

## Impact of Questioning Strategies on Reading Comprehension of Pakistani O-Level Students

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** This research investigates the impact of questioning strategies on the reading comprehension skills of Pakistani O-Level students. The study employed a true experimental research design, dividing 30 students from FFC Grammar School and College, Goth Machi, Sadiqabad, into Control and Experimental groups based on age and capability.

**Methodology:** Random sampling formed the Control and Experimental groups, with both undergoing pre and post-tests to assess reading comprehension levels. While the Control group received traditional teaching methods, the Experimental group received treatment involving diverse questioning techniques during reading activities.

**Results/Findings:** Statistical analysis revealed significant differences favoring the Experimental group. The implementation of varied questioning techniques led to improved comprehension of complex texts among students in this group.

***Future Direction:** This study underscores the efficacy of well-planned questioning approaches in enhancing reading comprehension. Further research could delve deeper into refining and optimizing these strategies to foster even better academic outcomes for O-level students in Pakistan.*

## **Introduction**

Reading is the text- information that might be in the form of written symbols e.g. pictures, diagrams, words, or it may be a blending of all. It is a skill to see, know, and comprehend the subject matter of what is read. The most significant point of reading is to conceive the communication between a reader and a writer. Reading is an essential skill for success in school, college, and university life, and in professional life as well. It involves understanding, appraising, ruminating, and engrossing with texts to get an aim, to expand one's knowledge and possibility for achievement, and to participate ambitiously in society. When we read a passage to understand the text being seen an interaction between the eyes and brain starts automatically. That is why, Alyousef states (2006) <sup>[9]</sup>, "Reading can be seen as an 'interactive' process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency. According to Wallace (2004) <sup>[11]</sup>," Reading has a significant role in almost every course of study. In English, reading is one of the most prominent skills from the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is not only important in the teaching-learning process but also in social circles". Reading comprehension is one of the most intricate behaviours in which teachers and professionals engage making it difficult to teach, measure, and research. In the past, decoding was emphasized in reading research. It was expected that the comprehension process would automatically occur when students would read fluently. However, many theoretical models have been propounded in current decades to understand how to comprehensively and meaningfully display reading comprehension (McNamara & Magliano, 2009; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014) <sup>[5]</sup>. When the matter of defining reading comprehension comes; there are so many definitions in this regard but if we have to define it in simple words; it is the ability to read written text, know its meaning, and incorporate it with the reader's already known knowledge. It depends on two capabilities: word reading and language comprehension. It is a conceptual groundwork from word meaning to text meaning which happens when words on the page are not mere words but ideas and thoughts making reading an interesting, informative, enjoyable, and purposeful activity. The techniques and methods that are used to ask questions effectively and efficiently

clarify understanding, stimulate thinking and learning, develop the thinking process, motivate towards clear ideas, enticement to act, gather information, and stir the imagination are always the purpose of questioning strategies. Questioning strategies are important in reading comprehension because they help readers engage with the text deepen their understanding, and develop critical thinking skills. By asking questions before, during, and after reading, readers can actively process the information they are reading and generate links to their earlier knowledge and experiences (Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023). The investigation of the impact of questioning strategies on reading comprehension is crucial for understanding the efficacy and potential benefits of employing such strategies in educational settings. This need arises from the desire to enhance students' reading comprehension abilities, promote critical thinking, and improve overall academic performance. Employing effective questioning strategies in reading instruction can significantly impact the skills of students' reading comprehension. By promoting active engagement, developing critical thinking skills, enhancing metacognitive awareness, facilitating collaboration, and cultivating critical reading habits, effective questioning strategies empower learners to comprehend texts at a deeper level. Educators play a crucial role in designing and implementing these strategies, ensuring that students develop the necessary skills and strategies to become proficient readers capable of critically engaging with a wide range of texts. Exploring the impact of questioning techniques on reading comprehension is essential for evidence-based decision-making, enhancing instructional practices, promoting student engagement and motivation, advancing critical thinking skills, and tailoring instruction to diverse learners (Phulpoto Oad & Imran, 2024). By conducting research in this area, educators and researchers can gain valuable insights that contribute to the development of effective instructional strategies, ultimately improving students' reading comprehension abilities and fostering a lifelong love for learning. The motivation of this research is to bridge the understanding gap that exists between the reading process and comprehension skills of students. Moreover, it aims to contribute to influential teaching comprehension methodology and particularly curriculum design with relevance to Pakistan so that the students of O-level in Pakistan could improve their reading comprehension skills (Ahmad, Bibi, & Imran, 2023).

### Objectives of The Study

- To explore the efficacy of different questioning techniques for improving the reading comprehension skills of Pakistani O-Level students.

- To provide evidence-based recommendations and guidelines for teachers, students, educators, and curriculum designers on effective implementation of questioning strategies to enhance the reading comprehension skills of Pakistani O-Level students.

## Research Questions

1. How do different questioning strategies impact the reading comprehension abilities of O-level students in Pakistan?
2. How can be questioning strategies optimized to cater to the diverse needs and abilities of O-level students in Pakistan?

## Significance of The Problem

Reading comprehension is a cardinal skill that empowers individuals to grasp and comprehend the written text, explicate information, and acquire knowledge. However, many students grapple with reading comprehension, and consequently, they face difficulties in academic and personal contexts. One viable solution to improve reading comprehension is to use effective questioning strategies during reading activities. Questioning strategies involve asking questions sometimes before and during, and usually after reading to magnify the understanding of students of the text.

Secondly, Pakistani O-Level students prepare themselves for higher education so reading comprehension is a crucial skill for their academic success as it encourages them to actively engage with the text, think critically, and build links between the text and their earlier knowledge. Moreover, by improving reading comprehension skills, they are sure to perform better academically especially in subjects such as English Language, Literature, and Social Studies, and to a greater extent in science subjects as well.

Effective questioning strategies would enhance their critical thinking by encouraging them to analyze and evaluate the text they are reading. As a result, they would get better opportunities for advancement in academic and professional life as better reading comprehension skills are demanded by many educational systems and professional institutions.

It can also help educators to adopt after identifying effective questioning strategies that can enhance O-level students' learning experiences. This may also lead to improving teacher-student relationships, better classroom management, and teachers' instructional approaches to support students' skill of reading comprehension.

Overall, analyzing the influence of questioning techniques on the reading

comprehension of Pakistani O-level students is essential for enhancing and promoting academic success, critical thinking, and effective teaching practices. It would surely help teachers to identify areas where students may need additional support and design their teaching approaches accordingly.

While the research on questioning strategies and reading comprehension among O-level Pakistani students holds significant value, it is important to acknowledge its scope and limitations. These limitations include potential challenges related to sample size, representativeness, external factors, time constraints, research design, resource constraints, and ethical considerations. Recognizing these limitations helps provide a comprehensive understanding of the research's boundaries and informs future studies on similar topics (Oad, Khan & Khoso, 2020).

## Review of the Related Literature

For the whole reading process, questioning strategies that are used in comprehension are essential. In successful questioning, many variables regarding these strategies play an important role. The questioning strategies must be well planned and used otherwise no comprehending process would take place. Hyman states (1979) <sup>[6]</sup> that teachers can show care for students for the content read when they employ the important artistry of evaluation by asking questions strategically. Reading specialists and educators (Aschner, 1961, Cushenberry 1969) <sup>[1]</sup>, influenced by behaviouristic theory, think that teacher-generated questions incite students to action as they are good stimuli to reading comprehension. Conversely, Duckworth and Bruner think that the metacognitive theory, which places comprehension within a framework of active processing by the use of self-questioning, improves reading comprehension in a better way (Duckworth 1973, Bruner 1971) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Theoretically, both teacher-provided and student-generated questions have their strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, due to the teacher's experience, the questions are more coherent, accurate, and thought-provoking than those of the student. Moreover, teacher-posed questions help the teacher to diagnose the students' strengths and weaknesses. Resultantly, he adjusts his teaching according to the strengths and weaknesses of the students (Oad & Niazi, 2021). No doubt, the self-questioning strategy stimulates and emboldens self-reliance and independence in the learner and empowers him to control his learning (Anderson 1970, Faw and Waller 1976, Rayan 1981, Va Jura 1983) <sup>[1]</sup>. But we must not forget that students' questions are mainly literal not higher-order ones. As a result, many educators and reading

specialists are in favor of student-teacher reciprocal questions (Helfedt and Henk 1990, Herrmann 1988, Martin and Blanc 1981) <sup>[1]</sup>.

From a theoretical standpoint, student-teacher reciprocal questions strategy capitalizes upon the strengths of both strategies and thereby shares the weaknesses of neither. Students not only get a chance to observe the teacher's questioning behavior in reciprocal questioning but also get a chance to imitate it under the teacher's supervision. Singer (1978) <sup>[7]</sup>, "In doing so a chance of possession is more possible to happen as we teach for it". He further says that teacher-posed questions are insufficient for the development of comprehension in students because they only direct student thinking. The teacher must go through a subsequent lesson to complete the instructional procedure as it motivates the students to formulate their questions before, during, or after reading.

Guszek (1967) <sup>[10]</sup> formulated a categorization system to analyze questions that teachers ask students. This is helpful because it goes beyond the existing taxonomies. Barret (1968) and Taba (1975) <sup>[3]</sup> tried to help teachers by simplifying the task of reading comprehension. With this purpose, they published their taxonomies (Oad, Khan & Khoso, 2020). They used questioning strategies and the most important point is that they put forward the idea of higher-level questions around texts. It was the observation that teachers asked questions after the reading of a text. Students responded to those questions using a few words only and at the literal level. This question-answer format made students think that their role was to answer the questions when they would finish reading asked by the teacher. The best literature review available on the impact of questioning strategies on reading comprehension is "Questioning Strategies that Improve Comprehension" by Dr. Janet Allen. She has provided a deep analysis of various questioning strategies, including the QAR (Question-Answer Relationship) strategy, the Reciprocal Teaching strategy, and the Question-Generation strategy. Metacognition in reading comprehension and how questioning can help students develop this skill come under her study. Some proposals on evidence-based recommendations are also suggested to teachers so that they can effectively use questioning strategies to improve their students' reading comprehension skills. Kresna Ningsih Manik and Dolli Ratua Sinaga (2019, 20) <sup>[8]</sup> conducted research entitled, "The Effect of Using Question Strategy on Students' Reading Comprehension." The research was conducted at Prima Indonesia University, Medan, and the academic year 2019-2020. The target of this study was to find out the effect of using a questioning strategy on students' reading comprehension in Prima, Indonesia University, Medan. The subjects in this research were students in the second semester of two

different classes with 30 students in each class. It was a quasi-experimental research design in which pre-tests and post-tests were conducted with treatment for the experimental group. After gaining and analyzing the data it was concluded that the students who were taught by using question strategy had a significant effect on their reading comprehension.

Talib Ali Bani Hamad and Abdallah Baniabdelrahman <sup>[2]</sup> conducted research entitled, “The Effect of Self-Questioning Strategy on EFL Tenth-Grade students’ Reading Comprehension”. It was only limited to students in the tenth grade at the AL-Samt Secondary School for Boys in the Al-Kora Directorate of Education during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023. The main interest of the researchers was to investigate the effect of the Self-Questioning Strategy on English as a Foreign Language for tenth-grade students’ reading comprehension.” They adopted a Quasi-experimental design. Two groups of students were selected from Al-Samt Secondary School for Boys, a public school, and the Directorate of Education in Irbid (AL Kora Directorate of Education). The Experimental group consisted of 25 students and the Control group also had 25 students. First, a pre-/post reading comprehension test was designed. After this, the self-questioning strategy was used to teach the Experimental group, but the Control group was taught by the traditional teaching strategy. The difference between the Control and the Experimental group result showed significant partiality in favour of the Experimental group. It was recommended by the researchers to use the Self-questioning Strategy on different EFL Skills and different levels of students. It was highly recommended that EFL supervisors inform their teachers of the value of Self-questioning Strategy activities and incorporate them into reading comprehension courses.

The best literature review available on the impact of questioning strategies on reading comprehension is "Questioning Strategies that Improve Comprehension" by Dr. Janet Allen. She has provided a deep analysis of various questioning strategies, including the QAR (Question-Answer Relationship) strategy, the Reciprocal Teaching strategy, and the Question-Generation strategy. Meta-cognition in reading comprehension and how questioning can help students develop this skill come under her study. Some proposals on evidence-based recommendations are also suggested to teachers so that they can effectively use questioning strategies to improve their students' reading comprehension skills.

Lida Holida Mahmud Tryana (2023) <sup>[4]</sup>, conducted research entitled, “Promoting Reading Comprehension by Using Socratic Questioning”. This Socratic Questioning method was used to depict the atmosphere to enhance the reading comprehension of Pumulang University

students in reading class. The subjects of this study were second-semester students from the English Department at Pumulang University. The tools used in this study were observation lists, reading tests, and questionnaires. By observing the class and analyzing the results, two cycles of classroom Action Research were administered. Data showed that Socratic Questioning bolstered the skill of reading comprehension. It put forth betterment in mean scores between the pre-test and post-test in the first phase. In the second phase, the differing score was likewise seen. It was concluded that the Socratic Questioning method stimulated them to ask questions, which meant that the Socratic Questioning method instigated their critical thinking to think about the text they read and also suited them to comprehend the text. The only drawback of Socratic Questioning was from this research, the students distracted themselves with those replies that were irrelevant to the questions and topics. It was suggested by the researcher that teachers should develop a well-planned questions strategy that could not allow students to distract from their topic (Ahmad, et al., 2023).

After reviewing different previous research works various ideas were found about teaching reading comprehension, difficulties in teaching reading comprehension, and strategies adopted by the researchers to teach reading comprehension. I have also updated myself with the research process and methodological tools which would be beneficial to my research.

### **Design of the Study**

The researcher adopted the true experimental design to conduct this research work. The study focused on examining the impact of questioning strategies on the reading comprehension of Pakistan O-level students. The population sample of 30 O-level students was taken for this study from FFC Grammar School and College, Goth Machi, Sadiqabad.

The reading material having almost the same difficulty level was chosen quite appropriately according to the participant's age and study level. A pre-test was managed to get the basic reading comprehension abilities of the participants. The researcher intervened after the pre-test but treated only the experimental group, not the control group. After the intervention period, a post-test was conducted for both the groups, Control and Experimental, using a reading passage that was similar to the pre-test in difficulty and complexity.

The dissimilarity between the pre-test and the post-test was calculated. For the ethical consideration the obtained data of each participant was kept confidential from the other participants. The findings were summarized to judge if questioning strategies had a significant impact on the reading comprehension of O-level students, using the result of the research conducted on the students of FFC Grammar School and College, Machi Goth,

Sadiqabad. The researcher did all that he could do to make the research effective.

Based on the outcome of the study suggestions for students, teachers, educators, and researchers were given to compile a comprehensive research report explaining the study design, methodology, results, and conclusions.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted, as it was crucial, before the implementation of a true experimental design on the topic, “Impact of questioning strategies on reading comprehension of Pakistani O-level students”. The chief target of this study was to diagnose issues such as passage difficulty level with difficult vocabulary, difficult question types that students had not experienced before, and unclear instructions of logistical challenges in the implementation of specific questioning strategies; so that proper feedback could be taken from the participant.

The pilot study helped in assessing the possibility of implementation of planned experimental design on a larger scale. It truly helped the researcher about the viability of the study and whether any further adjustments were needed. It also helped in the enhancement of the validity of the study as it was tested first on a small scale with two groups each having five students. It also ensured that the questions and interventions effectively determined what they were expected to determine.

### **Population Sample**

The population of the research contained O- level students from FFC Grammar School and College, Goth Machi, Sadiqabad. There were 30 students distributed into two groups: Control and Experimental each having fifteen students. The researcher picked students as a population depending on the characteristics of the population referring to the requirement that they were in the same age, stage, and capability. In this manner, they built up a sample that was appropriate to the specific needs.

### **Results**

#### **T-test Findings of Control Group**

$H_0$ : There is a significant improvement in skills of reading comprehension of the control group.

$H_1$ : There is no significant improvement in skills of reading comprehension of the control

group.

**Table 1 Pre-test & Post-test Paired Samples Statistics of Control Group**

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test control group	72.4667	15	13.61127	3.51441
	Post-test control group	68.4667	15	12.92764	3.33790

In Table 1.7, it can be seen the total of students was 15, the mean of the pre-test was 72.4667 and the mean of the post-test was 68.4667. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 13.61127, while the standard deviation of the post-test was 12.92764. The standard error mean from the pre-test was 3.51441, and the post-test was 3.33790. It could be seen that student's scores on the pre-test and post-test were different. There was a slight deterioration in the score of a control group of students in the post-test.

**Table 2 Pre-test & Post-test Paired Samples Statistics of Control Group**

Paired Samples Test									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test control group	4.0	5.169	1.335	1.138	6.862	2.997	14	.010
	Post-test control group								

Based on output SPSS, the Paired Sample T-test showed paired differences to know the same variance.

$H_0$  Is Accepted when calculated value of  $t <$  table value of  $t$

$H_0$  Is rejected when calculated value of  $t >$  table value of  $t$

Conclusion: Our calculated value of  $t$  is greater than the table value of  $t$  so the null hypothesis is rejected.

### T-test FINDINGS OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

$H_0$ : There is a significant improvement in the skills of reading comprehension of the

experimental group.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant improvement in the skills of reading comprehension of the experimental group.

**Table 3 Pre-test & Post-test Paired Samples Statistics of Experimental Group**

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pre-test experimental group	66.8667	15	11.71609	3.02508
	Post-test experimental group	75.2667	15	11.13852	2.87595

Based on Table 1.10, it could be seen the total of students was 15, the mean of the pre-test was 66.8667 and the mean of the post-test was 75.2667. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 11.71609, while the standard deviation of the post-test was 11.13852. The standard error mean from the pre-test was 3.02508, and the post-test was 2.87595. So it could be seen that students' scores on the pre-test and post-test were different. There was a significant increase in the score of the experimental group of students after having treatment in the post-test.

**Table 4 Pre-test & Post-test Paired Samples Statistics of Experimental Group**

Paired Samples Test									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. 2 tailed
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 2	Pre-test experimental group	-8.40	9.731	2.512	-13.789	-3.011	-3.343	14	.005
	Post-test experimental group								

Based on output SPSS, the Paired Sample T-test showed paired differences to know the same variance.

$H_0$ Is Accepted when calculated value of  $t <$  table value of  $t$

$H_0$ Is rejected when calculated value of  $t >$  table value of  $t$

**Conclusion:** Our calculated value of  $t$  is less than the table value of  $t$  so the null hypothesis is accepted.

### Independent Samples Test

$H_0$ : There is a significant improvement in the skills of reading comprehension of students.

$H_1$ : There is no significant improvement in the skills of reading comprehension of students.

**Table 5 Independent sample t-test analysis of students' reading comprehension achievement**

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2-tailed	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
									Lower	Upper
Post-t-test	Equal variances assumed	.159	.693	-1.543	28	.134	-6.80	4.406	-15.82	2.225
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.543	27.4	.134	-6.80	4.406	-15.83	2.234

Based on Table 1.13, the value of  $t$  obtained was -1.543 at the significant level of 0.05

in the two-tailed test with  $df = 28$ , where the table value of  $t$  is 2.048 since the value of  $t$  is obtained -1.543 is less than the table value of  $t$ , so the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Conclusion:** Our calculated value of  $t$  is less than the table value of  $t$  so the null hypothesis is accepted.

### **Finding**

The findings of this research study were obtained based on data presented in Chapter IV. The data were the scores of students' reading achievement which were taken from the Pre-test and the Post-test of the Control and Experimental groups. The pre-test was conducted before the treatment was given and the post-test was conducted after the treatment. The Average Category students of the Control Group showed inconsiderable betterment in the post-test, but the Experimental Group students of the Excellent and Good Category showed much improvement in the post-test after the treatment. This shows that questioning strategies improve the skills of reading comprehension in Excellent and Good Category students very quickly but in Average and Poor Category students not quickly due to their lack of concern and interest as observed by the researcher.

### **Conclusion**

It can be deduced after having the findings and discussion of this research that the teaching of English Reading using Questioning Strategies can improve the reading comprehension of O-level students. It comes to the notice of the researcher that the student faced too much difficulty in comprehending the questions of the text competently either before or after treatment. The problem of the background knowledge of the students also occurred, however, the use of questioning strategies expectedly and successfully maximized the students' reading comprehension of very good students but not the weaker ones. The students in the Experimental group improved significantly in reading comprehension skills which is evident through their scores on the post-test which were higher than the scores on the pre-test. The implementation of targeted questioning strategies has also shown a positive correlation with improved comprehension levels, as evident by the analysis of pre-test and post-test reading scores. Moreover, the efficacy of the multiple questioning strategies accentuates and affirms the importance of exercising a diverse set of strategies to enhance learning styles and preferences. The study builds a positive relationship between questioning strategies and reading comprehension contributing valuable insights into influential and effective practices that can enhance reading comprehension outcomes. The

result of the test was examined by using the t-test formula (paired sample). The value of t obtained was -1.543 at the significant level of 0.05 in the two-tailed test with df 28, where the table value of t is 2.048 since the value of t is obtained -1.543 is less than the table value of t, so the null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : there is a significant improvement in the skills of reading comprehension of students accepted.

## Recommendations

The researcher puts forward some recommendations for teachers, students, and policymakers for improving the skills of reading comprehension of students that are as follows:

Different questioning strategies have a lot of influence and impact on the reading comprehension abilities of students, therefore, such questioning strategies should be tailored and formulated that accommodate students' diverse learning levels enhancing their cognitive abilities. Furthermore, the technology adaptive questioning software should be exploited in the classroom that formulates questions according to the diverse needs and abilities of students.

Keeping in mind the cultural and multi-lingual nature of Pakistani students, during discussions in the classroom English, Urdu, or regional dialects and languages responses from students should be encouraged to boost the confidence and understanding of corresponding linguistic diversity. The teacher should have more training, motivation, and guidance toward teaching reading comprehension by attending the "Teachers Training Workshop" arranged every year by Cambridge University, England. He should give the students a lot of practice with crucial techniques of reading text, skimming, and scanning, and motivate them to read a variety of text types, including articles, essays, fiction, and non-fiction. Lastly, the teacher should share effective websites, e-books, and textbooks that can properly guide the students.

The students should have the skill of self-questioning that fosters a habit of internal reflection. They should be provided with a congenial learning environment so that they can discuss freely the activity jot down their thoughts, problems, and hurdles, and articulate any questions or uncertainties that had about the text. Lastly, the students should be skilled in recognizing the question type and how to answer it. They should be well aware of educational websites, and e-books with built-in questions.

Policymakers like specialists, textbook authors and compilers, course composers, and teacher trainers should plan and outline activities and courses that are helpful to aggravate and exaggerate the reading comprehension skills of the students.

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