

# Improving Reading Comprehension of First Year Engineering Students: A Quantitative Study at QUEST, Nawabshah, Pakistan

Mansoor Ahmed Channa<sup>1</sup>, Zaimuariffudin Shukri Nordin<sup>2</sup> & Abdul Malik Abassi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering, Science, and Technology, Nawabshah, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Cognitive Sciences & Human Development, University Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi, Pakistan

Correspondence: Mansoor Ahmed Channa, Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering, Science, and Technology, Nawabshah, Pakistan. E-mail: mansoor.english@yahoo.com

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## Abstract

This paper reports the results of the research conducted to explore whether students learn reading comprehension more successfully using the different approaches based on strategies in reading texts. The study was conducted at QUEST, in Pakistan and the respondents were selected from four engineering departments. Data was collected through a set of questionnaire used as the qualitative instrument among 311 respondents. However, Questionnaire data was analyzed by using SPSS 17. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze research variables for producing the Percentages, *Mean* and Standard Deviation of the data. The findings of this study reported that this research investigated 18 categories of reading comprehension. The highest mean score in reading comprehension was for “read aloud practices” category (=2.40) rated by all respondents; while the mean score for “asking questions before, during, and after reading” (= 1.48) was the lowest. However, no category of reading comprehension fell into low level of usage. In short, results, discussion and recommendations are presented for developing effective reading strategies to design syllabus for the engineering students to improve their reading proficiency.

**Keywords:** strategies, reading comprehension, reading barriers

## 1. Introduction

It is annoying for engineering students when they are unable to understand what they read and what they comprehend. Most engineering students when struggle for the comprehension of text; they over and over again lose their aspiration to prolong reading. Further, reading comprehension is indispensable to ensure engineering students' literacy for understanding as well as retaining the information they learnt through reading various text books. However, comprehension is a fundamental piece of learning how to read; it can be regarded as a multifaceted procedure based on different levels. It is imperative for teachers to know how the engineering students interact with text so that they can fathom out certain strategies as the most beneficial for developing reading comprehension abilities. Further, previously, there were no specific studies aimed at the barriers to reading comprehension as experienced by engineering students. Moreover, the main issues of engineering students were based on low, average, and high reading proficiency levels of students. Their inability to read is affected due to the factors that include intellectual, psychological, physical, socio-economic, gender difference, urban and rural area, age, government and private schooling background, learning environment, and teaching methodology. In addition, students' reading knowledge is also varied due to their learning competency, their behaviors due to urban and rural areas and motivations in reading engineering subjects. Thus, they felt difficulties in handling and comprehending the texts and materials. The teachers are responsible to develop lessons plans based on certain tasks of reading and activities for comprehension to encompass the learning of readers through metacognitive strategies of reading comprehension. In short, the main issues of engineering students in terms of reading text are based on reading barriers or difficulties, high or low reading levels, the way of reading and comprehending, word-by-word reading, poor pronunciation, omissions, repetitions, poor word attack skills, inadequate vocabulary, low reading speed, inability to locate information and inadequate comprehension. This study would be the great contribution because this area was not investigated in the past in Pakistan. This also would be different in the field by addressing the concerns of engineering students in Pakistani Universities to examine the gains in teachers scaffolding and