PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

COLONEL EL-HADJ LAKHDAR UNIVERSITY –BATNA–

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND HUMAN SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

FIRST YEAR HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE STREAM PUPILS' DIFFICULTIES IN READING COMPREHENSION COURSES

THE CASE OF ABDESSAMED ABD-EL-MADJID HIGH SCHOOL AT EL-MADHER / BATNA

THESIS

PRESENTED IN PARTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR A

" **MAGISTER DEGREE** "

IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

PRESENTED BY: SUPERVISED BY:

RIADH MEGUELLATI   PR. MOHAMED SALAH NÉDJAI

MEMBERS OF THE JURY:

CHAIRMAN: DR. GHOUAR OMAR

SUPERVISOR: PR. MOHAMED SALAH NÉDJAI

EXAMINER: PR. SAADI HACÈNE

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DEDICATION

TO the memory of my father and my uncle

Acknowledgments

Before all I thank Allah

My deepest gratitude and my most sincere thanks go to:

Firstly, my supervisor Pr. Mohamed Salah Nédjai, you have given me the chance of a lifetime, thanks for your patience, gentleness, and constant care.

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I'm also much grateful to my uncle Saleh, my cousin Salim and his wife Sabah, my cousin Abderrezak for their help.

Last, but not least, my special thanks go to my family for their unconditional help and support.

THE OUTLINE

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

Every day, schools all over the world deal with the problem of recognizing the characteristics of pupils with learning difficulties and deciding how to help them. These pupils present high-level learning difficulties that affect their performance in a variety of school tasks. A typical characteristic of such pupils is often their difficulty in understanding a written text. In many cases, despite good intellectual abilities, a superficial ability to cope with written texts and to use language appropriately, some pupils cannot find their way in the written texts they must read. They do not seem to grasp the most important elements, the connections between the different parts, or to be able to search out the pieces of information they are looking for. Sometimes these difficulties are not immediately detected by the teacher in the early school years. This may be because the first texts a pupil encounters are quite simple (sentences, short stories, etc.) with which the pupil is already familiar. However, as years go by and texts get more and more complex, comprehension difficulties will become increasingly apparent and increasingly detrimental to effective school learning.

Written text comprehension is one of the abilities that is most often evaluated in schools all over the world, including Algeria. And every day teachers deal with pupils who have not completely understood what they have

read. It is difficult to doubt the existence and the importance of the problem. Hence, this work is an attempt to handle reading comprehension at high schools, and aims at investigating the causes behind pupils' lack of understanding during reading courses. The research will be conducted on first year pupils at EL-MADHER High school.

The introductory chapter demonstrates the methodology followed in conducting this research. Chapter two, "The Reading Process." This chapter describes important issues in reading: what is reading? What is the role of word recognition and comprehension? What are the surface and deep structure in reading? What are the roles of semantic and syntactic contexts? What model, the bottom-up, the top-down, or the interactive, best explains what happens in reading. Chapter three, "Variables That Affect Reading Comprehension." Investigates the main variables that affect reading. Within the reader: aspects of the person doing the reading. And will look also at those aspects of the text to be read. Part two is made of two chapters: The analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire; which evaluates pupils' attitudes towards reading comprehension, is the core of the fourth chapter. Finally, chapter five is the analysis of the results obtained from teachers' questionnaire.

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INTRODUCTION

A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Reading is an important source of acquiring knowledge and language as well, and thus it is highly considered by both teachers and program designers. Despite of the fact that the teaching resources, books, include lots of reading passages, teachers encounter problems of pupils' lack of understanding and low achievement in reading comprehension tasks.

The present research intends to deal with reading comprehension and aims at unveiling the causes of the difficulties encountered by pupils in reading comprehension which, in their turn, lead to pupils' bad achievement in tests. Thus our research attempts to answer the following questions:

➢ Do pupils fail in reading comprehension because of the lack of background knowledge?

➢ Do pupils fail in reading comprehension because of low linguistic competence?

➢ Do the reading passages fit the pupils' tastes (interests)?

➢ Do pupils fail in reading comprehension because of their mother tongue interference?

➢ Do the difficulties lie in the time given to the reading comprehension courses?

B. HYPOTHESES:

We started our research with the attempt to answer the questions highlighted above, as follows:

Hypothesis 1:

We assume that first year pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension at El-madher high school are caused by the lack of background knowledge.

Hypothesis 2:

We assume that these difficulties in reading comprehension are due to low linguistic competence.

Hypothesis 3:

We assume that these difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the texts which are not interesting.

Hypothesis 4:

We assume that these difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the short time allocated for reading courses.

C. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Written text comprehension is one of the abilities that is most often evaluated in schools all over the world. And every day teachers deal with pupils who have not completely understood what they have read. It is difficult to doubt the existence and the importance of the problem. Great efforts have been made to investigate the different processes of text comprehension. On the

other hand, scare interest has been paid to subjects who have comprehension difficulties.

Cesare Cornoldi (1996), introduced the following statement explaining the importance of the problem:

> "*Today, good reading comprehension remains the most important key for school learning. In fact, every subject requires the processing of texts, their further elaboration and assimilation. The typical profile of a pupil with a reading comprehension problem (sometimes defined as a "poor comprehender") describes pupils who are slow in learning because they are not able to learn at the same rate as their classmates from lectures and textbooks. In general, teachers and administrators frequently rate the learning ability of their pupils, coming to the conclusion that many of them experience severe problems. If we were to use these assessments to estimate the proportion of pupils with a reading comprehension problem, we would arrive at the conclusion that the problem is very common and relevant in schools.*"

The great impact that reading has on language learning has pushed everyone who belongs to the foreign language teaching/learning field to think about the fruitful methods to realize the objective set before, mainly if we

know that our country is willing to reach an advanced level in foreign languages teaching, especially English language teaching, since it is the dominating language in our world. To do this, we need first to detect and describe the difficulties faced by the subjects doing the reading task, in addition to the analysis of the variables that affect the reading process in order to help in finding the effective way out for this problem.

D. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present research intends to reach the possible set of the precious information that can be gathered from the pupils and their teachers in order to reach a better understanding of the difficulties in reading comprehension.

Hence, we contribute in paving the way for teaching reading comprehension skills to learners of English as a foreign language with fruitful results by the suggestion of some solutions.

Theoretical part

CHAPTER ONE:

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Research in foreign language teaching/learning allows us to identify problems and find solutions. It allows us to develop new methods and find better ways to prevent learners getting problems in acquiring a new language. It provides evidence that can then be used by program designers and teachers as well to choose the fruitful curriculum. R. C. Bradly says (Research in Education, P 1):

> *"All educators can benefit from the knowledge of the nature, techniques, and procedures of scientific research. In the first place; this knowledge is useful because these skills will enable classroom teachers and other professionals to utilize scientific methods in attacking their own practical problems. Secondly, research knowledge is essential because it can furnish school personnel with the information necessary to make objective decisions concerning curriculum, methods, administrative procedures, and so on. Thirdly, knowledge of research permits the educators to be both a consumer and producer of research. It seems logical to assume that those who borrow from the research*

reservoir will desire to contribute to the ever increasing

supply of valid knowledge of education through research."

In this research, we attempt to recognize what makes pupils of first year at the high school of El-madher face some difficulties as far as reading comprehension is concerned. To unveil the causes behind such problem we need to know the attitudes and perceptions of the pupils and the teachers as well towards these difficulties, and try to come out with what we think are good answers of this problem in order to lessen those difficulties.

To reach the aims of our research, we have to follow some steps starting from data collecting & choosing sources, passing through the method used in this research, and ending by the instruments and the participants of our study.

I.1- AIMS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Broadly talking research process has to be formal, systematic, and intensive used in the investigation of a problem (R. C. Bradly 1971, p. 2),

> *"...thus, research is a formal, systematic, intensive*
>
> *process used in the investigation of a problem."*

In other words, research is a structured inquiry that uses acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge (UNISA, 2003: p. 5). Thus, our aim through the investigation of our research is to add as

objectively as possible some new knowledge in the field of foreign language teaching/learning, as reading comprehension is concerned,

> *"...an important attribute of a researcher is the ability to be objective, he reports what he finds irrespective of his feelings about the results obtained." (Research in Education, 1971)*

with the following intentions:

- ✓ Highlight the main causes behind first year pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension courses at El-Madher high school.
- ✓ Analyze and explain the results obtained from the data collected.
- ✓ Suggest some solutions based on the results gained from pupils and teachers attitudes towards the problem.

Taken as a whole, the aim of our study is to contribute in improving reading comprehension as part of English language teaching/learning as a foreign language in our schools.

I. 2- THE RESEARCH METHOD:

Since descriptive research is designed to determine the facts of current situation and thereby to clarify status. It is found that the descriptive method is suitable for this study. Thus, it is a situation that may be surveyed and interpretively described in terms of all available facts (James W. Turner, &

John Curry, 1971). Moreover, the discussion and the interpretation of the data collected is necessary here, because the descriptive method in research is not only a matter of collecting data about a specific situation, but needs to be discussed and adequately interpreted. J. W. Turner & J. Curry said at this level:

> *"The beginning researcher should realize that descriptive research is more than just a collection of data; it is not research unless discussion of the data is extended to the level of adequate interpretation."*

In the current study, we are dealing with a situation where first year pupils at the high school are facing difficulties in their reading comprehension courses. Thus, the descriptive method is the most suitable expectantly to end after the description of the situation, with some recommendations that hopefully be used in the future at the improvement of the fruitful teaching/learning of reading comprehension tasks.

I. 3- PARTICIPANTS :

I.3.1- THE POPULATION:

The present research needs to be conducted on two populations: the pupils and the teachers. Both of them will be concerned with a questionnaire, one for the teachers and one for the pupils.

Concerning the population of the pupils, it is made of first year science stream pupils at El-Madher high school, who are three groups the equivalent of one hundred pupils. (literary stream is not concerned since the curriculum is not the same).

The population of the teachers needed for this study is made of nine teachers, all teachers of English language at El-Madher high school (including its annexe).

I.3.2- THE SAMPLE:

The sample of our research is made of all the populations of both pupils and teachers, for two reasons: the first, is that our population is not very large which wouldn't in fact be a waste of resources (considerable amount of time, cost, and effort), and the second reason, is that the more the sample is larger, the better the suggestions are closer to come up with accurate results and effective solutions, since we are going to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of both populations, teachers and pupils.

Thus, we are going to take all first year science stream groups of pupils the equivalent of one hundred pupils for the first questionnaire. And for teachers questionnaire we are going to take all the teachers of English language at El-Madher high school.

I.4- THE INSTRUMENTS:

The focus will be on two questionnaires employed as research instruments for measurement purposes to collect reliable and valid data. The first questionnaire is designed for pupils, and the second is for teachers.

Factual questions which are concerned with facts about the teachers and their learners' language learning process, and attitudinal questions which are employed to find out what pupils and teachers think, are used to collect data suited for quantitative analysis.

I.4.1- PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE :

Pupils' questionnaire is designed for all first year science stream pupils at El-Madher high school. It is divided into four sections including twenty items (see Appendix 1). More detailed information about the questionnaire's implementation is presented in chapter four.

I.4.2- TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE :

teachers' questionnaire is designed for all teachers of English language at El-Madher high school including its annex. It is divided into four sections

including sixteen items (see Appendix 2). More detailed information about the questionnaire's implementation is presented in chapter five.

I.4.3- RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS :

In any research, accuracy in measurement is of great importance. One of the questions posed here was "How can the quality of the data be maximized to a considerable extent?", the quality of data reflects the reliability of the measurement used. If one cannot trust the measures, one cannot trust any analysis that uses those measures. The reliability of a research instrument concerns the extent to which the instrument yields the same results on repeated trials.

I.4.3.1- QUESTIONNAIRES :

Because of the essence of scientific research is trying to find answers to questions in a systematic manner, it is no wonder that questionnaires has become one of the most popular research instruments applied in the human sciences.

Constructing a good questionnaire involves a series of steps and procedures, including:

✓ Deciding on the general features of the questionnaire, such as the length, the format, and the main parts.

- ✓ Writing effective items/questions.

- ✓ Selecting and sequencing the items.

- ✓ Writing appropriate instructions.

- ✓ Piloting the questionnaire and conducting item analysis.

I.4.3.2- QUESTIONNAIRES' DESIGN :

The questionnaires were designed with particular attention aiming at guaranteeing as high as possible appropriateness, preciseness, intelligibleness, unbiasedness, and relevance.

Social Connectedness Scale (SCS); A modified version of the scale, originally developed by Lee and Robbins (1995), was used for this study. We modified this scale to specifically measure connectedness to the reading courses. Pupils indicated on a four point scale type the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement (1= strongly agree; 4= strongly disagree). Also, we have used varied questions to collect as useful as possible data.

I.4.3.3- QUESTIONNAIRES ADMINISTERING:

In foreign language teaching/learning research, group administration is the most common method of having questionnaires completed. One reason for this is that the typical targets of the questionnaires are language learners studying within institutional contexts, and it is often possible to arrange to administer the instrument to them while they are assembled together, for example, as part of a lesson or between certain other organized activities. The

other reason for the popularity of this administration format is that it can overcome some of the problems related to postal questionnaires or one-to-one administration. Groups of students are typically 'captive groups' in the sense that a response rate of nearly 100% can be achieved with them. There are, however, some important points to consider:

- ✓ With larger groups more than one field worker at a time is needed to help to answer questions and to distribute/collect the questionnaires.

- ✓ Oppenheim (1992) also warns us that in group administration 'contamination' through copying, talking, or asking questions is a constant danger.

- ✓ The negative influence of deviant pupils may create an inappropriate climate for sincere and thoughtful work.

I.4.3.4- PILOTING :

Because in questionnaires so much depends on the actual wording of the items (even minor differences can change the responses) an integral part of questionnaire construction is field testing, or piloting. Pupils' questionnaire was piloted once on a sample of thirty pupils (ten pupils from each class were chosen randomly) who are similar to the target sample the instrument had been designed for. Teachers' questionnaire was piloted at various stages of its development on a sample of two teachers. These trials allowed us to collect feedback about how the instrument worked and whether it performed the job it had been designed for.

Piloting can highlight questions:

- ✓ Whose wording may be ambiguous ?

- ✓ Which are too difficult for the respondent to reply to ?

- ✓ Which may, or should be, eliminated because, contrary to the initial expectations, they do not provide any unique information or because they turn out to measure something irrelevant ?

Piloting can also indicate problems concerning the administration of the questionnaire; and Valuable feedback can also be gained about:

- ✓ The overall appearance of the questionnaire.

- ✓ The clarity of the instructions.

- ✓ The length of time necessary to complete the instrument.

I.5- SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS :

Investigating human being attitudes and thinking towards a subject matter is not that easy task. To ensure a high level of consistency and to eliminate high range of bias is difficult, and need great efforts to be spent. Through the present research, definite programmes, schemes, methods of instruction for immediate schoolroom use can not be deduced. Our focus here is to highlight those factors lying beneath pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension courses. The game in reading is comprehending a text

(perffetti, 1985, p.13) and reading is not merely pronouncing the words but understanding the text and developing a cognitive representation of the text (Emerald, 1991, p. 4). Thus, when you realise that there is a failure concerning comprehension of texts read, a quick intervention is needed to spot the causes of the problem, and as it is said, it may not be so much what are we doing wrong but rather what are we not doing right. So, the attempt is done to hopefully answer this question.

CONCLUSION:

Earth needs to be cultivated with great attention; a considerable amount of time, cost, an effort is spent in order to gather the harvest. The same steps; if not more, are needed to be done with research in human sciences field, this latter namely the one concerned with teaching/learning of a foreign language is at the same time interesting and not easy to be done.

All what is said as far as this chapter is concerned is a modest effort spent to explain all what have a relation with our research; methods, steps, instruments, and objectives to reach a satisfactory level in reading comprehension for learners of English as a foreign language at the high school.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE READING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Many of the people concerned with language teaching/learning ignore the values of reading and its impact on other skills. In fact, reading is a key to success in school, a key to the development out of the school, a key to the enjoyment of leisure time. Indeed, reading is so interrelated with the total educational process that educational success requires successful reading. But why do we need another research on reading and on the teaching of reading comprehension? The simplest answer to this question is that, despite the effort spent on the improvement of reading skill, there are unfortunately many of those pupils who face great difficulties, and have less abilities to cope with reading comprehension tasks. Thus, our study is meant to investigate and to spot the important issues that underlie the reading process in order to help in the analysis of the data collected from pupils and teachers. For this, Chapter two examines those important issues in reading: What is reading? What is the role of word recognition and comprehension? What are the surface and deep structure in reading? To what extent is reading a thinking process? Is reading only a psycholinguistic guessing game or is it something more? What are the roles of the semantic and syntactic contexts? What model, the bottom-up, the top-down, or the interactive, best explains what happens in reading? And so on.

II.1 A DEFINITION OF READING

Definitions of reading are generally divided into two major types: (a) those that equate reading with interpretation of experience generally, and (b) those that restrict the definition to the interpretation of graphic symbols. The first is a broader category and encompasses the second; most reading definitions are related to one or both. Let us consider more closely some of the definitions which make up these categories.

II.1.1 READING AS INTERPRETATION OF EXPERIENCE

With the first type of reading definition, in which reading is equated with the interpretation of experience generally, we might speak of reading pictures, reading faces, or reading the weather. Dechant said:

> *"We read a squeaking door, a clap of thunder, a barking dog, or another's facial expressions. The detective reads clues, the geologist reads rocks, the astronomer reads stars, the doctor reads the symptoms of illness, and the reading teacher reads the symptoms of reading disability".*

The definition of reading that came out of the Claremont College Reading Conference fits this first category. In the Conference's Eleventh Yearbook, Spencer (1946) wrote,

"In the broadest sense, reading is the process of interpreting sense stimuli. . . . Reading is performed whenever one experiences sensory stimulation" (p. 19).

Benjamin Franklin in 1733 in *Poor Richard's Almanac* had such a definition in mind when he wrote:

"Read much, but not too many books"

An important implication of the definition of reading as interpretation of experience is that pupils must be readers of experience before they can become readers of graphic symbols. They must first be readers of the world. Pupils cannot read symbols without having had those experiences that give the symbol meaning.

II.1.2 READING AS INTERPRETATION OF GRAPHIC SYMBOLS

Turn now to the second type of definition of reading which equates reading with the interpretation of graphic symbols. Most definitions of reading given in professional textbooks are of this second type. Writers have furnished us with multiple descriptions of reading. They have described reading as

involving the comprehension and interpretation of the symbols on the page (Harris -Sipay, 1975, 1985); as a complex interaction of cognitive and linguistic processes with which readers construct a meaningful representation of the writer's message (Barnitz, 1986); or as giving significance intended by the writer to the graphic symbols by relating them to what the reader already knows (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985; Dechant, 1964, 1970, 1982; Duffy & Roehler, 1986).

Reading is also described as the reconstruction of the message encoded graphically by the writer; as constructing meaning from print (Gillett & Temple, 1986); as making sense of written language (Gillett & Temple, 1986); and as a process of information search or information processing. It is described as an interactive process involving both the reader's previous fund of knowledge and the words in the text; it is a process of putting the reader in contact and in communication with the ideas of the writer which are cued by the written or printed symbols; it is a process of building a representation or a mental model of text (Perfetti, 1985). Reading means building a representation of text by relating what is on the page to one's own fund of experience. When the reader's representation of text essentially approximates that of the writer, genuine reading occurs (Dechant, 1991).

II.2 THE WORD IDENTIFICATION PROCESS (ENCODING)

Reading is additionally described as a synthesis or integration of word identification and comprehension, in which the absence of either makes true reading impossible.

In reading, the obvious need is that the words on the page be identified and recognized by the reader. Reading begins as a sensory process and as a word identification process. Word identification or encoding of the printed word involves three basic processes: visual discrimination and identification of the symbols; visual memory for the symbols; and, generally recoding, pronunciation of the symbols, or association of sound with the symbols.

The purpose of all communication is the sharing of meanings; the purpose of all reading is comprehension of meanings. But it is the symbols or words that must carry the burden of meaning between the communicators. The written symbols are the writer's tools for awakening meaning in the reader. Communication through writing and its reciprocal, reading, requires such a sign system. Without the graphic input there can be no reading. Good readers often are such because they are capable of rapid and accurate word recognition. They have automatized the word identification skills. They have committed thousands of words to their sight or recognition vocabulary and can recognize them instantly with minimum language cues.

II.3 THE COMPREHENSION PROCESS (DECODING)

We have to note that the central purpose of all reading is the comprehension of meaning. Reading is thus more than word identification. If reading was simply a word-identification or word-naming process, pupils would be good readers when they could identify the word immediately at sight or when they could recode or name the printed symbols or words. Reading is more than the ability to identify or to pronounce the words on the printed page, or to go from the graphic to the spoken code. It is more than giving the visual configuration a name. This is recoding, but is not decoding. Decoding requires the reader to reconstruct the message encoded graphically by the writer. Decoding occurs only when meaning is associated with the written symbols and only when the meaning that the writer wanted to share with the reader has been received.

"It is not enough to put one's own stamp of meaning on the words. The reader must follow the thought of the writer"

(Goodman et al., 1987)

Comprehension occurs only when the reader's construction or representation of text agrees substantially with the writer's representation or his intended message. Only then does true communication via reading take place.

Hittelman and Hittelman (1983) note that:

> *"reading is the process of reconstructing from printed patterns the ideas and information intended by the author" (p. 4).*

In a later text (1988), Hittelman says:

> *"Reading entails both reconstructing an author's message and constructing one's own meaning using the print on the page. A reader's reconstruction of the ideas and information intended by an author is somewhat like a listener's reconstruction of ideas from a speaker's combinations of sounds" (p. 2).*

In the same text Hittelman notes that:

> *"Reading comprehension is partly the reconstruction of an author's intended meaning" (p. 416).*

II.3.1- SMITH'S VIEWS OF COMPREHENSION:

Throughout this research we have singled out Frank Smith's views because of his influence on the understanding of reading in the last 15 to 20 years. Smith (1988) observes that comprehension is:

"the basis of reading and learning to read" (p. 6)

He said that cognitive structure, which he terms non-visual information, determines whether the reader comprehends or not. From his perspective, comprehension is directly related to the amount of non-visual information, in other words, to what the reader knows. Comprehension for Smith (1988) is:

"the possibility of relating whatever we are attending to in the world around us to the knowledge, intentions, and expectations we already have in our heads" (p. 53).

Smith further defines comprehension as identification and apprehension of meaning, and as

"making sense of print," (p. 54).

It is of course true that a reader's difficulty is that he cannot make sense of what he is reading, but from another perspective it appears also clear that the reader's problem would be alleviated if he was more efficient in identifying the words. Smith himself intimates as much when he writes:

"Comprehension requires sharing knowledge with the author about the manner in which a text is conventionally constructed" (p. 226).

II.3.2- LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING :

We turn our attention now to the levels of comprehension:

✓   The encoding of the meaning of a single word is the most elemental form of comprehension. Just and Carpenter (1987) note that the first problem readers face is to encode the word and then to access its meaning in their internal or mental lexicon. The meaning of the single word or the word concept is the knowledge about a word that is stored in the brain and the representation or concept associated with the word.

✓   The encoding of the meaning that is appropriate to the context is a second level of comprehending. It is at this point that semantic and syntactic contexts start to play a critical role in comprehension.

✓   A third level is comprehending units of increasing size: phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and total text. Readers must be able to extract

meaning from units larger than a single word, phrase, or sentence. They must be able to develop a representation of extended text, of paragraphs and multiple paragraphs.

II.3.3- THE SURFACE AND DEEP STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE:

Psycholinguists have termed the graphic cue system "the surface structure" and have identified meaning with the "deep structure". They affirm that meaning resides in the deep structure of language, and they maintain that the two levels of language (the surface and deep structure) are related in a complex way through a grammar implicit in each reader, which is termed transformational grammar and which, as Smith (1988) observes, cannot be taught explicitly.

The deep structure refers to the meaning, and comprehension may be described as the translation of the surface structure into the deep structure. The surface structure includes the number, size, and contrast of the printed marks on the page.

According to Smith (1988),

> *"surface structure is the visual information of written language; it is the source of information that is lost to the reader when the lights go out."*

The surface structure refers to the observable features of language. It includes the syntactic form that the sentence takes. And meaning does not lie at the surface of language, but rather in the mind of the reader, or in what linguists term the within-brain context. In other words meaning is not implicitly contained in the printed or written marks on the page. The evidence overwhelmingly supports the view that the meanings brought to the surface structure differ from individual to individual and in the same individual from time to time.

II.4- THE SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC CONTEXT IN READING:

To comprehend, readers must access and process the semantic and syntactic information contained in words and sentences: they must associate semantic meaning (a meaning acquired through experience and conceptualisation) and syntactic meaning (a meaning inherent in language structures) with the symbols. In other words, there are two basic contexts in reading, the semantic and the syntactic, and readers must use both of them if they expect to be good readers.

II.4.1- SEMANTIC PROCESSING:

When readers associate meaning with symbols, a meaning that they have acquired through experiences, they are utilizing a semantic cue, are doing semantic processing, and are making use of the semantic context. Semantic cues are meaning-bearing cues based on experiences. When pupils "read" the

word *cat* and can pronounce the word as /kăt/ , they are still not yet reading. Readers must take meaning to the symbols. They must call upon their previous experiences with *cats* and associate these experiences with the printed symbol. The real live cat thus is the referent for the word *cat*.

Reading thus is correctly described as the process of giving the significance intended by the writer to the graphic symbols by relating them to one's own fund of experiences (Dechant, 1964, p. 12). Clearly, comprehension comes from the reader's fund of experience and is actually supplied by readers as they process symbols by relating them to experience. We read in order to gain experience, and yet it is also true that we get more out of reading if we have more experience. pupils cannot be good readers if their past experiences have not furnished them with a cognitive base relevant to the information contained in a particular written communication.

II.4.2- SYNTACTIC PROCESSING:

Readers must process the graphic-semantic cues, but this step needs to be supplemented by syntactic processing. To be a good reader, it is not enough to process the semantic context, or to focus on the semantic or referential meaning. Readers must also process the syntactic context; they must use language structure to decode meaning.

Good 'comprehenders' are such because they can process total language structures that are termed phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, and not simply

words, to decode meaning. They see the grammatical relations among the words in phrases, clauses, and sentences. They have more experience with and knowledge of language structure, of syntactic usage.

Lefebvre (1962, 1964), a linguist, started the emphasis on the significance of language structures for reading comprehension. He emphasized that the grasp of meaning is integrally linked to the processing of these language structures in a sentence. He pointed out that:

> *"syntactic cues, both the morphological or intra-word cues (such as inflectional endings, contractions, prefixes, suffixes, and accent) and the inter word cues (such as word order, function words, and punctuation) affect meaning. Thus, the addition of s to a word (cats, hits, Mary's) changes the meaning of the words; the prefix trans changes the meaning of the root port in transport; and the addition of the suffix fy changes false to falsify and creates a new meaning."*

II.5- MODELS OF READING:

Since reading deals with word recognition and comprehension, there is some question whether pupils use or should use a bottom-up approach to comprehension and reading, a top-down approach, or an interactive model.

II.5.1- BOTTOM-UP:

Bottom-up models operate on the principle that the written text is hierarchically organized (i.e., on the grapho-phonic, phonemic, syllabic, morphemic, word, and sentence levels) and that the reader first processes the smallest linguistic unit, gradually compiling the smaller units to decipher and comprehend higher units (e.g., sentence syntax). The emphasis in this approach is on text processing. In the bottom-up models, if the text processing falls down anywhere on the hierarchical ladder, remediation is applied at this point. Bottom-up models, at least in the beginning stages, give little emphasis to the influences of the reader's world knowledge, contextual information, and other higher-order processing strategies.

Gove (1983) suggests that advocates of the bottom-up strategy believe that:

✓ readers must recognize each word in a selection to comprehend the selection

✓ readers should give primary emphasis to word and sound/ letter cues in identifying unrecognised words

✓ reading acquisition requires a mastery of a series of word-recognition skills

✓ letters, letter/sound relationships, and words should receive primary emphasis in instruction

✓ accuracy in recognizing words is significant

✓ knowledge of discrete sub skills is important.

The reader thus first learns to identify letter features, links these features to recognize letters, combines letters to recognize spelling patterns, links spelling patterns to recognize words, and then proceeds to sentence, paragraph, and text-level processing.

II.5.2- TOP-DOWN:

Top-down models suggest that processing of print begins in the mind of the readers with meaning-driven processes or with an hypothesis about the meaning of some unit of print. From this perspective readers identify letters and words only to confirm their hypotheses about the meaning of the text. Thus, the top-down approach has been described as concept driven. The top-down approach emphasizes that reading is not simply a bottom-up process and that meaning is not entirely residing in the text. The knowledge, experience, and concepts that readers bring to the text, in other words, their schemata, are a part of the process.

Gove (1983) suggests that advocates of the top-down strategy believe that:

- ✓ readers can comprehend a selection even though they do not recognize each word
- ✓ readers should use meaning and grammatical cues to identify unrecognised words

- ✓ reading requires the use of meaning activities rather than the mastery of a series of word-recognition skills

- ✓ the reading of sentences, paragraphs, and whole selections should be the primary focus of instruction

- ✓ reading for meaning is the primary objective of reading rather than mastery of letters, letter/sound relationships, and words

- ✓ the most important aspect about reading is the amount and kind of information gained through reading.

II.5.3- INTERACTIVE:

The interactive model suggests that meaning comes from many sources, that the reader simultaneously uses all levels of processing, that any one source of meaning can be primary at a given time, that utilizing information from one source often depends on utilizing information from the others, and that the reader constructs meaning by the selective use of information from all the sources of meaning without adherence to any set order. The sources of meaning, from an interactive perspective, include the following:

- ✓ Logographic knowledge : This results in instant recognition of words on the basis of the salient and global features: their length, shape, or configuration as defined by the pattern of ascenders and descenders. It is recognition of words on the basis of gross aspects of words independent of the letters.

✓ Graphemic knowledge : This focuses on the distinctive features of the graphemes, both individual letters and letter clusters (e.g., *ch, sh, th, wh*). This is information specific to the letters making up the word.

✓ Phonological knowledge : The phonological knowledge includes the word's acoustic, articulatory, and phonemic structure; each word has a phonological identity.

✓ Orthographic knowledge : A word has an orthographic structure or identity; it has a specific internal structure. Each word has a distinct arrangement of grapheme sequences. Orthographic knowledge consists of recognition of the sequence of letters which bear a systematic relationship to the word's acoustic and articulatory structure.

✓ Morphemic knowledge : Some readers identify words by an analysis of the morphemic or meaning parts of words. They learn to sound the morphemes; recognizing *returnable* as *re-turn-able*.

✓ Grapheme/phoneme correspondence : This is knowledge of the grapheme/phoneme correspondences. These symbol/sound associations help readers to identify and recode words.

✓ Lexical knowledge : Lexical knowledge refers to individual word meanings; it includes also the morphemic information.

✓ Semantic knowledge : This is the experiential content of sentences and paragraphs; it gives the word semantic identity. It includes the meanings that the reader has acquired through experience and that form the reader's personal schema.

✓ Syntactic knowledge : This is the recognition of the word order and each word's grammatical function. Together they give the word its syntactic identity.

✓ Schematic knowledge : This is the prior knowledge that the reader brings to the text. It includes the reader's cognitive base, the reader's fund of linguistic experience, the reader's topical knowledge, and the reader's knowledge of the rhetorical structures that signal the organization of texts.

CONCLUSION:

Chapter two has reviewed various definitions of reading, classified definitions into those that define reading as interpretation of experience and those that define reading as interpretation of graphic symbols, and discussed the importance of word recognition, comprehension, and semantic and syntactic structures. Reading was described as building a representation of text, and as a word recognition and comprehension process in which integration of these two sub processes is an essential ingredient. Reading always involves a sign system (the words or symbols on the printed page) and decoding (the association of meaning with the symbols). The chapter also presented the view that readers can be good readers only if their past life experience has furnished them with a cognitive base relevant to the information contained in a particular written communication, and if their level of experience with language itself, with syntactic and idiomatic usage, has been adequate.

Finally, the basic theme of the chapter is that reading is clearly a process which is complete only when comprehension is attained. The critical element is that the reader reconstruct the message encoded in the written language. Full

comprehension occurs when the reconstruction agrees with the writer's intended message. And that comprehension depends as much or even more on the information stored in the reader's brain than on the information stored in the text.

CHAPTER THREE:
VARIABLES THAT AFFECT READING COMPREHENSION

INTRODUCTION

As explained in chapter two, the amount of research into reading in the mother tongue is simply enormous, however it is much smaller in quantity and scope as far as reading in second or foreign language are concerned. The aim of this chapter is not to present an extensive review of the literature, but rather to acquaint the reader with the main research findings in so far as they are relevant to the investigation of reading in a foreign language. Also, some keys for selecting a passage for readers of English as a foreign language will be discussed.

III. 1- FIRST LANGUAGE READING, FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING:

The investigation of the reading process brings us to the question of the nature of reading in a foreign language. The question is whether the ability to read transfers across languages: is a good first-language reader also a good foreign language reader ?

The issue usually poses itself somewhat differently, as an assertion: many foreign language teachers believe that poor foreign-language reading is due to a lack of good reading abilities/skills/habits in the first language. Alderson (1989) addresses this issue, and reviews much of the research published at that time, to conclude that there is likely to be a language threshold beyond which foreign language readers have to progress before their first-language reading abilities can transfer to the foreign language situation.

Cummins (1979,1991) has advocated the hypothesis of linguistic interdependence, suggesting that linguistic proficiency has two basic components: basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive/academic language proficiency, in more recent writings this has been formulated as conversational Vs. academic language proficiency. He argues that, when asked

to perform school reading tasks in two languages, bilingual pupils seem to be able to draw on the same knowledge base –academic language proficiency- which he posits, underlies either language. This, he asserts, means that once reading ability has been acquired in the first language, it is available for use in the foreign language. If first language reading abilities are poor, then the posited existence of the underlying academic language proficiency would suggest the wisdom of improving first language reading, and then allowing that ability to transfer.

The notion that poor foreign language reading is due to inadequate first language reading receives little support from the research literature (Alderson 2000). Results increasingly confirm the existence of a linguistic threshold, a threshold which will certainly vary different texts being read for different purposes by readers with differing amount of world knowledge.

III. 2- VARIABLES THAT AFFECT READING COMPREHENSION:

One of the more complex tasks facing English as a foreign language (EFL) reading teacher is the selection of appropriate reading passages. The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss seven factors that have a great impact on the reading comprehension process.

The selection of an appropriate reading passage is critical. If the passage chosen is inappropriate for whatever reason, the chances of success will diminish.

III. 2. 1- INTEREST:

The most important factor in selecting a reading passage is interest. Williams (1986, p.42) claims that:

"in the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible."

Carrell (1984, p.339) states:

"First, reading teachers should use materials the students are interested in, including materials self-selected by the student."

Nuttall (1982, p.29), who refers to interest as **_"suitability of content"_** claims that having texts that interest learners is more critical than either the linguistic level of the text or its **_"exploitability"_**. (see below)

Interest is important because of its relation to motivation. When the topic of a passage is not of interest to pupils, their motivation to read is substantially lessened.

As part of the effort to find interesting reading passages, Nuttall (1982, p.30) recommends that the teacher attempt to discover if the passage will:

✓ tell the students things they don't already know.

- ✓ introduce them to new and relevant ideas, make them think about things they haven't thought about before.

- ✓ help them to understand the way other people feel or think (e.g., people with different backgrounds, problems, or attitudes from their own).

- ✓ make them want to read for themselves (to continue a story, find out more about a subject, and soon).

In looking for readings that will interest their pupils, teachers should try to find those that have a reasonable amount of new information; a passage that contains relatively little new information can be boring.

III. 2. 2- EXPLOITABILITY:

Exploitability, which Nuttall (1982, p.30, p.31) defines as the facilitation of learning, is a key factor in selecting a reading passage. Simply put, will the passage allow the teacher to accomplish the objectives of the reading lesson?

One way teachers can determine the exploitability of a passage is to do the exercises and activities in the reading lesson. If, for example, one of the objectives is to have pupils discover the author's point of view, the teacher could do that activity to see if the reading passage allows the students to discover the author's point of view.

III. 2. 3- READABILITY:

The factor of readability ranks with interest and exploitability as one of the most important considerations in selecting a reading passage. Carrell (1987) uses the term to refer to the following phenomena: syntactic appropriateness; logical/rhetorical ordering of ideas; textual phenomena at the discourse level; lexical appropriateness; and background knowledge of the reader. Nuttall (1982) reserves this term only for syntactic and lexical considerations. Readability is used here to include the phenomena mentioned by Carrell, plus the length of the passage.

III. 2. 3. 1- *Lexical Knowledge:*

Lexical knowledge and background knowledge are the two most important elements that determine a text's readability. It is clear that as the number of unknown lexical items in a reading passage increases, the more difficult it is for pupils to read it with comprehension. However, lexical knowledge is among the more controversial factors in selecting a reading passage. Its controversial nature stems from two issues involved with lexical knowledge. The first concerns how to determine the degree of difficulty of the vocabulary of a reading passage. The second is the number of unknown words that is acceptable in a reading passage.

One way of assessing pupils vocabulary is through the use of a scanning exercise, whereby students identify in some fashion difficult or unknown words

in a passage. Over time, this will help teachers determine the lexical knowledge of their learners.

The second issue, how much new vocabulary should be in a reading passage, depends at least partly on the type of reading program extensive or intensive and also on the objectives of the reading lesson. Nuttall (1982, p.26) defines new lexical items as words and idioms or compound phrases and recommends that in an intensive reading lesson new lexical items should be less than three percent of the whole. Nuttall cites Bright and McGregor's (1970, p.80) recommendation that a passage should contain no new words because learners cannot respond completely to unknown items. However, if one of the objectives of the lesson is to teach learners to guess the meaning of unknown lexical items from the context, the passage would have to include some unknown words and phrases. In general it is recommended that the number of unknown lexical items be kept to a maximum of no more than one or two words per page.

If the reading passage finally selected does contain new vocabulary items, the teacher should consider their importance. That is, what value might be attached to their being learned at the learners stage in the acquisition of the target language? If the unknown lexical items are not important, it might be possible to substitute items the learners already know.

These recommendations must take into account the pupils reading abilities. It can be argued that at the intermediate levels, it may be advisable to maintain a

minimum of new vocabulary items (Richard, 1993). Finally, it might be difficult to find texts in which the quantity of unknown lexical items is very small. Thus, the number of unknown vocabulary items in a reading passage is affected by the pupils reading abilities, the goals of the reading course, and the objectives of the particular lesson.

III. 2. 3. 2- *Background Knowledge:*

Along with lexical knowledge, background (or world) knowledge is very important in the readability of a text. The more readers know about a particular topic, the more quickly and accurately they can read it. Research (e.g., Alderson and Urquhart 1988; Carrell 1987; Johnson 1981) has demonstrated that background knowledge plays a key role in the comprehension of a reading passage by intermediate and advanced EFL learners. Given its importance in these two stages, it might also be a critical factor in the beginning stages.

Since the background knowledge of EFL readers plays a critical role in their comprehension of the passage, teachers should make sure that the passage is on a topic that is known or familiar to their pupils. If the passage deals with an unfamiliar topic, there are two possibilities; either it can be rejected or pupils can be made familiar with the topic. The difficulty with the latter is that the more time we spend teaching our pupils about the topic of the passage, the less

time there is to devote to the actual purpose of the reading class learning reading skills and strategies.

The factor of background knowledge in EFL reading texts may be seen as an issue of course design. If one of the goals of the reading course or program is to broaden the pupils knowledge of the English-speaking world, then having the pupils read passages about the societies and cultures of English-speaking countries would be appropriate. Time spent in the reading class expanding the pupils knowledge on such topics would be meeting one of the goals of the course.

III. 2. 3. 3- *Syntactic Appropriateness (linguistic competence)*:

 Syntactic constructions in a passage affect its readability. If a passage contains grammatical constructions that the learners do not know, they might have a hard time reading it. Readability formulas are used frequently in first-language reading, and less often in foreign- or second-language reading, as a way of determining the level of syntactic complexity of a reading. Carrell (1987) provides an insightful summary of such formulas, and concludes that readability formulas fail for a variety of reasons, including a failure to take into account,

> *"the interactive nature of the reading process the interaction of the reader with the text"*
>
> *(Carrell 1987, p.32).*

Moreover, EFL reading teachers often do not have the time, resources, or appropriate information to utilize readability formulas, even if the formulas did what they are purported to do.

One way that EFL reading teachers can become better aware of the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of their learners is to ask them. This could be done as part of a scanning exercise, for example. Using an unfamiliar reading passage, the pupils are instructed to scan it and underline syntactic constructions that are new or difficult, or which they do not quickly recognize or understand. The teacher analyzes the results to determine the types of syntactic constructions likely to cause problems. The more often this is done, the better is the reading teacher's knowledge of pupils linguistic capabilities.

III. 2. 3. 4- *Organization:*

Organization refers to both the rhetorical organization of the text and the clarity of the organization. Research (e.g., Carrell 1985) indicates that EFL readers who can recognize the rhetorical organization of a text have better comprehension than those who do not. Therefore, the EFL reading teacher should carefully examine a text to see how it is organized. A passage that is not well organized might present problems for EFL pupils, especially at the beginning stages.

III. 2. 3. 5- *Discourse Phenomena:*

Textual phenomena at the level of discourse include the arrangement of topics and comments in a reading passage, and considerations of cohesiveness and coherence. EFL reading teachers need to be aware of the manner in which the author makes use of these in the passage and the degree to which EFL readers are able to deal with such textual phenomena. EFL reading teachers need to know whether their learners can handle the presentation of ideas and arguments in the passage, whether the cohesion markers and transition devices are within the linguistic competence of the learners, and whether they can follow the line of reasoning utilized by the writer of the passage. To the extent that these factors are within the competence of the learners, the passage can be considered for use in a reading lesson.

One way of determining pupils knowledge of discourse phenomena is through simple identification exercises. For example, if an unfamiliar text contains samples of various cohesion markers and transition devices, pupils can be instructed to identify them. The next step would be for the pupils to recognize

their functions in the passage. This could be done by a matching exercise in which the pupils have to match cohesion markers or transition devices that are either similar or different in function.

III. 2. 3. 6- *Length of Passage:*

The final factor of readability concerns the length of the reading passage. The most common mistake of inexperienced teachers or teachers who are not able to judge the reading abilities of their pupils is to select a passage that is too long. If pupils are unable to finish the reading passage, the lesson is not successful. The learners become frustrated and often blame themselves, feeling that they are poor readers.

In general, the objectives of the reading lesson determine the appropriate length of the passage. For example, if the focus of the lesson is on skimming, one excellent way to teach skimming is to give the pupils a rather lengthy article and a time limit to get from start to finish. But if the focus is on reading for main ideas, a much shorter article would be appropriate.

III. 2. 4- TOPIC:

The topic of a reading article is an important factor to consider. Teachers may feel that a wide variety of topics would be helpful to maintain pupils

interest and motivation. However, we should consider the merits of what Krashen (1981) calls **"narrow reading"** He claims that narrow reading, by which he means reading more in depth on a subject, might facilitate foreign language acquisition, as the vocabulary and structure are often recycled.

Dubin (1986, p.143) makes essentially the same claim when she proposes a reading-in-depth approach to provide background knowledge. Certainly, having learners read more on a subject would facilitate comprehension, as they would become familiar with an author's (or authors) style, and the vocabulary, concepts, and background information important to the topic. It is recommended, therefore, that, whenever possible, reading teachers explore three or four themes or topics during the reading course as an aid in facilitating reading comprehension and building background knowledge.

III. 2. 5- POLITICAL APPROPRIATENESS:

The political suitability of the reading passage must be taken into consideration. In some countries the political content of texts is a critical issue, while in others it is not.

Reading teachers should attempt to deal with their own political biases in selecting a reading passage. Teachers should not remove texts that do not reflect their political beliefs; nor should they attempt to use reading passages to put across their own political leanings.

III. 2. 6- CULTURAL SUITABILITY:

However, world knowledge typically refers to your world; the way your world works. And such knowledge may be limited, that is, other people's worlds may work differently. Such worlds may be particular; because of personal history, experiences unique to one person; and thus difficult to predict or control, but they may also be held in common with other people. To the extent that those other people are conventionally said to share a culture, then cultural knowledge is also crucial to text understanding.

The classic study is Bartlett's (1932), which showed how British informants, when reading a North American Indian folktale, consistently altered it to conform with their own cultural assumptions about the world, Since then, numerous studies with first-language readers have examined cultural differences among groups of readers, including children: religious group membership, black vs. white, inner city vs. rural, members of different dialect groups, and so on. Thus reading Texts in unfamiliar cultural settings can result in difficulty of reading comprehension.

III. 2. 7- APPEARANCE:

The final factor is concerned with the appearance of the reading passage, which includes layout and print and type size. The reading teacher should examine the text to see whether the layout is beneficial or harmful. For example, the teacher can check to see if there are pictures or other non-textual information that might help pupils understand the text. Are the lines or paragraphs numbered? The teacher can also determine the legibility of the passage. A barely legible text can spoil an otherwise excellent reading lesson.

CONCLUSION:

From all what has been said earlier, we can say that the wide variety of situations and circumstances in which English is taught throughout the world, it is not possible to have a reading text with readings appropriate for all learners in all contexts. The factors discussed here should be of some help to program designers who are concerned with the selection of texts for English as a foreign language reading classes. And for teachers to use them to help in forming a good reader who understands what he is reading. Teachers themselves are encouraged to add to these factors and to develop their own lists of criteria for their own specific situations.

Field work

CHAPTER FOUR:

PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

The present study attempts to unveil causes behind first year pupils' difficulties of understanding during reading comprehension courses at El-Madher high school (science stream), and expectantly find a kind of alleviation to these difficulties. Thus, we need to gather the pupils opinions, and seeing their attitudes and preferences towards this problem.

Questionnaires are considered to be adequate for this kind of research; they allow us to collect the necessary data. Hence this chapter presents all what is related to the administering, analysis and presentation, discussion and interpretation of the findings.

IV. 1- **PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES**:

One hundred pupils were chosen to participate in the study (all first year classes-science stream- at El-Madher high school). All pupils completed the questionnaire packet in class.

The questionnaire packet is a self-completion questionnaire using Social Connectedness Scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995; modified- see chapter one), included four sections to collect the necessary data on pupils attitudes, opinions and preferences regarding reading comprehension courses and to see the level of agreement and disagreement among pupils on many issues.

IV. 2- **QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERING**:

Group administration is the format I have used in my research, and as long as the questionnaire is well designed and the administration situation well prepared in advance, very good results can be achieved (see chapter one). Hence one hundred copies were distributed the first year science stream pupils at El-madher high school; and asked them to answer the questions.

Once answered, the questionnaires were collected and well-thought-out to be analysed.

IV. 3- **QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**:

To analyse data presented in the questionnaire, we used descriptive statistics, we thus analysed the questionnaire section by section, and item by item using percentages.

For the presentation of the results, we used for each item that is presented in a table, a histogram, following the percentages of choices presented in the tables.

SECTION I

In this section the reader will be apprised with pupils attitudes towards English language learning.

Item 1:

Table 01

Statement: 1- English is a very important language

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	31	51	14	4	100
Percentages	31%	51%	14%	4%	100%

The pupils were asked about their opinions towards the importance of English language, agreeing that we'll show more interest in any subject matter if we think it is important.

The results obtained show that the majority agrees about the importance of English language, 51% answered agree, 31% answered strongly agree, 14% answered disagree, and 4% answered strongly disagree.

Figure 01: The pupils opinions on the importance of English
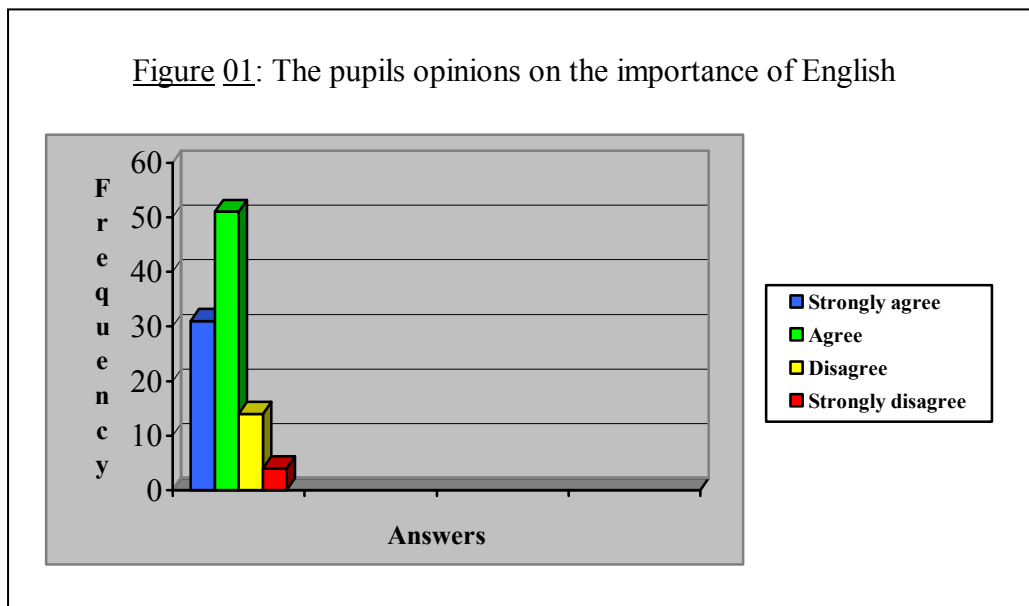
Item 2:

Table 02

2- Pupils attitudes towards English language courses

	Much	A little	Not at all	Total
Frequency	20	54	26	100
Percentages	20%	54%	26%	100%

In order to see the pupils' attitudes towards English language courses, they were asked to give their opinions about the following question: "Do you feel at ease during English language courses ?".

The results obtained reveal the pupils' lack of easiness in learning this module, in the sense that only 20% answered that they feel much at ease during English language courses, 54% answered a little, and 26% answered not at all.

Figure 02: Pupils attitudes towards English language courses
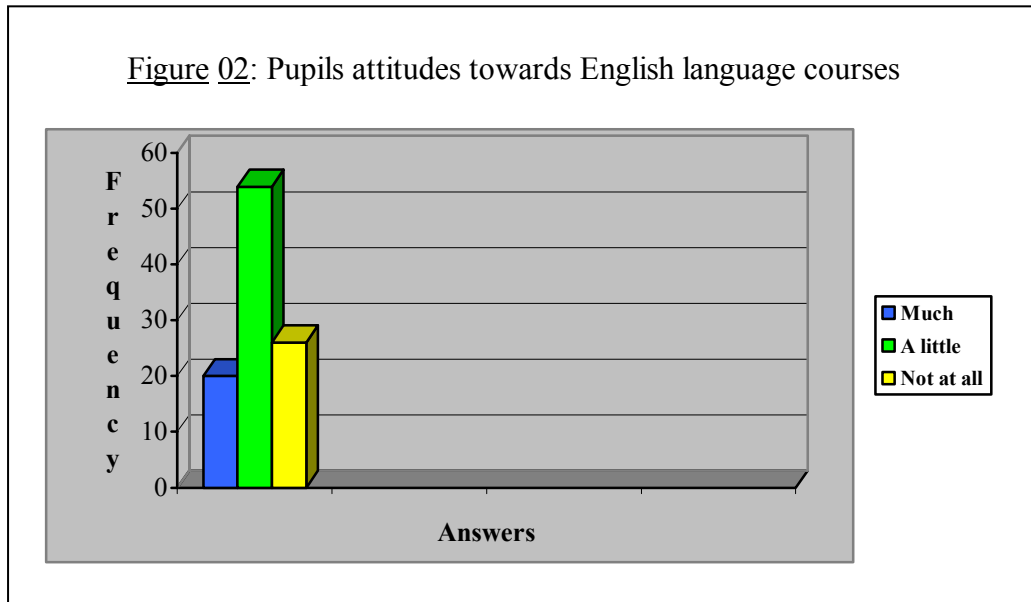
Item 3:

Table 03

3- Pupils dislikes in English language courses

	The language	The teacher	Other things	Nothing	Total
Frequency	20	30	37	13	100
Percentages	20%	30%	37%	13%	100%

Aiming at drawing a framework for the reasons that make the pupils not at ease we asked them the following question: "what do you hate in English language courses?".

The results on table 3 reveal that the pupils hate many things: first the language itself with 20%, 30% hate the teacher of English language, 13% answer nothing, and 37% state other things.

Figure 03: Pupils dislikes in English language courses
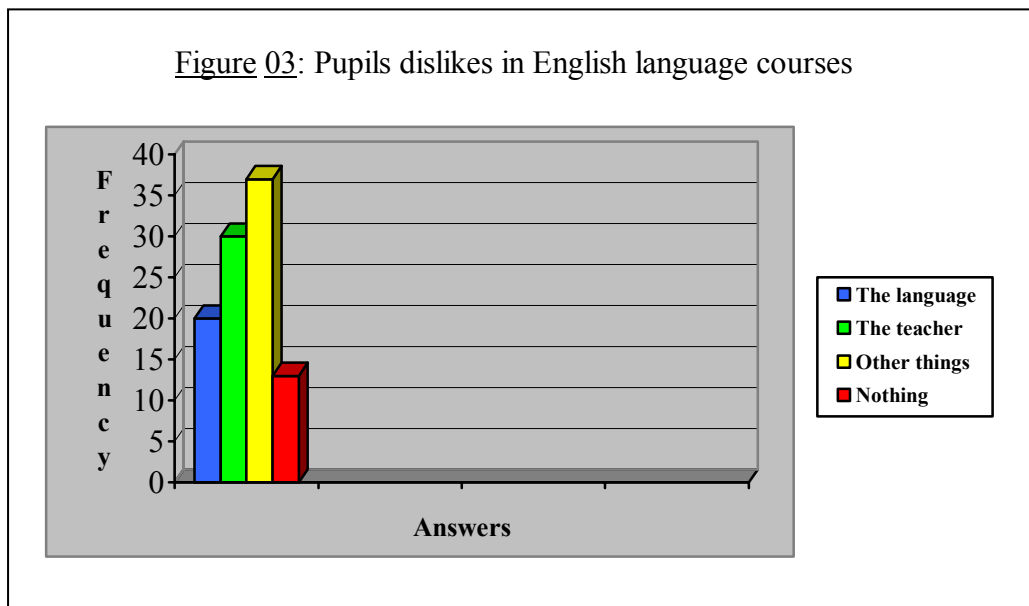
Item 4:

The 37 pupils who answered "other things", were asked to specify what are those other things and their answers are illustrated in the table below.

Table 04

4- Other things that pupils hate in English language courses

	Frequency	Percentage	Bars
I can't understand	23	62.15%	
Anarchy	06	16.22%	
The difficulty of the program	01	2.70%	
English coefficient is low	01	2.70%	
Very boring	01	2.70%	
No background knowledge	02	5.41%	
Undecided	03	8.11%	
Total	**37**	**100%**	

SECTION II

In this section, we will present pupils' attitudes towards the texts included in their course-book of English language.

Item 1:

Table 05

1- Pupils reading at home

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Frequency	08	02	01	89	100
Percentages	08%	02%	01%	89%	100%

To see if the pupils exert any effort at home to understand the texts included in their course-book, we asked them the following question: "Do you read texts included in your course-book of English before going to class?".

The vast majority of the pupils showed that no effort is spent to understand the texts by reading it at home, in the sense that only 08% do it often, 02% answered sometimes, 01% answered rarely, and 89% never tried to read the texts at home.

Figure 04: Pupils reading at home
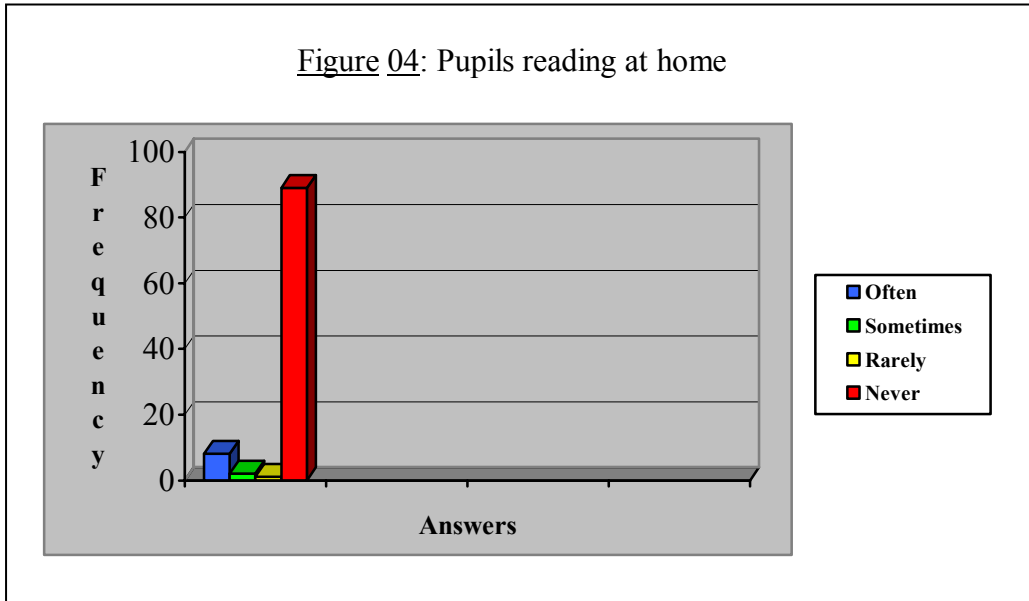
Item 2:

Table 06

2- Pupils reading at class

	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	67	33	100
Percentages	67%	33%	100%

To see if the pupils try to read the texts at the classroom during reading comprehension courses, they were asked the following question: "When the teacher asks the pupils to read the texts silently, do you read?".

The results attained reveal that the majority read the texts at the classroom, in the sense that 67% answered yes, and 33% answered no.
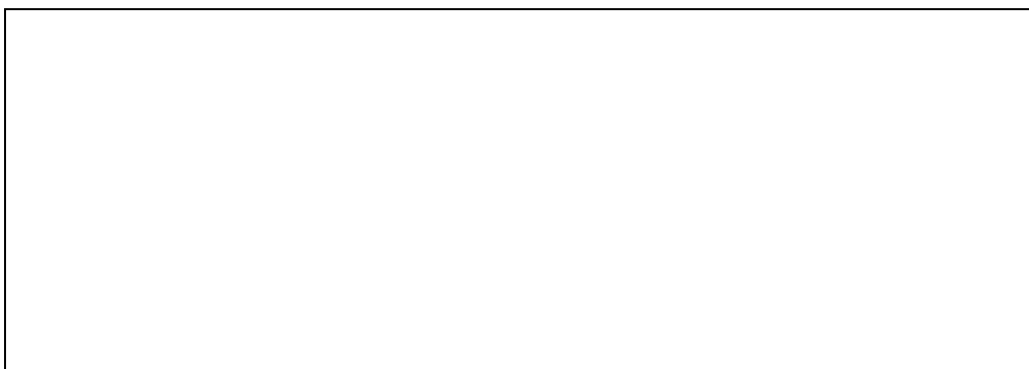
Figure 05: Pupils reading at class
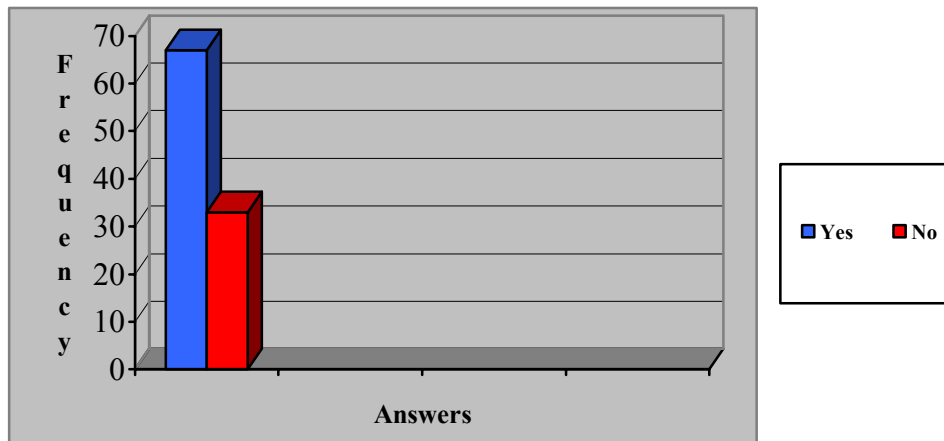
Item 3:

Table 07

3- Pupils attitudes towards reading comprehension courses

	Very enjoyable	Enjoyable	Not enjoyable	Total
Frequency	20	30	50	100
Percentages	20%	30%	50%	100%

In order to see the pupils' attitudes towards reading comprehension courses, they were asked to give their opinions about the following question: "How enjoyable do you find the reading comprehension courses?".

Table 07 shows clearly that the majority finds reading comprehension courses not enjoyable, in the sense that 50% answered not enjoyable, 30% answered enjoyable, and 20% find it very enjoyable.

Figure 06: Pupils attitudes towards reading comprehension courses
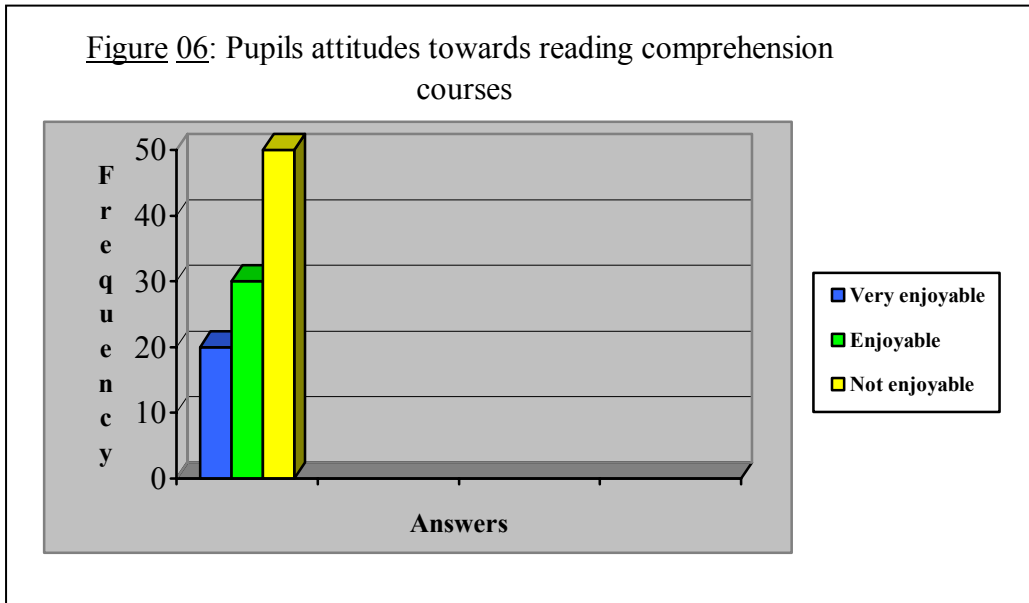
Item 4:

Table 08

4- Pupils' reading comprehension levels

	Read & understand	Read but can't understand	Can't read & can't understand	Total
Frequency	21	61	18	100
Percentages	21%	61%	18%	100%

In order to know how the pupils are as far as their reading and comprehension are concerned, they were asked the following question: "How are your reading and comprehension of the texts in your course-book, do you?".

The results obtained reveal that the pupils display a lack of understanding of the texts in front of them, in the sense that only 21% read and

understand, 61% read but can't understand, and 18% neither read nor understand.

Figure 07: Pupils' reading comprehension levels
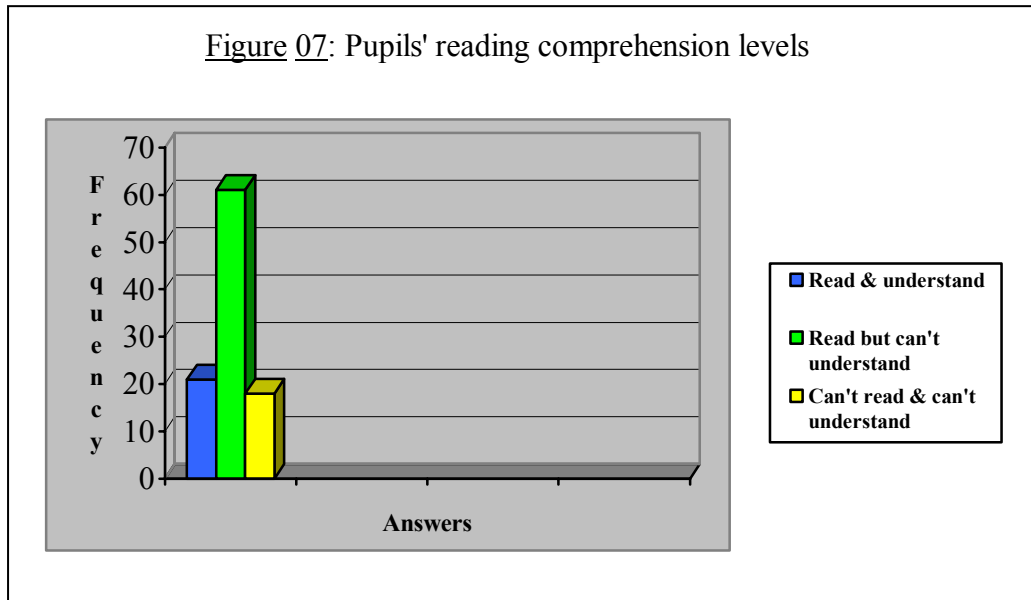
Item 5:

Table 09

5- Pupils attitudes towards the nature of the texts included in their course-book

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	Total
Frequency	02	36	46	16	100
Percentages	02%	36%	46%	16%	100%

To know how the pupils classify the texts included in their course-book we asked them the following question: "Do you think the texts included in your course-book are: very easy, easy, difficult, or very difficult?".

From table 09, it is clear that the majority sees that the texts are difficult, in the sense that 46% answered difficult, 16% answered very difficult, 36% said easy, and 02% answered very easy.

Figure 08: Pupils attitudes towards the nature of the texts included in their course-book
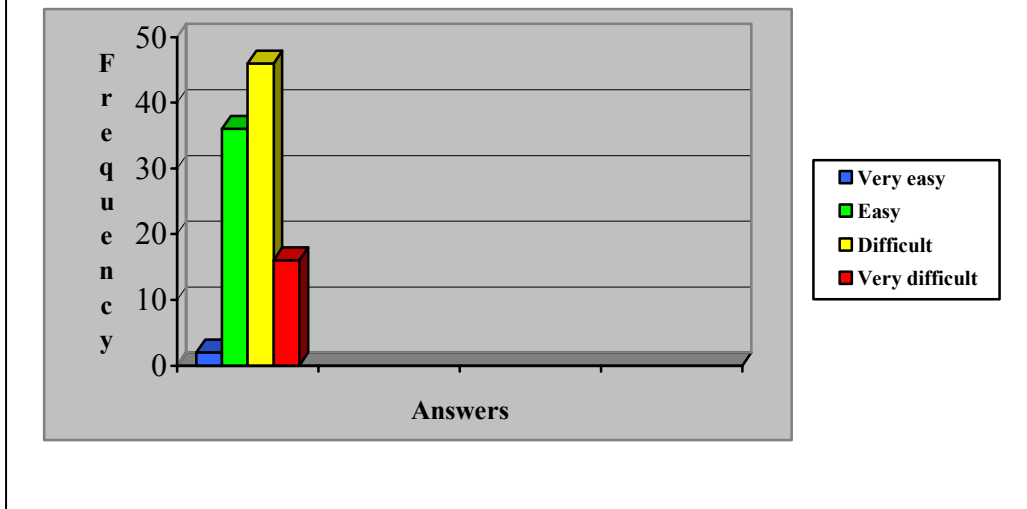
Item 6:

Table 10

6- Pupils attitudes towards the newness of the words used in their course-book

	All	The majority	Some	None	Total
Frequency	20	75	04	01	100
Percentages	20%	75%	04%	01%	100%

To know how the pupils see the words included in their course-book texts, we introduced the following statement: "(all, the majority, some, or none)…………..of the words used in the texts included in the course-book are new words for me."

The results obtained reveal that the greater part sees that the majority of the words is new for them, in the sense that 75% answered the majority, 20% answered all, 04% answered some, and 01% answered none.

Figure 09:Pupils attitudes towards the newness of the words used in their course-book
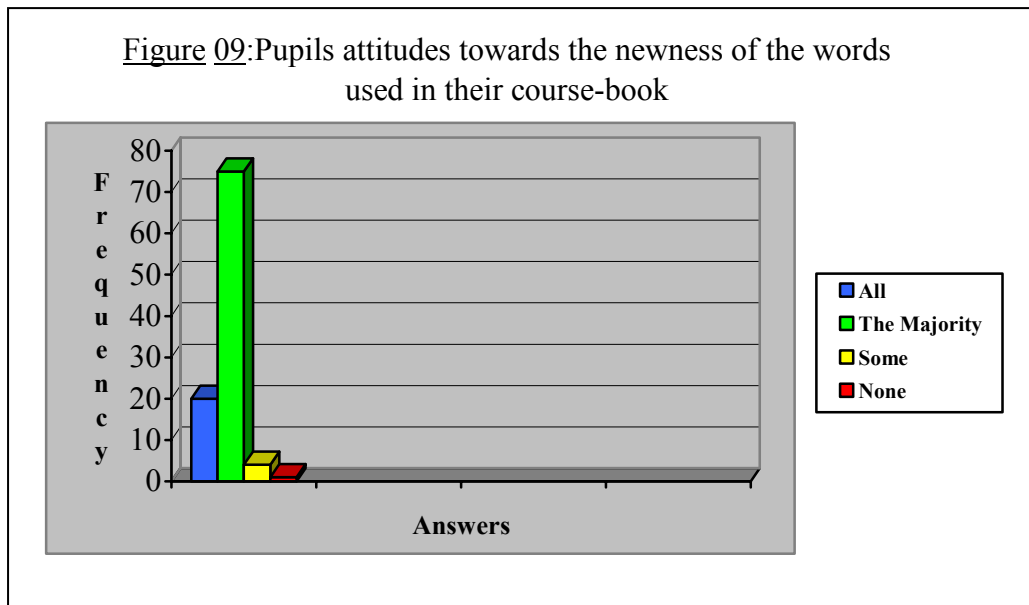
SECTION III

In this section, we will see pupils' attitudes towards the subjects discussed by the texts included in their course-book of English language.

Item 1:

Table 11

1- Pupils attitudes towards the interestedness of the subjects dealt with in texts selected in their course-book

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	04	21	60	15	100
Percentages	04%	21%	60%	15%	100%

In order to see pupils' attitudes towards the interestedness of subjects discussed by the texts, they were asked to give their opinions about the following question: "Subjects dealt with through texts selected in the course-book are interesting?".

From table 11 it is clear that the majority finds the subjects are not interesting, in the sense that 60% of pupils disagree, 15% of pupils strongly disagree, 21% agree, and 04% strongly agree.

Figure 10: Pupils attitudes towards the interestedness of the subjects dealt with in texts selected in their course-book
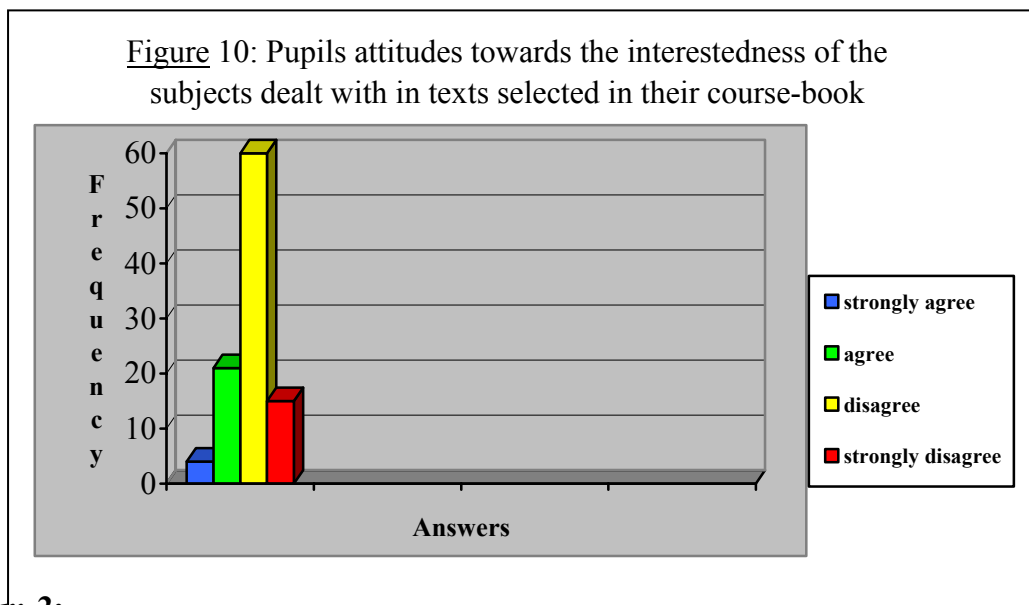
Item 2:

Table 12

2- Subjects newness for the pupils

	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	57	43	100
Percentages	57%	43%	100%

To see pupils' attitudes towards the newness of the subjects selected in their course-book we asked them the following question: "Those subjects are they new for you?".

The results attained reveal that the majority agrees, in the sense that 57% answered yes, and 43% answered no.

Figure 11: Subjects newness for the pupils
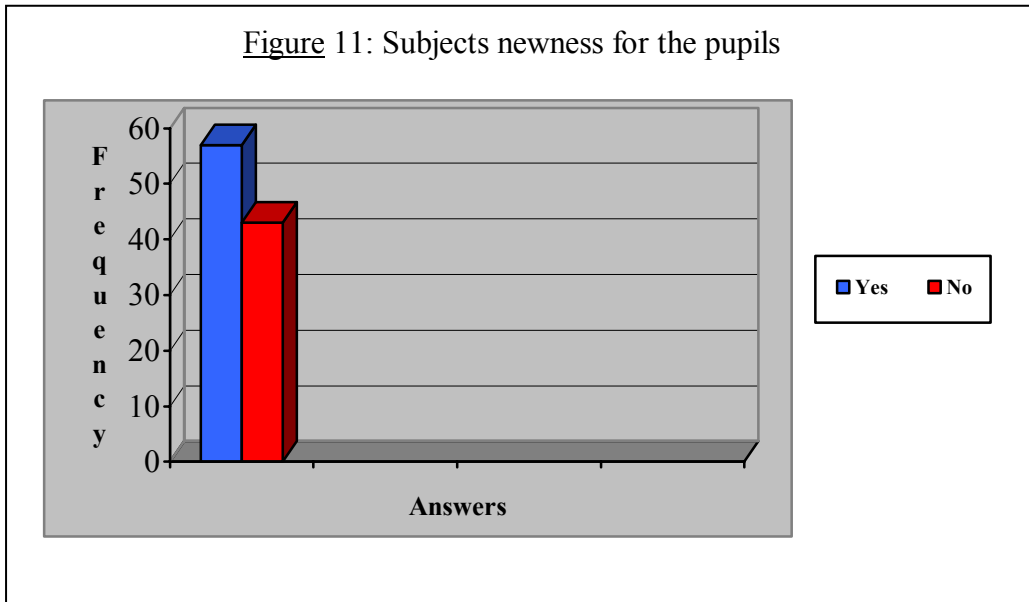
Item 3:

Table 13

3- Subjects preferred by the pupils

	Our culture	Foreign culture	Both	Total
Frequency	54	30	16	100
Percentages	54%	30%	16%	100%

To see what are the subjects preferred by the pupils we asked them the following question: "Do you prefer subjects about (Our culture, Foreign culture, or both) ?".

The results attained reveal that the majority prefers subjects related to our culture, in the sense that 54% answered our culture, 30% answered foreign culture, and 16% answered both.

Figure 12: Subjects preferred by the pupils
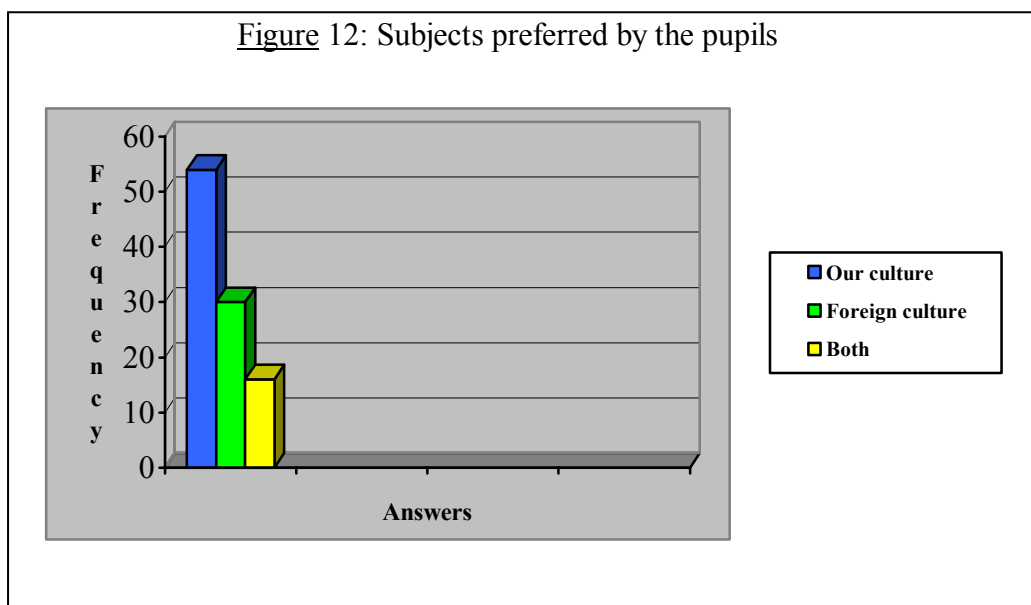
Item 4:

The pupils were asked to give the reasons behind their choices, and their answers are illustrated in the tables below.

Table 14

4- Why subjects concerning our culture ?

	Frequency	Percentage	
To know more about it	35	64.82%	
I like it	05	09.26%	
I hate other cultures	05	09.26%	
To develop my country	05	09.26%	
The majority of the modules talk about foreign cultures	02	3.70%	
Undecided	02	3.70%	
Total	**54**	**100%**	

Table 15

Why subjects concerning foreign culture ?

	Frequency	Percentage	
To know more about it	21	70.00%	
It is very enjoyable	04	13.33%	
It is very important	03	10.00%	
To facilitate communication with others	02	06.67%	
Total	**30**	**100%**	

Table 16

Why subjects concerning both cultures ?

	Frequency	Percentage	
To know more about the two	16	100%	
Total	**16**	**100%**	

SECTION IV

In this section, we will know about pupils' comprehension of the texts included in their course-book of English language.

Item 1:

Table 17

1- Pupils understanding of the main idea of the texts

	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	54	46	100
Percentages	54%	46%	100%

To see pupils' understanding of the main idea of the texts selected in their course-book, we introduced the following statement: "When I read I understand the main idea of the text".

The results attained reveal that the majority agrees, in the sense that 54% answered yes, and 46% answered no.

Figure 13: Pupils understanding of the main idea of the texts
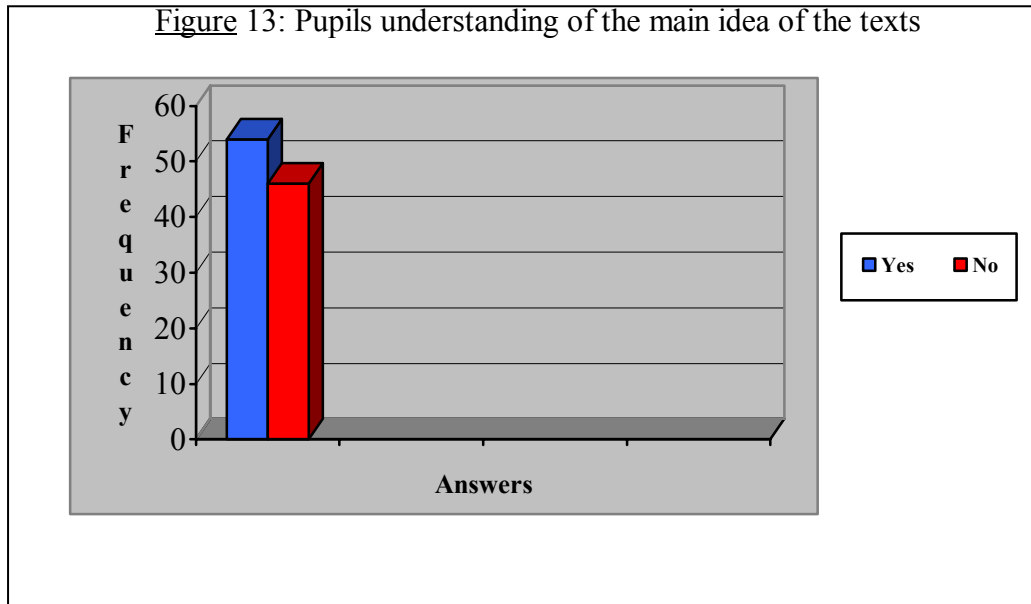
Item 2:

Table 18

2- Pupils understanding of the sub ideas of the texts

	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	22	78	100
Percentages	22%	78%	100%

To see pupils' understanding of the sub ideas of the texts selected in their course-book, we introduced the following statement: "When I read I understand the sub ideas of the text".

The results attained reveal that the majority don't agree, in the sense that 78% answered no, and 22% answered yes.

Figure 14: Pupils understanding of the sub ideas of the texts
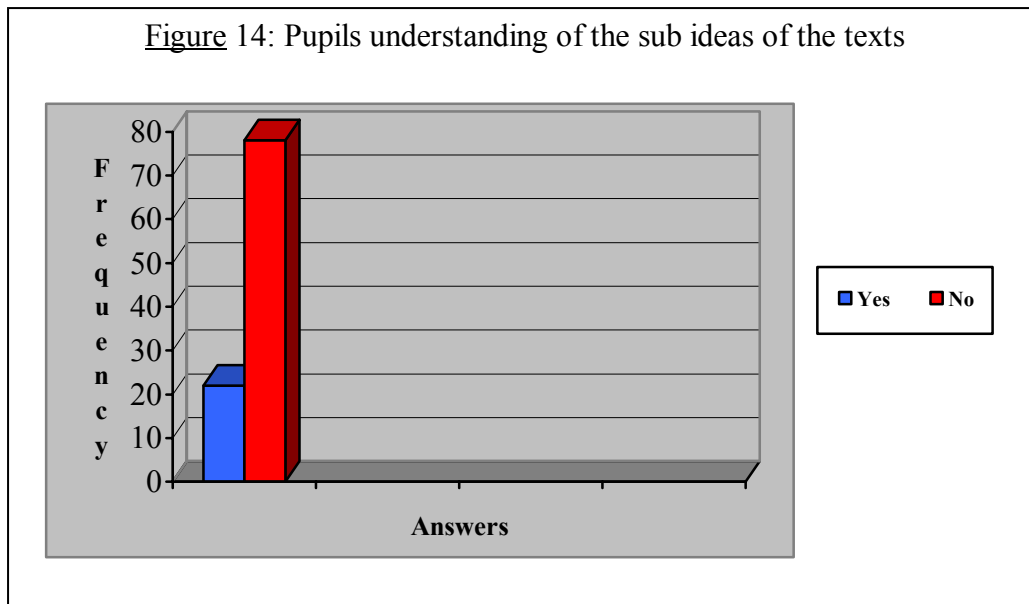
Item 3:

Table 19

3- pupils' attitudes towards time allocated for reading courses

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	10	60	28	02	100
Percentages	10%	60%	28%	02%	100%

In order to know pupils perceptions about the time allocated for reading courses, they were asked to give their opinions about the following statement: "Time allocated for reading comprehension courses is short".

From table 19 it is clear that the majority agrees that the time allocated for reading courses is short, in the sense that 60% answered agree, 10% answered strongly agree, 28% answered disagree, and 02% answered strongly disagree.

Figure 15: pupils' attitudes towards time allocated for reading courses
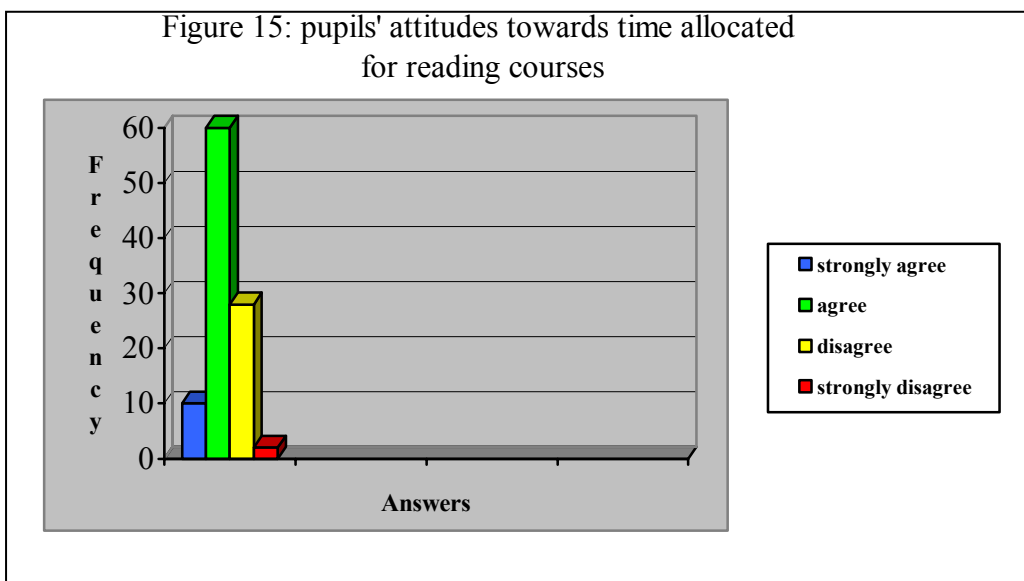
Item 4:

Table 20

4- Pupils understanding of the questions concerning the texts

	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	66	34	100
Percentages	66%	34%	100%

To see pupils' understanding of the questions concerning the texts selected in their course-book, we introduced the following statement: "I understand the questions about the texts".

The results attained reveal that the majority agrees, in the sense that 66% answered yes, and 34% answered no.

Figure 16: Pupils understanding of the questions concerning the texts
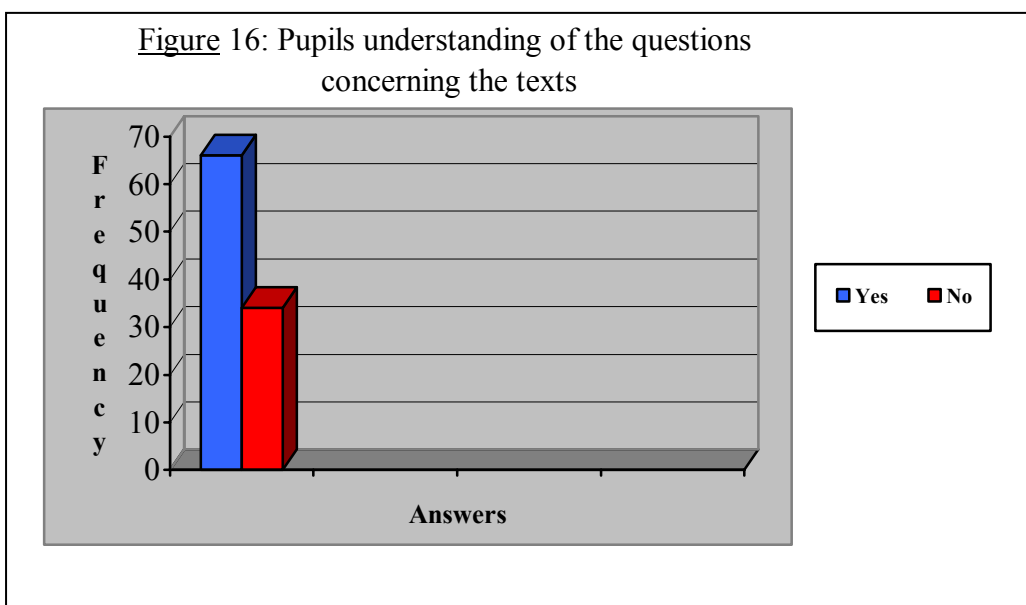
Item 5:

Table 21

5- Pupils' reasons behind the wrong answers given to the questions concerning the

texts

	Difficulty of the questions	Difficulty of the texts	Both	Total
Frequency	57	28	15	100
Percentages	57%	28%	15%	100%

In order to know the reasons behind the wrong answers given by the pupils to the questions concerning the texts, they were asked to give their opinions about the following question: "If you didn't answer or your answers were wrong, do you think that this is due to".

From table 21 it is clear that the majority sees it's due to the difficulty of the questions, in the sense that 57% answered difficulty of the questions, 28% answered difficulty of the texts, and 15% answered both.

Figure 17: Pupils' reasons behind the wrong answers given to the questions concerning the texts
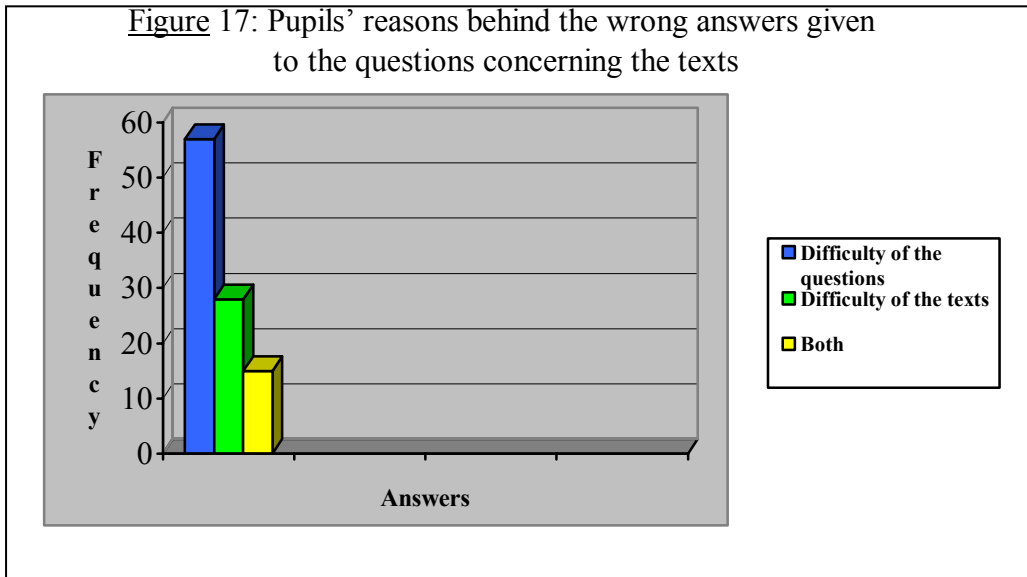
Item 6:

The pupils were finally asked to suggest what could be done to make reading comprehension courses easier, their answers are illustrated in table 22.

Table 22

6- Suggestions

	Frequency	Percentage	
Explain difficult words in Arabic	26	26%	
Teachers have to explain more	20	20%	
Explain difficult words in English under the texts with the use of synonyms and antonyms	15	15%	
Select easier texts	11	11%	
The problem is in the previous years, we have no background knowledge	09	09%	
No suggestions	06	06%	
Change the teacher	05	05%	
Read in English not only in the classroom	04	04%	
Everything is clear	02	02%	
Use computers	01	01%	
Add more hours	01	01%	
Total	**100**	**100%**	

IV. 4- **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS:**

The basic aim of the use of this questionnaire is to detect the causes behind pupils' lack of comprehension in reading courses, in addition to find out what can help in improving reading comprehension courses in general. Our research started with the assumed answers for the questions stated at the beginning of our study, those answers or hypotheses were test through the field work and gave some results which are discussed below:

Hypothesis 1:

We assumed that first year pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension at El-madher high school are caused by the lack of background knowledge (knowledge of the world), and the results gained from questionnaire analysis and presentation show that we were right, in the sense that in section III, item 2: the majority of the pupils answered that the topics discussed through texts are new for them, in other words they had no background knowledge about the subjects. Also in the same section, item 3: the majority of the pupils answered that they prefer subjects related to their own culture, and they were asked to give the reasons, the majority linked it with their background knowledge.

Hypothesis 2:

We assumed that the difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the lack of linguistic competence (syntactic and lexical). We were not wrong if we refer

back to section II, item 6: the majority of the pupils answered that the majority of the words used in the texts are new for them.

Hypothesis 3:

In claiming that these difficulties in reading comprehension may be due to the texts which are not interesting, we are justified if we refer to section III, item 1: where the majority of the pupils disagreed when they were told that the texts are interesting.

Hypothesis 4:

In claiming that these difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the short time allocated for reading courses. We are also justified if we refer to section IV, item 3: where the vast majority of pupils agreed that the time allocated for their reading comprehension tasks is short.

It is clear from the results obtained that pupils lack interest in reading in English language, this is made clear in section II, item 1: where the vast majority (89%) of the pupils answered; when asked if they read their texts at home, that they never did it. Also, in the same section, item 3, where the majority of pupils answered: 'not enjoyable' concerning reading comprehension courses.

However, pupils showed that they are aware of the importance of English language, in the sense that the majority of them agreed on this, and this is made clear if we go back to section I, item 1.

Concerning the suggestions of pupils to make reading comprehension easier, the majority of pupils (if we don't take into consideration those answers by less than 5%) are divided into:

- Pupils who ask for the use of their mother language to explain difficult words

- Pupils who blame the teachers and ask for more explanations.

- Pupils who blame their poor background knowledge.

CONCLUSION:

The results obtained show clearly that reading comprehension needs special and high consideration. And the results make clear that the pupils show high level of difficulty in dealing with the reading courses, and this is due to many reasons detected through the questionnaire analysis, mainly: their weak background knowledge, their poor linguistic competence, their lack of interest, and the less consideration given to reading courses as far as the amount of time allocated is concerned.

Pupils' questionnaire was of great importance, as far as the help it gave us to spot those causes behind pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension courses.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

If we want to significantly enrich our research to unveil causes behind first year pupils' difficulties of understanding during reading comprehension courses, we need to combine pupils questionnaire with another data collection procedure which is a questionnaire designed for teachers, and meant also to check the reliability of our pupils' responses.

The other aim of this instrument is to determine teachers' perceptions of the problem, and their opinions concerning what would be done to lessen the consequences of the problem faced.

V. 1- PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES:

Nine teachers were chosen to participate in the study (all teachers of English language at El-Madher high school including its annexe). All teachers completed the questionnaire packet.

The questionnaire packet is a self-completion questionnaire using Social Connectedness Scale (as already mentioned - see chapter one-; Lee & Robbins, 1995), included four sections to collect the necessary data on teachers' attitudes, opinions and perceptions regarding reading comprehension courses and to see the level of agreement and disagreement among teachers on many issues.

V. 2- QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERING:

Group administration is the format I have used with pupils questionnaire and which I also prefer to use with teachers questionnaire, and as long as the questionnaire is well designed and the administration situation well prepared in advance, very good results can be achieved (see chapter one). Hence nine copies were distributed the teachers of English language at El-madher high school; and asked them to answer the questions. (before administering the questionnaire to the whole population, it was first piloted on a small sample –two teachers–).

Once answered, the questionnaires were collected and well-thought-out to be analysed.

V. 3- **QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**:

To analyse data presented in the questionnaire, we used descriptive statistics, we thus analysed the questionnaire section by section, and item by item without using percentages because of the small number of the participants.

For the presentation of the results, we used for each item that is presented in a table, a circle divided into 3D sectors.

SECTION I

In this section the reader will be apprised with teachers' attitudes towards English language teaching.

Item 1:

Table 23

1- <u>The choice of teaching as a profession</u>

	I like English language	It has many advantages	I had no choice	Other reasons	Total
Number	04	03	01	01	09

To see if teachers like their job they were asked why they have chosen teaching as a profession, and from table 23, it is clear that the majority like English language, in the sense that 4/9 teachers answered I like English language, 3/9 answered it has many advantages, 1/9 answered I had no choice, and 1/9 stated other reason; which is: my father's choice.

Figure 18: The choice of teaching as a profession
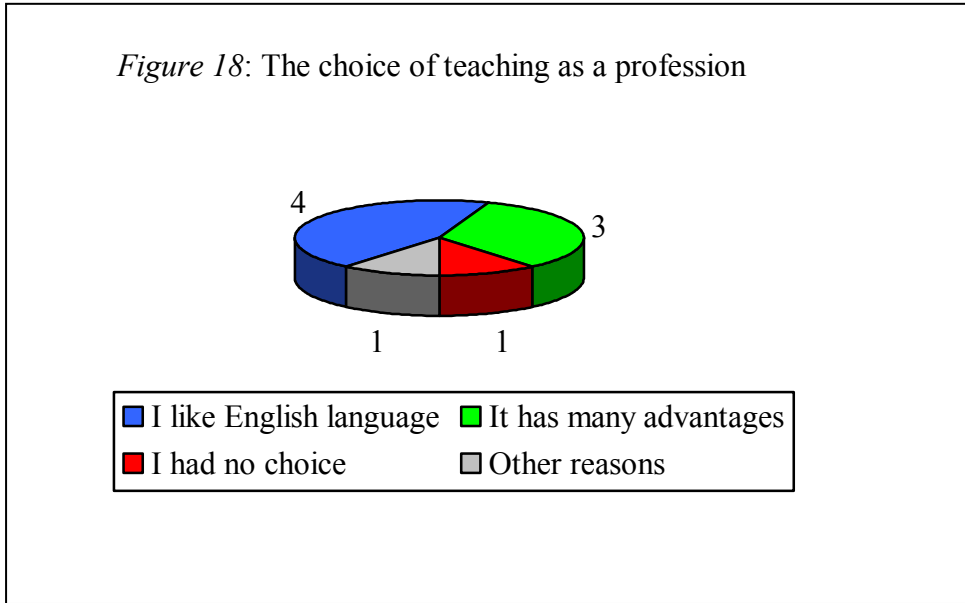
Item 2:

Table 24

2- The period of teaching English language at high school

	Less than 05 years	More than 05 years	Total
Number	00	09	09

To see the experience of teachers in this profession they were asked for how long they taught it.

The results show that all of them are experienced teachers, in the sense that 9/9 teachers answered that they taught English language more than 05 years (6years, 7years, 9years,10years, 12years,14years, 22years).

Figure 19: The period of teaching English language at high school
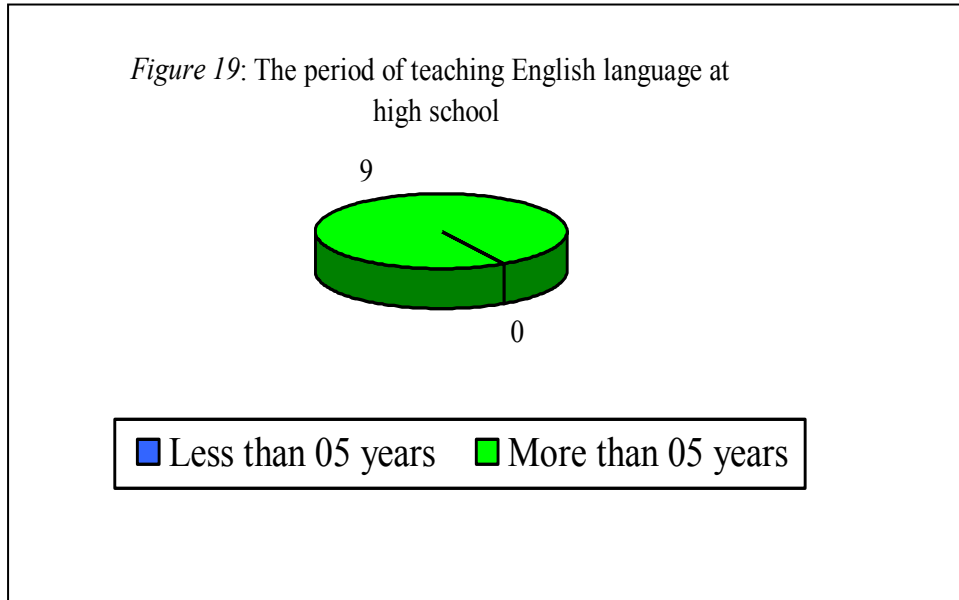
Item 3:

Table 25

3- Teachers reading out of the classroom

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Number	02	03	04	00	09

To see if the teachers like reading in English language they were asked the following question: "Do you read in English out of the classroom?".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of teachers are none readers, in the sense that 4/9 teachers read rarely, 3/9 read sometimes, and only 2/9 read often.

Figure 20: Teachers reading out of the classroom
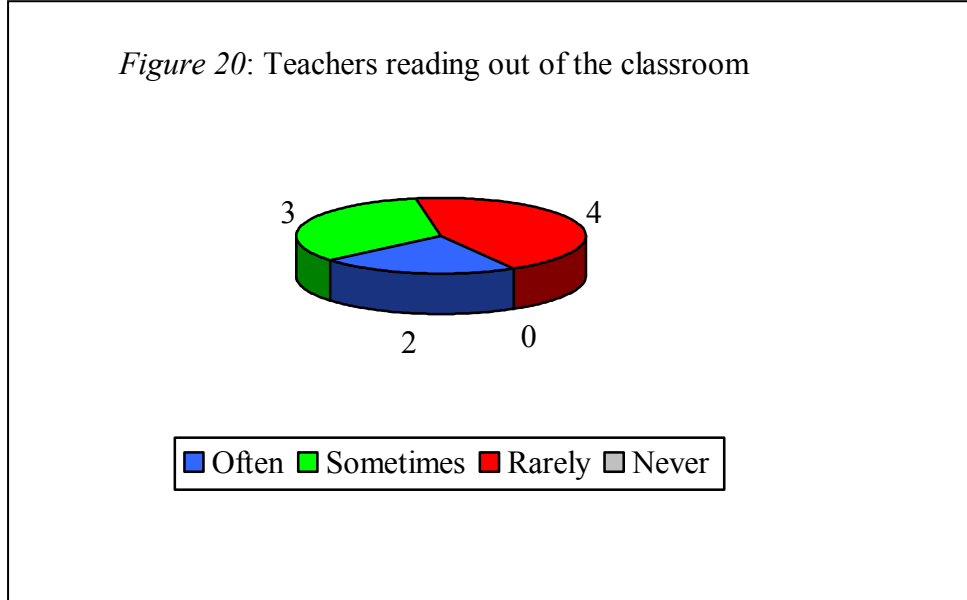
SECTION II

In this section the reader will be acquainted with the teachers perception of their pupils.

Item 1:

Table 26

1- Teachers' perception of their pupils

|	Able pupils	Average pupils	Unable pupils	Total
Number	01	05	03	09

To see the teachers perception of their pupils, they were asked how do they perceive the majority of them.

The results obtained reveal that the majority of teachers perceive their pupils as average pupils, in the sense that 5/9 teachers see them as average pupils, 3/9 see them as unable pupils, and 1/9 see them as able pupils.

Figure 21: Teachers' perception of their pupils
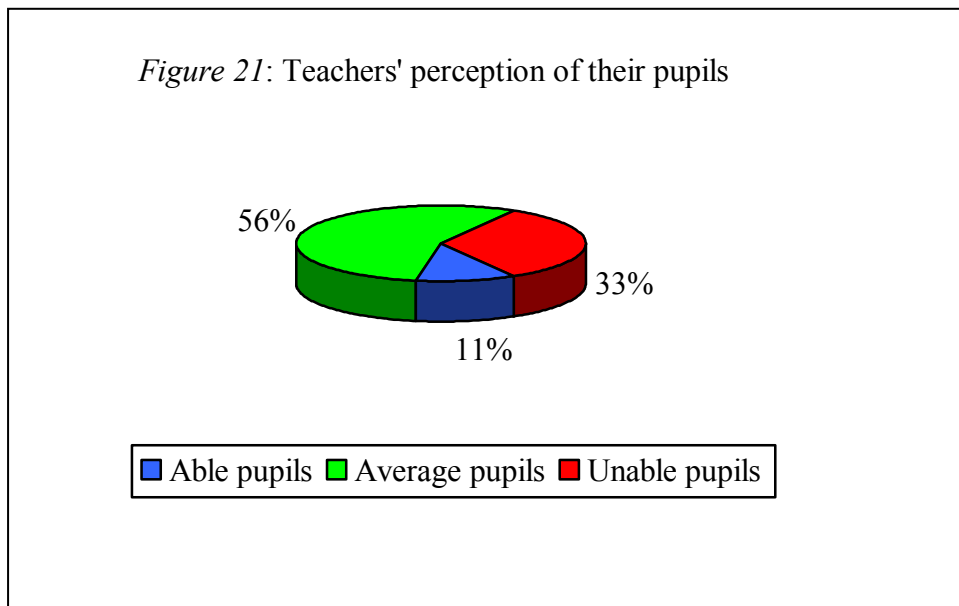
Item 2:
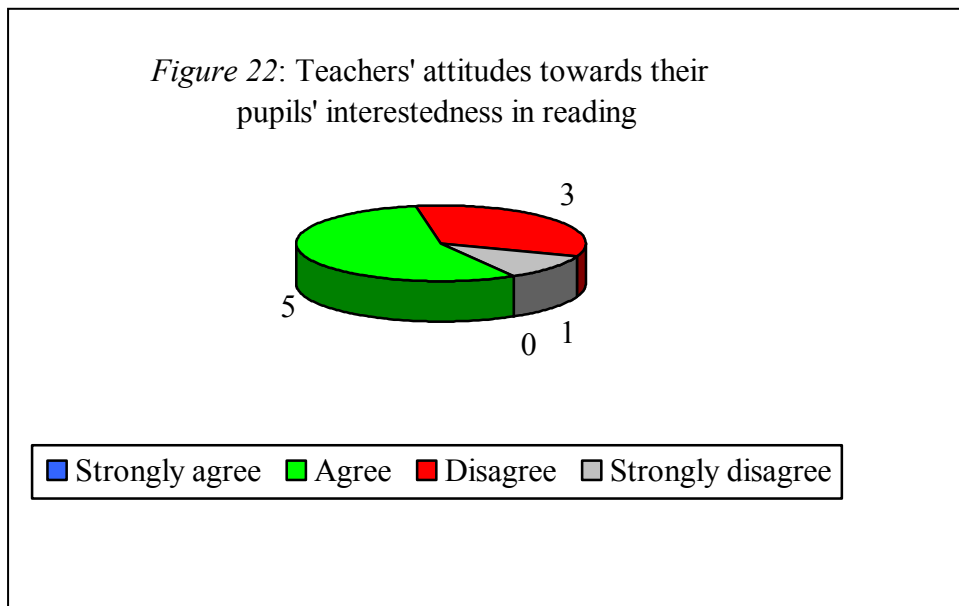
Table 27

2- Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' interestedness in reading

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number	00	05	03	01	09

To see the teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' interestedness in reading courses, the following statement was introduced to them: "Pupils are interested in reading courses".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the teachers agree with the above statement, in the sense that 5/9 agree, 3/9 disagree, and only 1/9 strongly disagrees.

Figure 22: Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' interestedness in reading

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Item 3:

<u>Table 28</u>

3- <u>Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' background knowledge</u>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number	00	01	07	01	09

To see teachers' attitudes towards their pupils background knowledge as far as the topics introduced are concerned, we asked them to give their opinions on the following statement: "my pupils' background knowledge is sufficient at this level".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the teachers disagree, in the sense that 7/9 teachers say disagree, 1/9 teachers says strongly disagree, and only one teacher answered agree.

Figure 23: Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' background knowledge

7

1   0   1

■ strongly agree   ■ agree
■ disagree   ■ strongly disagree
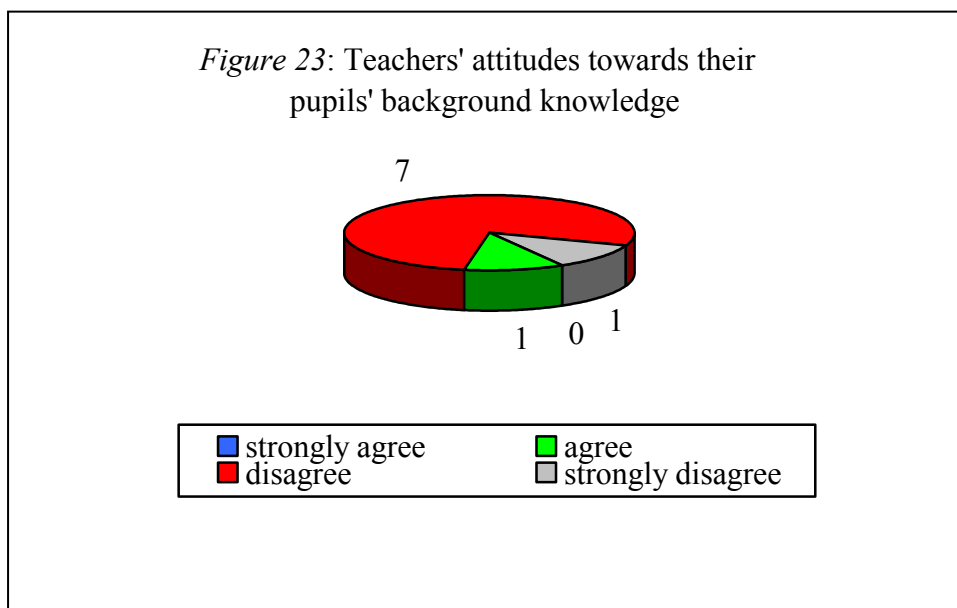
Item 4:

Table 29

4- Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' vocabulary

	Very rich	Rich	Poor	Very poor	Total
Number	00	00	07	02	09

To see how is the vocabulary of the pupils, the teachers were asked to give their opinions by answering the following question: "Do you think that your pupils' vocabulary is".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the pupils have a poor vocabulary, in the sense that 7/9 teachers answered poor, and 2/9 teachers answered very poor.


Figure 24: Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' vocabulary
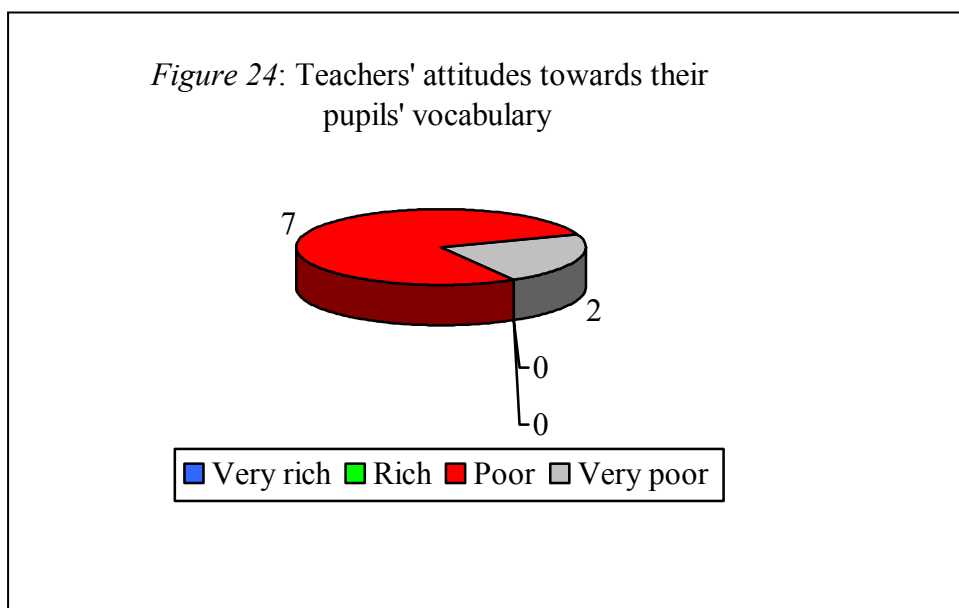
Item 5:

Table 30

5- Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils master of syntactic constructions

	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not really	Total
Number	00	01	08	09

To see teachers' attitudes towards their pupils master of syntactic constructions, they were asked to answer the following question: "To what extent do you think that your pupils master syntactic constructions.

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the pupils do not master the syntactic constructions, in the sense that 8/9 teachers say not really, and only one teacher says to some extent.

Figure 25: Teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' master of the syntactic constructions
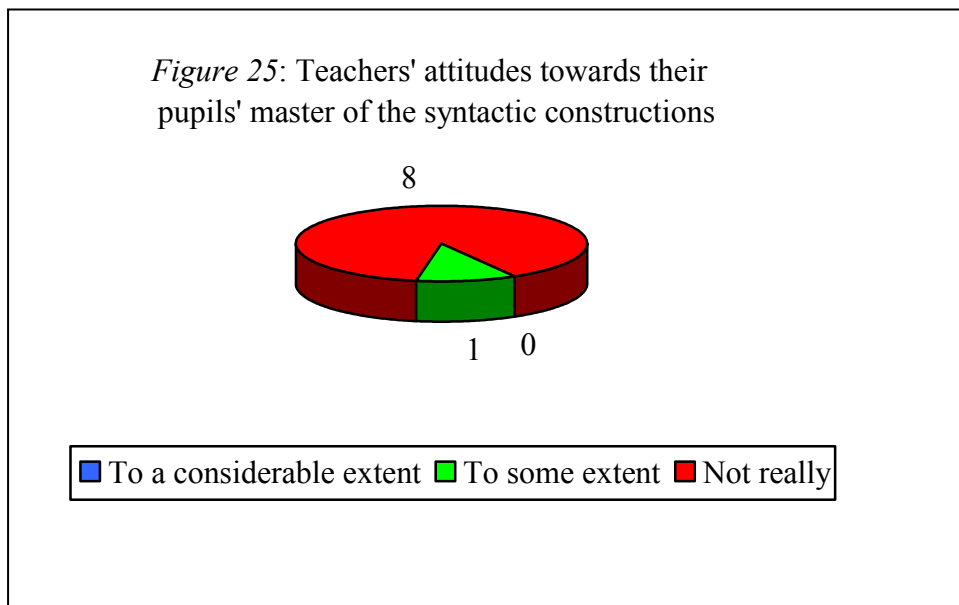
SECTION III

In this section the reader will be acquainted with teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the texts and the subjects included in the course-book.

Item 1:

Table 31

1- Teachers' perception of the texts included in the course-book

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	Total
Number	00	04	05	00	09

To see the teachers' perception of the texts included in pupils' course-book, they were asked the following question: "Texts selected in the course-book are".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of teachers perceive the texts as difficult texts, in the sense that 5/9 teachers see them as difficult texts, and 4/9 teachers see them as easy texts.

Figure 26: Teachers' perception of the texts included in the course-book

| ■ Very easy | ■ Easy | ■ Difficult | □ Very difficult |
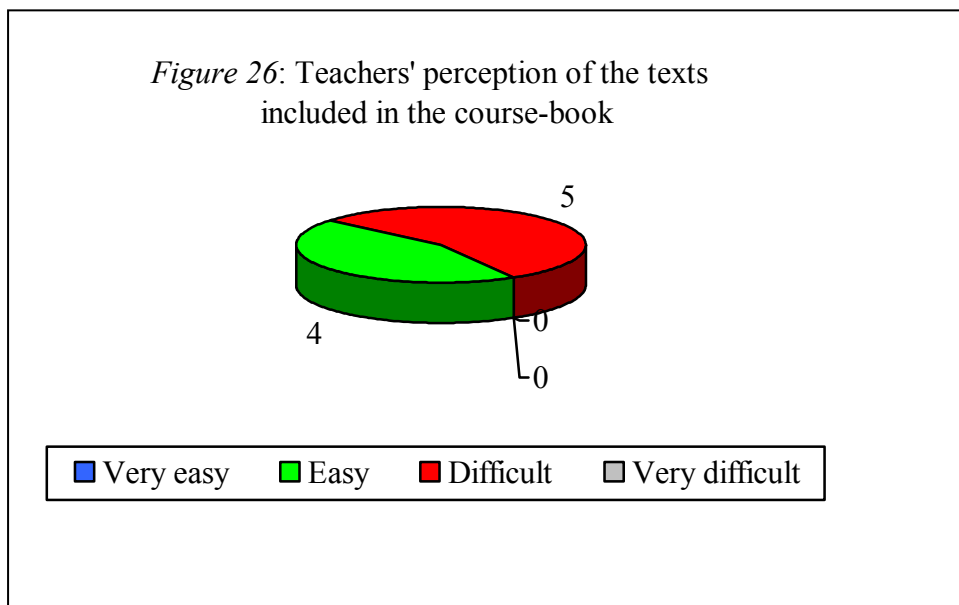
Item 2:

Table 32

2- Teachers' perception of the texts' length

	Very short	Short	Long	Very long	Total
Number	00	03	06	00	09

To see the teachers' perception of the texts length, they were asked the following question: "Texts selected are they: very short, short, long, or very long?".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of teachers perceive the texts as long texts, in the sense that 6/9 teachers see them as long texts, and 3/9 teachers see them as short texts.
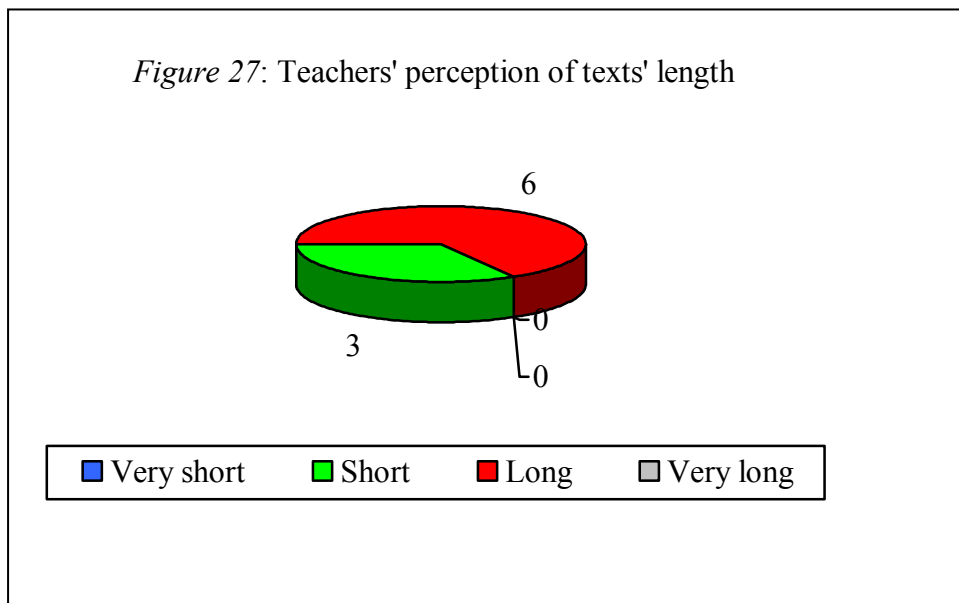

*Figure 27*: Teachers' perception of texts' length

Item 3:

Table 33

3- <u>Teachers' attitudes towards subjects' interestedness</u>

	Yes	No	Total
Number	02	07	09

To see the teachers' attitudes towards the subjects' interestedness, they were asked to give their opinions about the following statement: "Subjects discussed in the texts are interesting".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the teachers disagree with the above statement, in the sense that 7/9 teachers say no, and only 2/9 teachers say yes.

Figure 28: Teachers' attituted towards subjects' interestedness
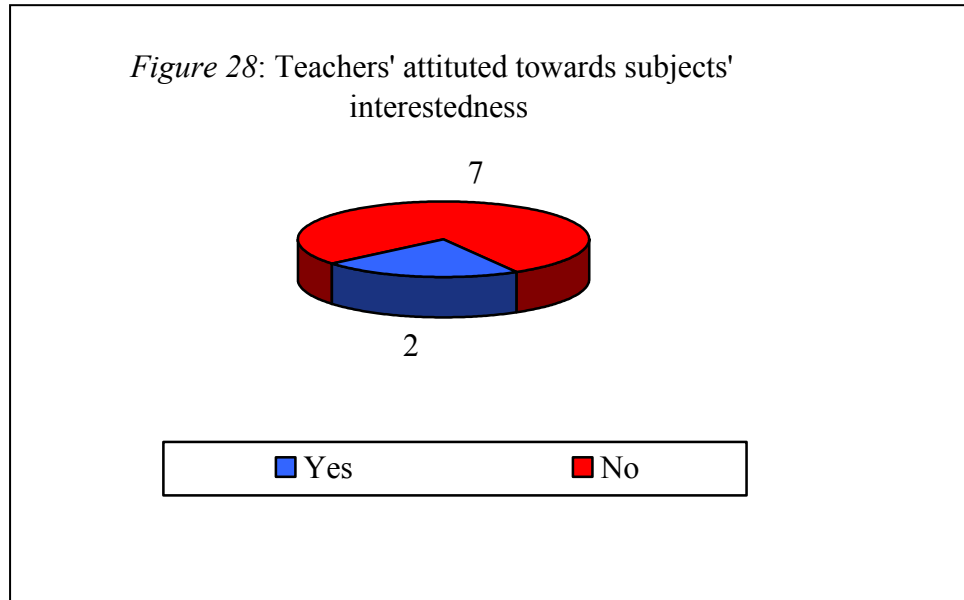
Item 4:

The teachers were asked to give the reasons behind their choices, and their answers are illustrated in the tables below.

Table 34

4- Why subjects are not interesting ?

	Frequency	Percentage	
Not related to learners' culture & social life	04	57.14%	
Difficult to understand	03	42.86%	
Total	**07**	**100%**	

Table 35

Why subjects are not interesting ?

	Frequency	Percentage	
Not related to our culture	02	100%	
Total	**02**	**100%**	

Item 5:

Table 36

5- Subjects preferred by the teachers

	Our culture	A foreign culture	Both	Total
Number	08	00	01	09

To see what are the subjects preferred by the teachers we asked them the following question: "Do you prefer subjects about (Our culture, Foreign culture, or both) ?".

The results attained reveal that the majority prefers subjects related to our culture, in the sense that 8/9 teachers answered our culture, and only one teacher answered both.

Figure 29: Subjects preferred by the teachers

8

0

1

| Our culture | A foreign culture | Both |
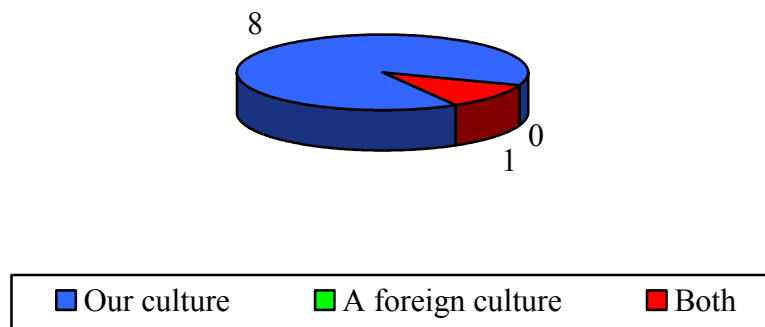
SECTION IV

In this section the teachers will be asked to give their opinions about some issues related to their attitudes towards reading comprehension teaching.

Item 1:

Table 37

1- Teachers' attitudes towards time allocated to reading comprehension

	Quite sufficient	Not sufficient	Total
Number	03	06	09

To see if teachers think the time allocated to reading comprehension quite sufficient, they were asked the following question: "Do you think the time allocated to reading comprehension courses is quite sufficient?".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of teachers think it is not sufficient, in the sense that 6/9 teachers say not sufficient, and 3/9 say quite sufficient.

Figure 30: Teachers' attitudes towards time allocated to reading comprehension
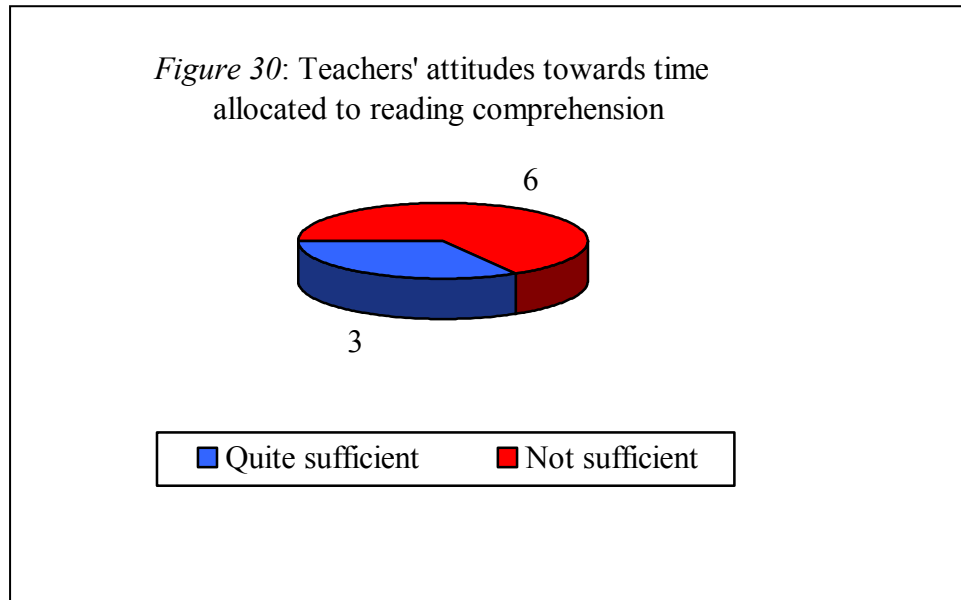
Item 2:

Table 38

2- Teachers' attitudes towards the way reading comprehension is taught

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
Number	00	07	02	00	09

To see teachers' attitudes towards the way reading comprehension is taught, they were asked to give their opinions on the following question: "Concerning the way reading comprehension is taught, I am".

The results obtained reveal that the majority of the teachers are satisfied, in the sense that 7/9 teachers say somewhat satisfied, and only two teachers answered somewhat dissatisfied.

Figure 31: Teachers' attitudes towards the way reading comprehension is taught

7

2

0

0

■ Very satisfied   ■ Somewhat satisfied
■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied
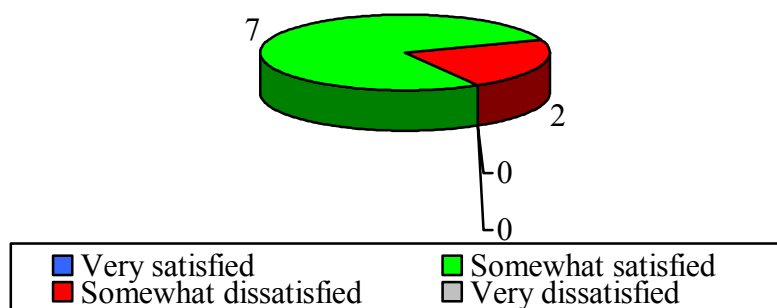
Item 3:

The teachers were finally asked to suggest what could be the causes behind pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension courses, and what could be done to make it easier, their answers are illustrated in table 39.

Table 39

3- Suggestions

	Number of teachers	
Pupils do not read out of the classroom	02	
Lack of motivation	01	
Short time allotments	01	
Texts contain a lot of difficult words	02	
Reading is one of the most boring tasks for our learners	01	
We need freedom in selecting the subjects according to pupils' interest	02	
Total	**09**	

V. 4- DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS:

Besides the pupils' questionnaire, this is another questionnaire designed for teachers to strengthen our means used to highlight the causes that underlie the difficulties facing pupils in their reading comprehension courses. Teachers' perceptions and suggestions about the problem are also targeted with the use of this instrument of data collecting.

After being tested, again our hypotheses that were formulated at the beginning of our study are proved to be valid:

Hypothesis 1:

We claimed that first year pupils' difficulties in reading comprehension at El-madher high school are caused by the lack of background knowledge, is valid if we refer to section IV, item 2. and to section II, item 4.

Hypothesis 2:

We assumed that the difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the lack of linguistic competence. We were not wrong if we refer to section II, item 5.

Hypothesis 3:

In claiming that the difficulties in reading comprehension may be due to texts which are not interesting, we are justified if we refer to section III, item 3.

Hypothesis 4:

In claiming that these difficulties in reading comprehension are due to the short time allocated for reading courses. We are also justified if we refer to section IV, item 1.

The results obtained highlight an important view that was suggested by the teachers, saying that if they were given the freedom to select reading texts the

situation is different now. Also they spot the time task, which they think ;and agree, that it is not enough for reading classes.

CONCLUSION:

The results obtained strengthen the previous results as far as pupils' questionnaire is concerned. The causes that we thought were responsible of the difficulties in reading comprehension courses gained teachers agreement.

What is important here is that the teachers asked for freedom in selecting the texts for reading comprehension tasks.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

From all what has been said, some recommendations are expectantly proposed to improve the reading comprehension process, and English teaching in general:

➢ If looking for reading that will interest pupils, texts with reasonable amount of new information are useful, because too much new information in one written text makes it difficult to be understood; however, a passage that contains little new information can be boring.

➢ Taking into consideration that at this level pupils are not much experienced with the life. Thus, their background knowledge is related much more to their culture, traditions, and customs. In other words, their world is not very large, in the sense that they can deal with other cultures, traditions, and customs.

➢ Teachers should be free in selecting reading texts for their pupils, because they are the only persons who know their pupils needs and abilities.

➢ Pupils experience with English language is young at this level. Thus it's better to avoid those texts which need high linguistic competence especially those texts adapted from scientific encyclopedias, novels, …

➢ The importance of reading, and since it is a key for many other issues. It is needed to rise the time allocated for it, in order to give the pupils more of comprehension.

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