

The Impact of the Interactive Reading Model on Grade 7 Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement

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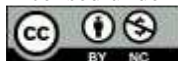
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Abstract: The study aimed at examining the impact of the interactive reading model on students' reading comprehension achievement. Quasi-experimental research design with a pre-post-test control group design was used to model the study. The participants were 81 grade 7 students (n=41 for the experimental and n= 40 for the control group) who attended their lessons in Leul Alemayehu Primary School in 2021/2022 that were selected with a lottery sampling technique. The experimental process lasted six weeks: 12 class hours, twice a week for 40' per session. The experimental group was taught through the interactive model of reading. In contrast, the control group was taught through the conventional method. Parallel forms of reading comprehension tests were used to collect data, and parallel forms of reliability were checked by Pearson correlation and found to be ($r=.805^{**}$). Data were analysed using an independent sample t-test, and the effect size was calculated to see the practical significance of the research outcome. The independent sample t-test result showed that the experimental group had a significant difference from the control group's reading comprehension achievement $t(79) = 3.138, p < 0.05$. The effect size was found to be large. Thus, it is recommended that different interactive reading activities be considered to improve reading comprehension achievement.

Keywords: Bottom-up; Interactive reading model; Reading comprehension; Top-down

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1. Introduction

Reading is a basic skill that serves as the foundation for formal education. The ability to read proficiently at an early age is crucial for acquiring other skills and knowledge efficiently (Johnson, 2008; Lopera Medina, 2012; Moats, 2020). Knowledge highly depends on how much a person reads (Butler, Urrutia, Buenger and Hunt, 2010; Huang, Nelson and Nelson, 2008; Lien, 2011). Therefore, reading skills should be the baseline for all learning levels, as English is a subject and medium of instruction (Eskey, 2005; Gorsuch and Taguchi, 2010; Grabe, 2008).

From the FL perspective, the primary objective of reading lessons is to provide students with the tools necessary to read and comprehend texts in another language independently, at a reasonable pace (Honig, Diamond and Gutlohn, 2000). To achieve this, effective teaching procedures, and techniques that promote students' appropriate language use are crucial (Eskey, 2005; Gorsuch and Taguchi, 2010; Grabe, 2008; Nuttall, 2005). It is important to carefully select activities, methods, and procedures at all educational levels, as reading is a critical component of language learning. The primary level is particularly significant as it establishes the foundation for reading skills. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that students become proficient readers as this enhances their language proficiency and academic achievements. One way to achieve this is by evaluating relevant theories and the models.

Similar to teaching methods, theories on reading have undergone changes over time. Behaviorists regarded reading as a response to printed words focusing on word recognition for understanding a text. According to this perspective, comprehending a text involved combining word meanings to understand phrases and clauses (Anderson, 1999; Nuttall, 2005; Omaggio, 1993). These theories emphasized lower-level skills related to visual stimuli. Such as recognizing and recalling words. Information processing began with smallest sound units and progressed to letter combinations, words, phrases, and sentences. However, the researcher argued that solely analyzing smaller units within a text does not lead to improved reading abilities.

During the 1960s, there was a significant shift in the cognitive sciences, resulting in a new understanding of reading (Nuttall, 2005; Omaggio, 1993). Cognitive theory views reading as a complex process that requires active engagement. According to this theory, reading goes beyond simply extracting meaning from a text; it involves connecting the meaning within the text to the reader's existing knowledge. Reading is seen as a dynamic interaction between the reader and the text, where active cognitive processes occur, and the reader's prior knowledge plays a crucial role in constructing meaning (Smith, 2004; Tierney and Pearson, 1981). Reading is not a passive and mechanical activity; it is purposeful and logical, relying on the reader's prior knowledge and expectations. When readers encounter unfamiliar texts, the information within the text becomes more important than their prior knowledge in the process of constructing meaning.

Constructivist theory, which has been around since the 1920s, considers reading as an active process of constructing mental representation. In this view, readers link new information from the text to their existing knowledge (Tracey and Morrow, 2017). Meaning is created through the readers' organization of content based on the structure of the text or other cognitive structures. The readers select important content and make connections by inferring and elaborating the information. According to constructivism, reading is a dynamic process where readers actively engage their cognitive abilities to construct meanings.

In consequence, based on the above views, three models of reading have been proposed to account for the reading process (Eskey, 2005). Grabe and Stoller (2019) forward the metaphorical models of reading as Bottom-up (traditional), Top-down (cognitive), and Interactive (constructive) models. The bottom-up model's primary focus is the text (Gough, Hoover and Peterson, 1996), where specific data from the text activate information processing. The top-down model focuses on the reader (Rumelhart, 1977). The processing starts with broad predictions based on higher-level schemata and then searching at a more specific level to approve the predictions (Grabe and Stoller, 2019). The interactive reading model focuses on the interaction of the text and the reader. Here reading is an interactive

process, and the interaction occurs between bottom-up and top-down processing, or the reader's existing knowledge and the knowledge resided in the text (Bernhardt, 2010; Grabe, 2008; Nassaji, 2003).

The classroom application of the reading models is viewed differently by different scholars. There is a contrast on which model is appropriate for the different levels of the students. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) argue that the top-down models of reading can hardly be used at primary levels of language instruction since knowledge of enough words is essential to make top-down processing possible. Additionally, Škudienė (2002) and Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes (1991) posit that the bottom-up model lacks utility in advanced levels since students are already capable of decoding visual stimuli automatically.

However, Angosto, Sánchez, Álvarez, Cuevas and León (2013) approve that top-down processing is present from a very early age and add that bottom-up processing in later school is as effective as top-down are in the early ages. Furthermore, FL/L2 readers face specific challenges when it comes to an excessive focus on top-down strategies. Unlike readers, FL/L2 readers are more likely to encounter linguistic gaps that can impede their reading comprehension and lead to misinterpretations of texts (Birch and Fulop, 2020; Eskey, 2005; Grabe and Stoller, 2019; Hudson, 2009; Koda, 2005). Therefore, relying solely on top-down strategies can be problematic for FL/L2 readers, as it may exacerbate their struggles and hinder their ability to accurately understand and interpret written materials. Kintsch (2005) also affirms that both models should be given coverage, as nothing happens without them.

Among the researchers who investigated the effects of the interactive reading model on students' reading comprehension abilities, Nur and Ahmad (2017) conducted classroom action research to improve students' reading skills through an interactive approach. The participants were 35 high school Indonesian students. Data were collected through a test and observation checklist. The research finding indicated that implementing the interactive approach was successful since the success criteria were achieved: 70% of students could pass the target score and become more actively involved in the teaching-learning process. The observation checklist also showed that the students were more creative and confident in the reading activities through an interactive approach.

Hayati, Kasim, and Muslem (2020) researched using the interactive approach to enhance students' reading comprehension by using a true-experimental pre-posttest design. Two sections (20 each) of grade 7 Indonesian students were assigned as experimental (taught by the interactive approach) and control group (taught by bottom-up approach). The result showed that using the interactive approach improved students' reading scores and students gave positive responses toward using the interactive approach in teaching reading.

Cetinkaya, Ates, and Yildirim (2019) researched the effects of interactive book reading activities on improving elementary school students' reading skills using a pretest-posttest one-group quasi-experimental design. The participants were 309 grade 2, 200 grade 3, and 196 grade 4 students from 4 state schools in Ankara. The findings revealed that the students' post-test scores regarding reading fluency and reading comprehension showed significant differences from the pre-test scores.

Even though the above studies showed that the interactive reading model showed improved students' reading comprehension, Nur and Ahmad (2017) used a qualitative action research design where it is challenging to measure reading comprehension achievement through observation and semi-structured interviews qualitatively. Besides, Hayati *et al.* (2020) conducted true-experimental research whose applicability in a classroom setting is questionable. Cetinkaya *et al.* (2019) study was quasi-experimental. However, it was a pretest-posttest one-group design whereby so many internal validity questions could be raised.

In Ethiopia, different studies were conducted concerning students' reading comprehension skills. Their findings revealed that students are poor at reading, and the researchers recommend using different reading strategies (Enyew and Yigzaw, 2015; Mengesha and Davidson, 2018). From her long years of teaching experience, the researcher also observed that students' reading skills are

daunting. Henceforth, providing a remedial reading program is imperative to improve students' reading comprehension achievement. Reading comprehension is crucial for primary school students as it is imperative at this stage of development (Angosto *et al.*, 2013). Effective reading instruction blends comprehension with fluency to create efficient readers (Gorsuch and Taguchi, 2010; Grabe, 2008; Grabe and Stoller, 2019). Also, appropriate reading strategies will enhance the success of reading comprehension among EFL readers (Enyew and Yigzaw, 2015; Grabe, 2008; Hudson, 2009; Koda, 2005).

To read fluently and with comprehension, students must successfully combine several reading sub-skills that are prerequisites for successful reading. One way of owning that is making reading classes have a wide range of interactive reading activities available. Grabe (2008) affirms that introducing interactive reading model activities to the reading class means a greater variety of skills and strategies are taught. The preliminary assessment of the grade 7 English textbook reading activities gives sufficient coverage for reading lessons. However, it mainly covers the top-down activities and overlooks the interactive activities. The activities presented are limited to letting students practice predicting, triggering background knowledge, and doing literal comprehension questions and retelling. It fails to make a balance of higher and lower-level processing activities. To make students well equipped with the higher-level as well as lower-level skills of reading; it is vital to entertain different interactive activities that make a balance of the skills. Efficient readers simultaneously use both types of processing (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the impact of the interactive model of reading on students' reading comprehension achievement. To this end, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₀: There is no significant difference between those who learned through the interactive model of reading and those who learned through the conventional method.

H₁: There is a significant difference between those who learned through the interactive model of reading and those who learned through the conventional method.

2. Research Methods

A quantitative approach was used. Thus, a quasi-experimental design with a pre-posttest control group design was employed to determine the impact of the interactive model of reading on students' reading comprehension achievement. A quasi-experimental design was used because the research investigated the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Besides, intact groups were used. Creswell (2012) states this design is used when the experimenter cannot artificially create groups for the experiment. The pre-posttest control group design is preferred to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change due to treatments or interventions. Among the quasi-experimental research design variants, a pre-posttest control group design was employed as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) state that this design helps to control threats to internal validity.

2.1. Participants

The study was conducted in Leul Alemayehu General Primary School in Central Gondar Zone. The school was purposefully selected because it is a public school and a convenient location for experimentation. Thus, grade 7 was the level where the students fully started reading to learn in the English language, whereby the model could be tested. Grade 8 was not considered as it is the level where students focus on the regional primary school leaving exam. Owing this, grade 7 students who attended class in the 2021/22 academic year were the subjects of the study. Out of 5 grade 7 sections, the three sections that the same teacher taught were identified. Then, from the three sections the same teacher taught two sections were selected using a lottery sampling. Thus, sections 1 and 2 were found to be the study groups and were randomly assigned as experimental and control groups, respectively. There were 103 students in the two sections; however, only 81 participants (n=41 and n=40) from the experimental and control groups participated.

2.2. Data Gathering Tool

Reading comprehension achievement tests prepared and validated by the researcher were administered to collect the data. Parallel form tests were prepared to avoid the carry-over effect. The tests were prepared based on the principles of testing reading skills by considering the grade-level syllabus. Then, grade-level teachers and TEFL instructors evaluated tests for face and content validity. Amendments were made based on that, and then the tests were validated by making a tryout on students who did not participate in the study. The difficulty indexes, item discriminations, and item appropriateness were analyzed based on the result. Then, poor items were revised and rejected. Thus, parallel form tests contained 20 items, each having literal comprehension, inferential, reference, and vocabulary in context questions were in use. The parallel form reliability was computed using Pearson correlation, and the result was ($r = .805^{**}$), which showed that the parallel forms of the tests were highly correlated.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedures

The two sections were identified and assigned as experimental and control groups. Then the pre-intervention test was administered to check the homogeneity of the groups. Once it was assured, the intervention was in effect after a consent letter was signed, and training was given to the experimenter teacher on how to handle the experimental group with the new instructional procedure. The intervention session was conducted for six weeks in a 40' class hour twice a week for 12 sessions. The activities done were brainstorming, predicting, relating prior knowledge, key words study in the pre-reading; skimming, scanning, confirming prediction, predicting more, comprehension, reference in the during-reading and retelling, echo-reading, choral-reading, repeated-reading, summarizing, graphic-organizers, connecting the text with experience, roleplaying and creative ending in the post-reading stages. The intervention material was prepared based on the Douglas and Brown (2001) interactive approach to language pedagogy.

In contrast, the control group learned through the conventional method, whereby lessons were presented as given by the syllabus and decided by the teacher. The researcher observed each session and monitored the experimenter teacher's proper implementation of the interactive reading model. There were after-class discussions with the experimenter teacher to evaluate how well the lesson was going on and the way forward was being dealt with for the upcoming lesson. After 6 weeks of the intervention, the post-intervention test was administered both for the experimental and the control group.

2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation Techniques

The data collected from the groups on reading comprehension achievement tests were analyzed quantitatively. Tests of normality and homogeneity were computed before using the statistical tests, and assumptions were found to be satisfied. To investigate the difference in the reading comprehension achievement of students who learned in the interactive reading model and conventional method independent sample t-test was computed. The statistical tests were computed by SPSS version 23. The level of significance for the test was chosen to be 0.05. The effect size was calculated to see how significant the difference was.

2.5. Ethical Consideration

An ethical clearance letter was collected from the Department of English Language and Literature. Then Leul Alemayehu Primary School Director was contacted, and acceptance was gained to conduct the research. After that, the willingness of the participant teacher and the students was gained as the participants filled out the consent form, which included the activities they needed to be engaged in, the time that the study takes, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to quit at any time in the course of action. In addition, since it is difficult to deal with all the student's parents, the director arranged a program to deal with the parent-teacher association on the objective and reach a consensus on what

would be done. The materials were evaluated for their appropriateness, and the instruments were tried out to check their validity and reliability. It was after the tryout that the study was conducted.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

The study examined the impact of the interactive reading model on students' reading comprehension achievement. To attain the study's objective, normality, and homogeneity tests were computed to ensure whether assumptions were violated before deciding the type of statistical test used. In addition, histograms, QQ plots, and box plots were checked for outliers.

Table 1. Tests of normality

Scores	Group	Tests of normality							
		Descriptive		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Skewness	Kurtosis	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Reading comprehension pre-test	Experimental	-.111	-.995	.113	41	.200*	.964	41	.209
	Control	.201	-.522	.092	40	.200*	.976	40	.542
Reading comprehension post-test	Experimental	.067	-.736	.095	41	.200*	.977	41	.565
	Control	.048	-.606	.097	40	.200*	.968	40	.320

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors significance correction

The tests of normality results above show that the reading comprehension achievement scores are normally distributed. The skewness was (SE= -.111; .201) for the experimental and control groups. The skewness of the two groups' reading comprehension achievement post-test score distribution was found to be (SE=.067; .048) for the experimental and control groups, respectively. This implied that the skewness is approximately symmetric as the values are close to zero. This means the tails on either side of the distribution are about equal. Pallant (2010) states the distribution is reasonably symmetrical when skewness is between -0.5 and 0.5.

Besides, (Kurtosis = -.995; -.522) was found for the experimental and control groups' pre-test scores, respectively, and (Kurtosis= -.736; -.606) was found for the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension achievement post-test score, respectively. This implies that the kurtosis values are close to normal. The scholar mentioned above states that a kurtosis value close to 0 implies a form close to normal. In contrast, a value greater than +1 show the distribution is too peaked. A value less than -1 indicates the distribution is too flat.

The Shapiro-Wilk test was interpreted for a small sample size. Pallant affirms that the Shapiro-Wilk test is appropriate for a < 50 sample size. Hence, the reading comprehension achievement scores for both groups were normally distributed as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p=.209$; $p=.542$) and ($p=.565$; $p=.320$) for experimental and control group pre- and post-tests at a significant value of ($p>0.05$). Pallant (2010) states that if the p-value of the Shapiro-Wilk test is >0.05 , the data is normally distributed. If it is < 0.05 , the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Since the test results were found to be ($p>0.05$), it is deduced that the data were taken from a normally distributed population.

After this, the homogeneity of variances was computed to check if the two group's variances were equal in the population.

Table 2. Tests of Equality of Variances (Levene's)

	F	Df	P
Reading comprehension pre-test	.451	79	.504
Reading comprehension post-test	.795	79	.375

The Tests of Equality of Variances (Levene's) showed that the p-value for reading comprehension was ($p=.504$; $p=.375$) for the pre-test and post-test, respectively, which means the groups are homogenous as the significance value was found to be ($p>0.05$).

The data had no outliers, as assessed by the inspection of a boxplot. Reading comprehension scores for each group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test, and variances were homogeneous, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances. Thus, it was safe to use parametric tests for the analysis. In addition, the independent sample t-test (see Table 3) showed no statistically significant difference between the groups from the onset, which is another assurance for using the parametric test safely.

An independent-samples t-test was computed to determine if there were differences in the reading comprehension achievement pre-test between the experimental and the control groups.

Table 3. Independent sample t-test results of the two groups' reading comprehension achievement of the pre-test

Groups	N	M	SD	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Experimental	41	10.36	4.01	1.143	79	.257
Control	40	9.37	3.78			

The two groups' reading comprehension achievement mean, and standard deviation have slight differences ($M = 10.36$, $SD = 4.01$) for the experimental group and ($M = 9.37$, $SD = 3.78$) for the control group. To affirm this, the inferential statistics independent sample t-test was computed, and it was found that there was no statistically significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement pre-test of the experimental and the control group, $t(79) = 1.143$, $p < 0.05$. These results demonstrated no pre-existing difference between the two groups of students in their reading comprehension before the intervention.

To meet the objective of the study, that is to investigate the impact of the interactive model of reading on students' reading comprehension achievement, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_0 : There is no significant difference between those who learned through the interactive model of reading and those who learned through the conventional method,

H_1 : There is a significant difference between those who learned through the interactive model of reading and those who learned through the conventional method,

Thus, an independent sample t-test was computed to test the hypothesis.

Table 4. Independent sample t-test results of the two groups' reading comprehension achievement of the post-test scores

Groups	N	M	SD	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Experimental	41	11.82	2.94	3.138	79	.002	0.11
Control	40	9.60	3.33				

An independent-samples t-test was computed to compare the reading comprehension achievement scores of the experimental and control group students. There was a statistically significant difference

in scores of the experimental group ($M = 11.82$, $SD = 2.99$) and control group ($M = 9.60$, $SD = 3.33$; $t(79) = 3.138$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted as the p-value was less than the pre-set alpha level, which is 0.05. This means there was a statistically significant difference between the groups as the p-value was lower than 0.05, which is .002. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 2.22, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .81509 to 3.64345). The eta squared statistics (.11) indicated it was nearly large. This indicates that the intervention explains .11% of the variance in reading achievement. As (Anderson, 1999); Cohen (1992) states, effect size statistics indicate the magnitude of the differences between the groups. He added that Eta squared .01 refers to a small effect, .06 refers to a moderate effect, and .14 refers to the large effect of the intervention.

4. Discussions

In this quasi-experimental pre-posttest control group design study, the impact of the interactive model of reading instruction on the reading comprehension achievement of grade 7 students was investigated. Findings indicated a significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement scores of experimental and control groups of students. Students who learned in the interactive model of instruction outperformed as compared to the control group, who learned through the conventional method. This finding aligns with studies conducted in Turkey and Nigeria that the interactive reading activities positively impacted learners' achievement in reading comprehension ability (Cetinkaya *et al.*, 2019; Yusuf, 2015).

Even though reading can be done for different purposes, the main aim of teaching reading is to enable students to comprehend ideas in the text in English Language or other subjects (Grabe, 2008). Thus, this study examined how comprehension could be satisfied, and the result supported the claim that the interactive reading model instruction positively impacts students' reading comprehension achievement. Reading is viewed as a combination of bottom-up and top-down processing, which start from the reader to the text. The interactive approach provides the reader with diverse knowledge sources that can be used in comprehending the message of texts. It is, therefore, important to teach those interactive activities that will promote the students' comprehension abilities.

Hayati *et al.* (2020) findings also revealed interactive approach improved students' reading scores, and students also responded positively toward using the interactive approach in teaching reading. Reading activities allow interaction between teacher and student, students and students, and student and text. Furthermore, Oyetunde and Umolu (2009), Ruddell and Unrau (1994), and Yusuf (2015) argue that encouraging students to engage in discussions or conversations about the texts they read can have positive effects on their reading abilities and their ability to derive meaning from the text. The research conducted by these scholars revealed that when students had the chance to have purposeful conversations with their teachers, they became more enthusiastic, actively participated, and showed increased engagement in the reading process. Petty (2016) supports that we learn by doing, and active learning is much better recalled, enjoyed, and understood. Interactive activities made it easy for teachers to see how individual thought processes work with the information received from texts.

The finding is also in line with Douglas and Brown (2001) and Gamboa-González (2017) who state that competent readers are those who actively and interactively construct meaning through an integrated process in which they interact with words and integrate new information with pre-existing knowledge structure. Based on interactive activities, the students become familiar to processing the text actively. Students need to employ lower-level bottom-up and higher-level top-down strategies to become efficient readers. The students must read interactively with the bottom-up and top-down strategies functioning harmoniously. Parallel to this, Yusuf (2015) claim aligns with this research finding that students should be provided with opportunities to interact during reading lessons to enhance reading comprehension. Hence, the interactive reading model is crucial to improve students' reading comprehension achievement.

The improvement of the experimental group's reading comprehension achievement after getting interactive reading model instruction as the treatment proves that the model can show better results since it combines the features of bottom-up and top-down models. The interactive reading model maintains the use of the reading phases that entertain different bottom-up and top-down model activities that let students recognize linguistic signals and conceptually driven processes. In sum, the finding revealed that the interactive reading model impacted the students' reading comprehension achievement as it simultaneously recognizes the interaction of the high-level and low-level reading processes. The apparent disparity in test performances between the experimental and the control group has provided significant proof to clarify the effect of the interactive reading model on reading comprehension.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The interactive reading model employs both bottom-up and top-down processing; thus, it plays a crucial role in enhancing the reading comprehension of learners. Bottom-up processing is centered on the development of word recognition skills and vocabulary. In contrast, top-down processing prioritizes the utilization of learners' background knowledge, knowledge of the text, and context to execute the intended meaning. The findings of this study revealed that the interactive reading model positively impacted students' reading comprehension achievement. The effect size result also assures that the result that comes from the intervention is large. Since there was a statistically significant difference between the group that learned through the interactive reading model and the group that learned through the conventional method, the study concludes that learners should be frequently engaged in interactive reading activities to realize better results in reading comprehension ability.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were drawn. The interactive reading model is an important variable that has to be considered in teaching reading comprehension based on a systemic structure that balances the bottom-up and top-down models in the upper primary levels of education. The result of the study shows that the pedagogical implication is paramount; thus, it is crucial for curriculum planners, textbook authors, and designers of instructional materials to integrate interactive activities into students' guides. Teacher training institutions should provide courses in reading instruction to prepare teachers to teach reading at various levels of education. The reading tasks should include bottom-up and top-down model activities that let students practice lower- and higher-level skills. Students should use the interactive model of reading activities to facilitate their reading skills. It is important for EFL teachers to expose students to interactive activities that foster meaningful interaction with texts during reading comprehension lessons. This can be accomplished by incorporating a range of activities and experiences into the instructional approach. Since local research in the area is scant, more issues related to the topic should be investigated. A possible focus of future research is investigating the effects of the interactive model of reading on students reading motivation, self-efficacy, and fluency.

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