooms (Lutz et al., 2019).

Furthermore, this research adds to the current body of literature by providing a subtler understanding of students' preferences and engagement. It informs educators and curriculum developers to decide on suitable reading strategies properly. Eventually, this research highlights the need to take students' voices into discussing reading strategies. It ensures that teaching applications are practical and responsive to learners' preferences and engagement. This study comprehensively analyzes how traditional reading comprehension strategies are suitable for students. It will also give insights about how that could enhance instructional practices and improve educational outcomes. Ultimately, it will ensure students' voice inclusion in designing teaching materials. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), when students have a say in their learning processes, their motivation and engagement levels increase.

By answering the questions, the research provides actionable insights. It will help educators tailor instruction to student needs, improving comprehension and academic performance (Guthrie et al., 2019). Ultimately, this adjustment is crucial for developing a more engaging and beneficial learning environment. Furthermore, it leads to enhanced reading comprehension and achievement.

As a result, understanding students' preferences and engagement levels with traditional reading comprehension strategies is more important. It can help curriculum designers, teachers, and students improve learning. Specifically, this study seeks to bridge the current gaps in the literature by giving a quantitative analysis of these relationships among the

variables. This study tries to inform educators and curriculum developers by concentrating on students' voices and preferences. It will ensure that reading comprehension strategies are practical, used, and applied by learners. Furthermore, the findings will have important implications for instructional designs. Ultimately, it will improve student engagement and academic success in reading comprehension.

According to Elleman and Oslund (2019), reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for academic success. However, many students struggle with effectively engaging with texts. Traditional reading strategies such as summarization, questioning, predicting, and clarifying have long been used in classrooms. These strategies help us to enhance comprehension. Students' preferences for these strategies and engagement levels remain underexplored (Forster et al., 2020). This study examines recent research (post-2016) on students' strategy preferences. It also discusses engagement factors and the implications for instructional design.

Traditional reading strategies have been widely studied for their effectiveness in improving comprehension. Ahmed et al., 2016, stated that summarization, for instance, helps students purify key ideas, enhancing retention. Similarly, questioning encourages active engagement by prompting students to interact critically with the text (Guthrie et al., 2019). Despite their proven benefits, recent studies suggest that not all strategies are equally preferred or effective for every student (Schunemann et al., 2017).

A meta-analysis by Forster et al. (2020) found that summarization and questioning were among the most effective strategies. However, students' engagement varied significantly based on personal preferences and instructional context. The finding highlights the need for a more profound understanding of how students perceive and interact with these strategies.

According to Kissau and Hiller (2013), research indicates that students show distinct preferences for certain reading strategies. The preferences are related to learning styles, motivation, and prior experiences. Schunemann et al. (2017) found that summarization was preferred by students who valued structured note-taking. Additionally, questioning was favored by those who enjoyed interactive and discussion-based learning. Predicting was less preferred as students found it speculative and less immediately useful. Kissau and Hiller (2013) further demonstrated that when students were allowed to choose their preferred strategies, their comprehension scores improved by 15-20% compared to when strategies were assigned. This finding suggests that strategy autonomy plays a crucial role in reading success.

Fredricks et al. (2019) said that engagement in reading comprehension is multidimensional. It encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Behavioral engagement refers to participation in reading tasks. On the other hand, emotional engagement relates to interest and motivation, and cognitive engagement involves deep processing of text.

Another study by Lutz et al. (2019) found that students who used questioning strategies reported higher emotional engagement. This was due to the interactive nature of the approach. Furthermore, those who relied on summarization showed stronger cognitive engagement, as the strategy required more profound analysis. Besides, skimming and scanning were efficient for some. However, it led to lower overall engagement, particularly in emotional and cognitive dimensions. These findings suggest that not all strategies equally foster engagement, and instructors should consider student preferences when designing reading activities.

Understanding students' preferences and engagement levels is essential for transforming reading instruction. Fredricks et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of employing differentiated strategy instruction, suggesting that offering multiple strategy options is more effective than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. The study further recommends incorporating student choice by allowing learners to select strategies that align with their preferences, thereby enhancing motivation. In addition, explicit strategy training is advised, where students are systematically taught how and why specific strategies improve metacognitive awareness and academic performance.

Ultimately, understanding the critical interplay between students' preferences, engagement, and traditional reading strategies is essential. While summarization and questioning remain highly effective, their success depends on alignment with student needs. Therefore, teachers should also explore cultural, disciplinary, and longitudinal engagement trends to refine instructional practices further.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research study uses a descriptive quantitative survey method to collect data. This study examines undergraduate English major students' preferences and engagement levels with traditional reading comprehension strategies. According to Creswell (2017), this method of collecting data is appropriate for numerical data collection. The descriptive nature of this research helps provide a comprehensive overview of the study. For that reason, the descriptive quantitative design is suitable for this research. According to Aaker et al. (2018), this method facilitates a comprehensive understanding of students' preferences and engagement levels. Kothari (2004) said that descriptive research is particularly effective in taking the characteristics of a population. It also helps in creating relations between variables without influencing them.

The target population for this research was 278 undergraduate English major students in the English Department of Kabul University. Among them, a sample size of 72 students was selected. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. This technique confirms proper representation. It ensures representation across key demographic factors and can capture diverse perspectives and reduce bias through the stratified random sampling technique. According to Fowler (2014), this technique ensures proportional inclusion of subgroups. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for a 95%

confidence level and a 10% margin of error, accounting for the finite population (Nadia & Rizki, 2024).

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' preferences for different traditional reading comprehension strategies?
2. What is students' level of engagement related to different traditional reading comprehension strategies?
3. What is the relationship between strategy preference and engagement levels?

The main aim of this study is to identify the gaps by quantitatively analyzing students' preferences and engagement levels using different traditional reading comprehension strategies. This study seeks to identify which strategies students prefer and how these preferences correlate with their engagement levels in reading activities. By analyzing these relationships, this study will give valuable insights into the effectiveness of traditional reading strategies and their adjustment to students' necessities.

Data Collection

The data was collected by using a structured questionnaire. It was designed to assess students' preferences for traditional reading comprehension strategies. It also evaluates their engagement levels during reading activities. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire focused on demographic information. On the other hand, the second section included Likert-scale items measuring students' preferences for specific reading strategies (e.g., summarization, questioning, clarifying, and predicting) and their self-reported engagement levels. According to Muijs (2011), the Likert scale is a famous and usable method for measuring attitudes and preferences in educational research.

Data were collected over two weeks through an online questionnaire. A series of systematic steps ensured an organized and ethical data collection process. Initially, students were contacted through WhatsApp groups, and an invitation was distributed containing a brief explanation of the study's purpose. The invitation outlined that the research aimed to explore students' preferences regarding reading strategies and emphasized voluntary participation, anonymity, and data confidentiality. A direct link to the survey, hosted on Google Forms, was provided.

A reminder was sent via the same communication channels three days after the initial invitation. A final reminder was issued five days before the survey deadline to encourage responses from non-respondents. Participants were given 14 days to complete the questionnaire, which required approximately 10–15 minutes to finish, with an option to save and resume later. A total of 100 invitations were distributed to secure at least 72 completed responses, accounting for potential dropouts. Ultimately, 72 completed questionnaires were received, resulting in a 72% response rate.

The final sample matched the stratified sampling plan. No significant differences were found between early and late responders, suggesting minimal non-response bias (Dillman et al., 2016). A 72% rate is considered strong for online surveys in education research (Dillman et al., 2016). It exceeds the 60% threshold for valid statistical analysis (Nulty, 2016). Typical online survey response rates in academia range from 30–70% (Saunders et al., 2019), making this study's rate robust.

FINDINGS

The analysis of the survey data revealed some important perceptions. The study found the preferences for reading comprehension strategies and engagement levels among undergraduate English majors.

Demographics

Table 1 below presents the demographic characteristics of the students in the research. The sample covers 72 students. Division of the gender shows that 100% are male and 0% are female. Ultimately, distribution based on the respondents' age indicates that most respondents (72.2%) are between 20 and 22 years old. Additionally, 16.7% of the students are between 23 and 25. Also, 11.1% of the respondents are within the 17 to 19 age range. Furthermore, distribution based on the respondents' year of education indicates that most respondents (58.3%) are studying in second class. Also, 13.9% of the students study in the fourth class. Meanwhile, 16.7% of the respondents studied in the third class. Ultimately, 11.1% of the respondents are studying in the first class.

Based on this distribution, it can be observed that the typical age range of undergraduates focuses mainly on young adults in their early twenties.

Table 1. Demographic Features

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	72	100%
Female	0	0%
Age		
17-19	8	11.1%
20-22	52	72.2%
23-25	12	16.7%
Year of Study		
First Year	8	11.1%
Second Year	42	58.3
Third Year	12	16.7%
Fourth Year	10	13.9%
Total	72	100.0%

Preference of the Students

Table 2 below shows the preferences of students for reading strategies. After analyzing the data, different respondents' attitudes towards reading comprehension strategies were found. The mean scores and standard deviations for each strategy can be seen in Table 2 below.

In the analysis process, it was found that the students generally prefer summarization to other reading comprehension strategies. Summarization as a reading strategy showed (M = 4.4, SD = 0.6). This is followed by questioning (M = 4.2, SD = 0.7) and predicting (M = 4.1, SD = 0.5). Furthermore, it was found that the clarifying strategy received the lowest mean score (M = 3.9, SD = 0.8). This means that it is less favored than other strategies among students. The narrow score range (3.9-4.4) and small standard deviations (0.5-0.8) indicate that all strategies with strong group consensus were moderately to highly preferred. These findings suggest instructors could effectively build on students' natural inclination toward summarization and questioning techniques while incorporating other strategies, as none were strongly disliked. The consistent preference pattern across strategies implies that while some differentiation exists, students generally value all traditional reading approaches to some degree.

Table 2. *Preferences of Students for Reading Strategies*

Reading Strategies	Mean	SD
Summarization	4.4	0.6
Questioning	4.2	0.7
Predicting	4.1	0.5
Clarifying	3.9	0.8
Overall Mean Score	4.3	0.6

Overall Engagement

After analyzing the data, it was found that the general mean score for engagement when using these strategies was M= 4.3. It indicates that students felt significantly engaged with all the reading comprehension strategies. Figure 3 shows the study's respondents' mean scores for the different reading comprehension strategies. This strong positive engagement across the board implies that traditional reading methods remain effective for motivation and participation, with some strategies potentially eliciting slightly higher involvement than others. The consistently high ratings indicate that these techniques successfully capture students' attention and maintain their interest during reading activities, which is crucial for comprehension and academic success. The narrow range of scores (as implied by the 4.3 average) further suggests that while certain strategies may be marginally more engaging, students generally respond well to the entire set of traditional reading approaches.

Correlation Between Preferences and Engagement

Table 3 below reveals the correlation between preferences and overall engagement levels among the students. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to check the relationships between preferences for reading strategies and overall engagement levels. It was found that

strong positive correlations exist across all strategies among the students. Particularly, it was found that a strong positive correlation exists between summarization ($r = 0.75$) and questioning ($r = 0.65$) strategies among students.

Table 3. Correlation Between Preferences and Overall Engagement

Reading Strategies	Correlation with Engagement	P-Value
Summarization	0.75	< 0.01
Questioning	0.65	< 0.01
Predicting	0.70	< 0.01
Clarifying	0.58	< 0.01

The table shows that strong preferences for summarization strategy, which is $r = 0.75$, and questioning strategy, which is $r = 0.65$, exist among the students. This amount is higher than that of other strategies among the respondents. As a result, both summarization and questioning correlate positively with the overall engagement level of the students. Predicting ($r = 0.70$) also shows a strong positive correlation, indicating its relevance.

The strong positive correlations ($r=0.65-0.75$) reveal a meaningful connection between students' strategy preferences and their engagement levels, particularly for summarization and questioning techniques. These high correlation coefficients suggest that students demonstrate proportionally greater behavioral and cognitive involvement during reading activities when they favor certain strategies. The particularly robust relationship with summarization ($r=0.75$) may indicate this strategy's dual effectiveness for comprehension and sustained focus. While all strategies showed positive relationships, the variance in correlation strengths implies instructors might prioritize teaching summarization and questioning methods first when aiming to boost engagement while still incorporating other valuable techniques like predicting ($r=0.70$) to maintain a balanced instructional approach. These findings empirically validate that student preferences should inform strategy selection in reading instruction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study present important perceptions about the preferences for reading comprehension strategies among undergraduate English majors. It shows a remarkable inclination toward summarization and questioning among the students. Also, a strong correlation exists between the engagement levels of the students. These results combine with existing literature emphasizing the importance of active engagement in reading. According to Rosenshine (2012), strategies like summarization and questioning are often highlighted as effective strategies for enhancing comprehension and retention. Additionally, Duke and Pearson (2002) supported this idea and said that summarization and questioning are the most important and usable strategies for compelling reading.

Additionally, it can be found that the highest mean score exists for summarization, which is ($M = 4.4$) among the students. Students recognize this strategy as particularly beneficial for

understanding and remembering information. This is consistent with previous research. According to Kothari (2004), summarization helps in comprehension and promotes deeper mental processing. Ultimately, it can be found that the preference for questioning strategy is $M = 4.2$. It shows that this reading strategy is at the second-highest level among other reading strategies. Elder and Paul (2009) further support the idea that active engagement through generating questions facilitates a more profound interaction with the text.

It was also found that the lower mean score for clarifying reading strategy is $M = 3.9$. It shows that while students recognize its importance, they may not use it as frequently as other strategies. This could suggest a need for educational interventions to encourage the combination of clarifying techniques. It can include using external resources or peer discussions. Vandergrift (2007) stated that it can enhance understanding of complex texts.

This study shows valuable insights; it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of the study was only 72 students. Although it is adequate for initial analysis, it may limit the generalizability of the findings. This means the observed correlations (e.g., between summarization and engagement) might be stronger or weaker in a larger population. A more robust sample (e.g., 200+ participants) would improve confidence in applying these results to broader contexts. Additionally, the study was conducted at a single university in Afghanistan. It may not reflect the experiences of English majors at other universities. For example, students in Western universities with greater access to digital tools might prefer different strategies. Cross-cultural validation is needed to confirm whether these results hold in varied settings.

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases because students might have higher grades in their engagement levels or preferences for particular strategies. This reliance on self-reported data risks response biases. Without observational or performance-based measures (e.g., reading tests tied to specific strategies), the actual effectiveness of strategies remains uncertain. So that future research could work with mixed-method approaches, including qualitative interviews or focus groups. This will increase a deeper understanding of students' attitudes and experiences with reading comprehension strategies.

A mixed-methods intervention study should be conducted to strengthen and empower the findings of this research further. It should be done with $N \geq 200$, with gender-balanced sampling. Also, it should test structured summarization/questioning modules, combining pre-post comprehension tests with student interviews to assess efficacy. Additionally, a longitudinal cohort study tracking strategy preference across academic stages should be done. It should use annual surveys and GPA correlations to identify developmental shifts. It could explore how these preferences change as students' progress through their academic careers. Also, it will find how different levels of academic support impact the usage of the strategies.

Moreover, the research could find the role of technology in facilitating these reading strategies and, for example, explore how digital tools or platforms that enhance collaborative summarization or questioning might affect student engagement. It can find the best perceptions of modern pedagogical practices and applications.

Finally, a cross-institutional analysis should be done. It will link strategy use to academic performance through standardized reading assessments and transcript analysis, controlling for socioeconomic factors. It investigates the relationship between students' reading comprehension strategies and academic performance. It could produce important implications for curriculum design and teaching methods. Eventually, it will improve educational outcomes for undergraduate students, especially.

This study offers three key contributions to reading instruction and research. First, it provides educators with an evidence-based framework. It informs the prioritization of summarization and questioning strategies in curricula. because these were both preferred by students ($M=4.4-4.2$) and strongly correlated with engagement ($r=0.75-0.65$). Such alignment with student preferences can increase motivation. It is supported by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Second, it advances pedagogical practice. It demonstrates that student voice matters in instructional design. The findings empirically validate that strategy choice should balance efficacy. For instance, summarization's cognitive benefits with learner perceptions are a nuance often overlooked in traditional top-down curriculum development. Third, it sets a foundation for targeted future research, particularly in technology integration, like AI summarization tools and longitudinal tracking of strategy effectiveness. For policymakers, these results underscore the need for teacher training programs to emphasize strategy customization based on learner feedback.

Adopting these thoughts could transform reading instruction from a standardized practice to a dynamic, student-centered process. It fosters engagement and academic achievement (Guthrie et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

Through this study, the opinions and preferences of undergraduate English majors are thoroughly explored. This study focuses specifically on reading comprehension strategies. It provides crucial insights into the undergraduate student's academic engagement. The findings of this study reveal a clear preference for summarization and questioning as the most effective strategies. The findings indicate a higher engagement level, with mean scores showing strong agreement among respondents. These ideas are important for educators. Ultimately, it will enhance reading comprehension skills within academic curricula.

Furthermore, the research meaningfully contributes to the present body of knowledge. It sheds light on the desired strategies and the perceived effectiveness of these approaches. Moreover, knowing these preferences allows learners and teachers to modify instructional methods and resources to support students' needs better. As a result, it will thereby improve

educational outcomes. The strong usage of the summarization strategy suggests an opportunity for curriculum developers to emphasize this technique in their teaching materials to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Additionally, future research could explore these findings by investigating the impact of specific teaching involvements focused on these preferred strategies. Also, through longitudinal studies, researchers could assess how these preferences change and grow over time. Additionally, researchers can find their correlation with academic performance. Additionally, investigating the influence of various demographic factors, such as year of study or occupational status, on strategy preferences could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the student experience.

As a result, this research sheds light on the reading comprehension strategies favored by undergraduate English majors and investigates the importance of aligning educational practices with student perceptions. By addressing these preferences, educators can enhance engagement, promote effective learning, and enhance a more inspiring academic environment.

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