Reading for Conducting Research Purposes: The Case of Second-Year Master's Students of British Civilisation

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Abstract

This paper explores the area of reading for research purposes. It examines the reading habits and techniques employed by second-year British Civilisation Master's students at Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University, Algeria. To meet this end, a mixed-methods approach was used. A questionnaire was selected to investigate the learners' attitudes towards the different available information sources, reading habits, and difficulties when reading and synthesising those materials. A semi-structured interview was conducted with supervisors to get more in-depth insights on conducting research work. The paper sheds light on learners' complex processes while choosing, understanding, and combining materials from academic literature. A special focus was placed on digital resources' availability and influence on their research fulfilment. The results showed that the twenty learners involved in this study faced various issues at different levels and often resorted to techniques that they deemed helpful. Teachers-supervisors also highlighted important insights that should be considered, such as devoting modules to the teaching of conducting research and reading for research purposes, besides providing training on the use of technology and AI tools.

Keywords: *Digital resources, reading habits, second-year Master's students, scholarly texts, techniques.*

Introduction

Today, reading and research are fundamental key concepts in higher education. Effective reading habits and carefully selected research strategies are two essential academic success parameters. They enable learners to investigate the complexities of academic literature, gather relevant data, and construct a comprehensive understanding through integrating knowledge from various sources. For students enrolled in their second year of Masters in British

Civilisation, a field rich in historical significance and cultural exploration, and required to conduct research and write a thesis, mastering these two skills is necessary.

In this vein, British Civilisation is widely known as an interdisciplinary field of study that goes beyond history to reach culture and societal evolution. To master research in this field, traditional approaches rely on different techniques, including library research, printed literature, document synthesising, recording events, and note-taking. However, with the advent of technology as a facilitating tool, digital resources are mainly promoted among researchers, teachers and learners. This shift in preferences, accessibility, and usefulness raises essential questions about how Master's students in British Civilisation navigate this transition and fulfil their academic research.

While the significance of effective reading habits and research strategies is widely acknowledged, a lack of comprehensive studies examining the practices and challenges encountered by second-year Master's students in this discipline is noticed. To meet this end, this study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the reading habits and research strategies used by these learners for research purposes. It also aims to understand the complex relationship between traditional and digital methods, as the latter become an integral academic research tool. In this regard, two questions are put forward:

- What are the primary information sources and reading strategies used by second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation at Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University for research purposes?
- What challenges do second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation encounter when engaging with scholarly texts for research purposes, and how do digital resources influence these challenges?

This study is believed to provide essential data for researchers. Exploring the way second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation search for the needed information, understand it, and synthesise it is believed to be of vital significance. In this line of consideration, findings are expected to contribute to understanding the dynamics within this academic discipline and the broader debate on the evolving relationship between technology and traditional reading habits and techniques in academic research. Moreover, the insights gained from this study are expected to offer practical implications for teachers, syllabus designers, and researchers, enabling them to adjust their approaches and teaching methods to respond positively to the needs of the learners and the requirements of the digital era.

2. *Literature Review*

2.1. DEFINITION OF READING

Reading is an essential skill for students as it plays a crucial role in their overall academic success. Scholars propose different definitions. McKay (2006) defines reading as both a process and a product, emphasising the interaction between the reader and the text. She states, "Reading is both process and product. This means the reading process involves interacting with the reader and the text. The product of reading is reading comprehension or internal construction of meaning; there has been understanding." (McKay, 2006, p. 224)

Frankle *et al*. (2016) also highlight that reading goes beyond merging information from the text with the reader's prior knowledge. It encompasses the knowledge derived from the reader's past experiences and relationships. They (2016) state, "Reading is about more than combining information from the text with a reader's prior knowledge. It is also about the kind of knowledge that the reader possesses based on prior experiences and relationships." (p. 8)

Moreover, it is essential to recognise reading as a complex skill. Broughton *et al*. (1998) highlight this complexity, stating, "First it must be recognised that reading is a complex skill, that is to say, that it involves a whole series of lesser skills." (p. 89). One of these fundamental skills is recognising stylised shapes, including figures on the ground, curves, lines, and dots in patterned relationships.

Ultimately, scholars offer diverse perspectives on the definition of reading, highlighting its complexity and the cognitive processes involved. Some definitions emphasise reading as the ability to decode written symbols and derive meaning from text. Others stress the interactive nature of reading, where readers actively engage with the text to construct meaning, make connections, and critically analyse information.

2.2. READING HABITS AND STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

Developing effective reading habits and strategies is essential for academic research, which requires fostering efficient reading habits and strategies. Similarly, Owusu-Acheaw (2014) believes that students' academic achievements are significantly influenced by their reading habits, emphasising the strong connection and dependence between reading and academic success.

According to Singhal's study (2001), Oxford (1990) presented a comprehensive classification scheme that proves helpful, stating that if applicable to the various aspects of language learning, including the realm of reading strategies, it is more appropriate to consider six sub-strategies summarised as follows:

Cognitive strategies encompass a range of language-manipulating activities such as note-taking (Gourley, 2021) and summarising, that is, to express information in one's own demanding the reader identify critical elements during reading and succinctly express the information using their own language words (Armbruster *et al.*, 2001), paraphrasing, predicting (Küçükoğlu, 2013), analysing, and utilising context clues. Ultimately, these strategies help readers engage actively with the material and express their understanding in their own words.

Memory strategies, also known as mnemonic techniques, enhance learners' capacity to remember and retrieve information effectively. These strategies encompass a range of methods, including the creation of vivid mental images by grouping and associating concepts (Küçükoğlu, 2013), utilising semantic mapping to organise information, employing keywords as memory triggers, making word associations to establish connections, and situating new words within a contextual framework. By employing these strategies, readers can enhance their ability to remember and comprehend the content.

Compensation strategies encompass skills like making inferences, through which students can draw conclusions, predict, identify themes, extract meaning from text, interpret images (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000), and engage in contextual guessing while reading and employing reference materials like dictionaries. In other words, these strategies help readers fill in gaps in their understanding and extract meaning from the text.

In reading, metacognitive strategies encompass different methods such as focusing attention, evaluating oneself, structuring information, establishing objectives, actively seeking opportunities to practice, etc. Moreover, another illustration of a metacognitive strategy in reading is the capacity to monitor one's performance and rectify mistakes, which helps readers become more aware of their reading strengths and weaknesses, effectively set goals, and adjust their reading strategies accordingly.

Learners also employ effective strategies for managing emotions and creating a conducive learning environment. Such strategies include engaging in self-encouraging behaviour to alleviate anxiety and foster a positive attitude towards learning. By fostering a positive attitude towards reading and reducing anxiety, individuals can approach reading tasks enthusiastically and openly, improving comprehension and enjoyment.

Finally, social strategies pertain to involving others in the learning process. These strategies include collaborating with peers, engaging in discussions, asking for corrections, and seeking feedback. For example, while reading, a student may actively seek input and feedback from another individual regarding their

comprehension, interpretation, or analysis of the text. By interacting with others, readers can gain different perspectives, deepen their understanding of the text, and refine their reading comprehension skills.

2.3. IMPACT OF DIGITAL RESOURCES ON READING COMPREHENSION

The digital revolution has significantly transformed how students read, write, and access information in academic settings. However, it is undeniable that reader preferences still lean towards print rather than screen-based reading, as demonstrated by several studies (Kretzschmar *et al*., 2013; Baron *et al*., 2017). Despite this preference, the impact of digital resources on reading comprehension remains a subject of debate among researchers. Studies comparing reading comprehension in digital and print mediums have yielded mixed results, further adding to the complexity of this issue.

Kretzschmar *et al*.'s study (2013), which compared reading from digital media "tablet" to reading from print books, showed that comprehension accuracy did not differ between the two. Ultimately, they emphasised the need to separate subjective evaluations from cognitive processes in digital reading.

In this vein, Schugar *et al*. (2011) write, "Our research found no discernible differences in reading comprehension levels between the e-Reader and non-e-Reader groups". (p. 174). However, they went a step further and argued that according to the survey findings, it was observed that students tended to utilise active reading techniques such as highlighting, bookmarking, and annotating when engaging with traditional printed texts. However, these same active reading skills were not consistently applied or transferred to their reading of electronic texts or e-readings.

The latter results highlight the findings of Dillon *et al*. (1988) regarding reading texts on screens. According to their study, reading from screens was found to be slower, less accurate, and more fatiguing, resulting in reduced comprehension and being subjectively perceived as less effective than reading from paper (as cited in Ackerman, 2011). However, it is essential to question the relevance of these findings in the present day and whether they still hold true.

2.4. CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS WHO ARE CONDUCTING RESEARCH FOR LITERATURE REVIEW WRITING

Students face common challenges in research writing, particularly when navigating the literature review process. This shared experience is evident across various studies, highlighting the complexities students encounter in their academic journey. In a qualitative study conducted by Yeh (2010) at a Taiwanese university, graduate students' experiences with research writing were examined in depth. The

study revealed that reviewing related literature was one of the most difficult tasks for these students. As novice researchers, they faced numerous challenges in this area. Searching for appropriate sources and assessing their quality and relevance posed significant difficulties due to their limited knowledge and skills. Additionally, they struggled with paraphrasing others' ideas effectively, finding it challenging to convey concepts from existing literature in their own words. Furthermore, correctly using vocabulary and academic language proved another obstacle for these students.

Furthermore, Benbellal and Khaledi (2021) pinpoint several challenges students face in writing the literature review chapter, which is discussed based on interviews and content analysis. The difficulties identified by students include summarising and paraphrasing ideas, counterclaiming, and indicating gaps in previous research. Students also struggled with writing in-text citations and the list of references, synthesising knowledge claims to establish a theoretical position, and maintaining language, coherence, and cohesion in their writing. Additionally, issues such as asserting formative claims about knowledge or research practices surveyed, indicating theoretical positions/frameworks, and interpreting terminology used in the dissertation were revealed during the content analysis.

Collectively, these studies bring attention to the extensive array of challenges that students encounter throughout the literature review process. The findings highlight the diverse and multifaceted nature of students' difficulties as they engage with the intricacies of conducting literature reviews.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted with twenty-six second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation at the English language and literature department of Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University, Algeria, and six teachers-supervisors working in the same Department.

This study used a non-probability sampling method to select learners and supervisors. The non-random selection technique is deemed the most adequate as it allows for the inclusion of every single informant. In other words, it is essential to select individuals based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

In this respect, convenience sampling was selected mainly because it allowed for targeting individuals who were available and willing to be involved in the study and met the necessary criteria, including primarily the idea of sharing the same purpose, i.e., to read for conducting research purposes and supervising

students' works. It is worth mentioning that although this sampling technique may not ensure the generalisability of the findings, it provides valuable insights and an in-depth understanding of the selected population.

3.2. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Two research instruments were employed in this study. A questionnaire was administered to second year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation. It aims to gather the needed data on the learners' preferences for information sources, reading practices, and challenges encountered when engaging with scholarly texts. A semi-structured interview with supervisors is another essential tool that provides further insights into the research process.

As mentioned before, the questionnaire was selected to gather the needed data. It was administered to twenty-six learners. It consisted of different types of questions, including open-ended, close-ended, and demographic questions. The following are examples taken from the questionnaire:

- Demographic questions: What is your speciality?
- Close-ended questions: Apart from research, do you read?
- Open-ended questions: How do you synthesise scholarly texts you choose to include in your research?

The questionnaire comprised 20 questions divided into four rubrics: The first rubric was devoted to learners' profile and reading habits, including their areas of specialism, their adopted reading habits, the time allocated to reading, and the inclusion of technology. The second rubric was dedicated to exploring the main obstacles students face while reading for conducting research purposes. The third rubric was reserved for the strategies learners adapt to overcome the issues highlighted in the second rubric. In the last rubric, students were invited to provide recommendations to better cope with their situation. At this stage, it is important to stress that the questionnaire was piloted with informants. After the piloting phase, a number of questions were simplified, and others were modified and added.

The semi-structured interview was conducted with six teachers-supervisors working at the English language and literature department of Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University. It consisted of 16 questions divided into four sections, each devoted to enlightening an important element. The first section was reserved for teachers' profiles, including their qualifications, specialisation, and expertise in supervising students' work. The second section, Challenges Faced, aimed to shed light on the issues their students faced while reading and conducting their research. Questions related to the common issues students faced in understanding research

materials and whether they found it challenging to combine information from different sources were asked.

The third section was devoted to the strategies students have to use while fulfilling their research. Elements, such as the types of documents, tools, resources and strategies, were discussed in this section. The last section discussed support and help as fundamental elements students often seek while conducting research. Teachers were asked about the guidelines they offer to their students, the organisation of workshops and training, and their suggestions for selecting the needed materials, reading and synthesising documents effectively, and conducting appropriate research.

In this semi-structured interview, a mixed type of questions was used, including close-ended questions such as the following example:

- Do you offer guidelines to help your learners in selecting materials?
Open-ended questions were also asked, including notably:

- How do you deal with the students who face issues in conducting research and materials selection?

3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In this case study, a mixed-methods approach is used. Gathering data from different sources using qualitative and quantitative methods is essential for exploring the situation, cross-checking results, and ensuring the credibility of findings. To meet this end, a questionnaire was administered to second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation, considered an essential tool. It aims to gather the needed data on the learners' preferences for information sources, reading practices, and challenges encountered when engaging with scholarly texts. The semi-structured interview with supervisors is another essential tool that provides further insights into conducting research work. Data collected are analysed systematically to provide a holistic understanding of the importance of considering the relationship between technology and traditional reading methods in academic research, even though using a mixed-methods approach is valuable for researchers. Still, it has its limitations, which are highlighted in this paper.

4. Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the study explores the information selection, comprehension and synthesis processes adopted by second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation at the English language and literature department of Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University, Algeria. The research

also considers the availability and the impact of digital resources on their research process. At this level, important results were gathered from the learners' questionnaire provided. The twenty informants who answered the questionnaire were adults enrolled in their second year of Master's and specialised in British Civilisation. This latter may reveal their awareness of their reading habits, the obstacles they face and the strategies they adopt.

The informants taking part in the study revealed that apart from their research, they often read for a period that ranges from a few minutes to entire hours. They read for different purposes, as mentioned in the figure below:

Figure 1.
Students Reading Purposes
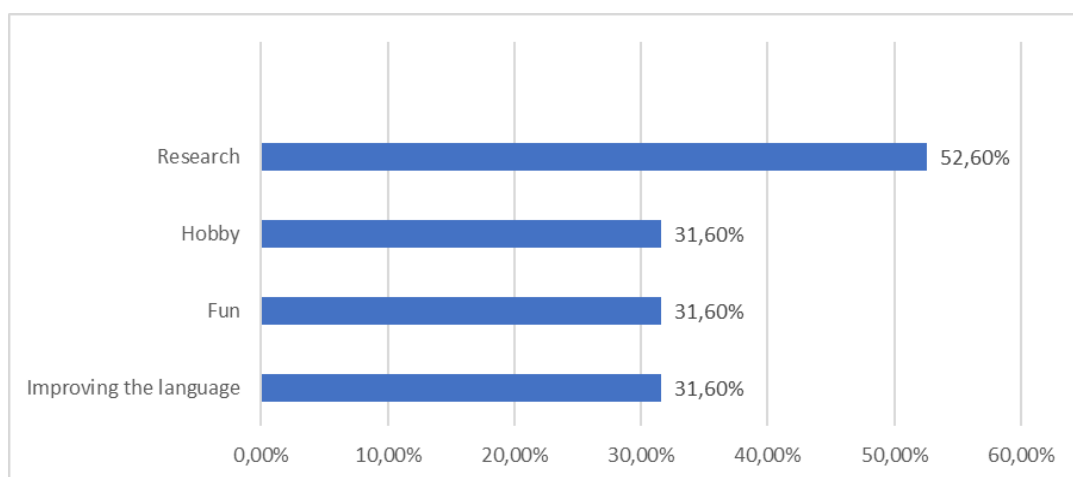
Believing in the vital role played by technology (78.95%) of the responses highlighted its crucial significance in research, emphasising its role, ease of use, assistance in data collection and access to information, and its ability to provide sources and simplify the research process. As for the type of reading documents, (63,20%) of the informants show a preference for printed documents over digital ones. Informants, also acknowledge the availability of various resources, from pdf to articles, books, e-books, etc. They considered technology a facilitating tool for conducting research, contributing to their reading experience. Still, the majority (63,20%) prefer books, as mentioned in the figure below.

Figure 2.
Types of Materials / Reading Resources
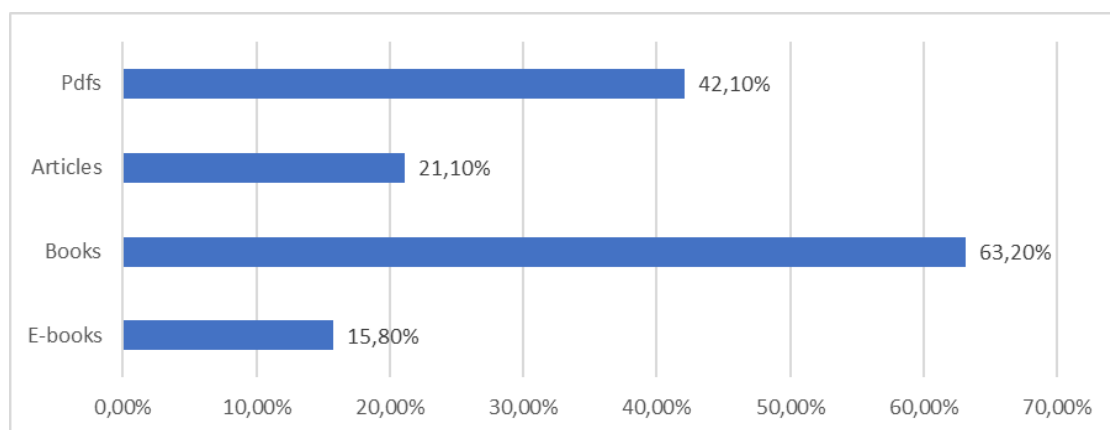
As for the second rubric, informants agreed on the following issues they face when reading for conducting research:

- Understanding complex academic texts.
- Lack of motivation to engage with reading materials.
- Limited time for reading due to other academic commitments.
- Loss of focus and interest while reading.
- Difficulty in synthesising information from multiple sources.
- Lack of access to relevant reading materials.

They go beyond to mention other obstacles, including primarily:

- High costs of printed books and limited access to printed sources can pose challenges.
- Difficulty in understanding complex terms and vocabulary, which can impede comprehension.
- Specialty-specific vocabulary and vague words may require additional effort for clarification.
- Forgetting ideas and reading too quickly without proper focus can affect retention and understanding.

Based on the difficulties mentioned above, informants were invited to identify the strategies they adopt to facilitate the reading process. In this regard, students revealed that they often resort to the use of the following strategies, including:

- Breaking down readings into smaller, manageable sections.
- Actively highlighting and taking notes while reading.
- Utilising online resources or supplementary materials.
- Summarising the main points or critical arguments.

Another element of the questionnaire was selecting the needed materials. Informants' answers varied from a random selection based on availability to an objective one based on relevance and reliability. Online sources such as academic databases or specific websites were also mentioned. The use of AI was another method informants used to select their materials.

Respondents relied on rereading the materials, relating them to the research topic, conducting close reading and analysis, using summarising tools and simplifying language, employing translation methods and dictionaries, and relying on prior background knowledge to understand these selected materials. However, some respondents expressed uncertainty or lack of comprehension.

Informants need to use AI tools and summarisation techniques to synthesise scholarly texts to be included in their research and identify common points. Mixing ideas from different sources and selecting appropriate methods were also mentioned. Overall, the reliance on AI tools and the ongoing exploration of strategies were the dominant strategies among the respondents' answers.

Apart from the already mentioned strategies and to overcome the reading barriers, informants suggested other solutions, including:
- Watching videos as an alternative method to understand the topic.
- Using other platforms like YouTube or academic channels.
- Reading the abstract and conclusion sections.
- Looking for the meaning of the target concept when facing reading obstacles.
- Moving forward to the next line.
- Translating methods to enhance understanding.
- Key information and summarising main ideas to enhance comprehension.
- Searching for events or terms individually to gain a clearer understanding.

In the last rubric, informants were invited to provide suggestions to better cope with their needs and facilitate the reading for research purposes. Their answers were summarised as follows:
- The inclusion of AI tools.
- Working in groups.
- Actively highlighting and taking notes while reading.
- Summarising the main points and key arguments.
- Reading abstracts and conclusions while searching for relevant information.

As mentioned before, the semi-structured interview was selected as the second research tool that aims to enlighten the reading process for conducting research purposes from the angle of the teachers-supervisors. In this regard,

findings revealed that the informants in question hold a doctorate in various fields, including ESP, Didactics, Civilisation, and Literature, and they supervise students in different fields. The common element is that they all supervise second-year Master's students specialising in British Civilisation at the English language and literature department of Mustapha Stambouli-Mascara University, Algeria. Their supervision experience ranges from 7 to 20 years. This latter denoted that their expertise in monitoring students' works increased their awareness of the learners' needs. It allows them to detect the main issues and offer their learners assistance with diverse expertise and extensive supervisory experience.

While reading for research purposes, students faced different challenges. In this regard, teachers-supervisors prefer to divide them into four areas, including:

1. Reading Challenges:
   - Difficulty in grasping material gist.
   - Weak idea connections.
   - Vocabulary comprehension.
   - Fear of full-book reading.
   - Uncertain starting point.
   - Lack of reading strategies.
   - Critical thinking, paraphrasing.
   - Selective reading.
   - Idea connection difficulties.
   - Vocabulary gaps.
   - Research topic narrowing.
   - Material selection issues.
2. Understanding Research Materials Challenges:
   - Difficulty in selecting appropriate research materials.
   - Unfamiliarity with the field.
   - Lack of practice navigating research materials.
3. Sources Introducing Complexity for Supervisees:
   - The high cost and lack of access to research materials.
   - Challenges and complexities posed by the length of books, long articles, and specialised archives.
   - Unique demands and difficulties associated with specialised books.
4. Synthesising Information from Multiple Sources Challenges:
   - Challenges related particularly to literature review.
   - Struggle with combining information from various sources.

- Difficulties in classifying, switching, and commenting on information.
- Challenges in deciding what to include or exclude due to limited reading.

As for the sources and strategies adopted by the learners, teachers-supervisors answers indicated that students depend on various sources, like eBooks, Google Books, Google Scholar, PDFs, videos, journals, and periodicals for their research. As a result, they emphasised the learners' dependence on digital resources. For the strategies, informants identified a set of common strategies that are summarised as follows:

- Selective reading.
- Skimming.
- Summarising.
- Paraphrasing.
- Note-taking.
- Highlighting the keywords and main points.
- Using websites and AI tools such as ChatGPT.
- Elaborating reading cards.

Responses to collaborative strategies teachers-supervisors deem successful were varied. Some noted partnerships in synthesising quotes, interpreting findings, and providing recommendations, while others called for more practice or reported rare instances. The effectiveness of collaboration was seen to depend on students' ability to employ diverse strategies. One participant specifically mentioned successful collaboration during the development of reading cards.

To assist students facing reading issues in conducting research, materials selection and synthesising data, teachers-supervisors claim that they often resort to:

- Guide them in choosing the appropriate research method.
- Help develop an outline and list of references.
- Conduct preliminary sessions to explain the matter.
- Provide individualised help and support.
- Practice together before they work independently.
- Review key points from research methodology courses.
- Offer guidelines.
- Organising workshops / training at the beginning of their research journey depending on their motivation and teachers' schedule.

Drawing from the previous data, teachers-supervisors were invited to provide suggestions for enhancing students' research experience, specifically improving their reading skills. Their suggestions are summarised as follows:

- Formal training in thesis fulfilment and digital tools to enhance research quality.
- Emphasise extensive reading in the students' field of speciality to familiarise them with the subject matter, academic writing style, and different research methods.
- Conduct training sessions on specific points, such as source selection, reading techniques, and synthesis.
- Devote a practical module for thesis development from the undergraduate years to the Master's level.

The interview analysis also provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by students during the research process, particularly in the area of reading. The teachers-supervisors, with extensive academic experience and expertise in various fields, identified several common reading challenges among students. In this regard, the informants highlighted the following difficulties:

- Understanding the main ideas of the different reading materials they recourse to;
- Failure to draw logical relationships between the identified ideas;
- Hostility towards lengthy books;
- Students often fail to understand technical terms;
- They do not know how to narrow down their research topics;
- They also find it challenging to adopt the appropriate technique, including paraphrasing, summarising, note-taking, quoting, etc.

Informants also stressed that in the literature review, i.e., the theoretical part of the student's work, where they should reveal a high command of the different research skills already gained, students enrolled in their second-year Master's do not know how to combine ideas and discuss them systematically. In this case, they often appeal to their supervisors to ask them "what to include" and "what to exclude."

To address these challenges, the teachers-supervisors mentioned various resources and strategies students employ. These include relying on digital sources like eBooks, Google Books, Google Scholar, PDFs, videos, journals, and periodicals. Students also employ strategies such as selective reading, skimming, summarising, paraphrasing, note-taking, highlighting keywords and main points, and utilising websites and AI tools like ChatGPT. It is worth noting that reading cards were specifically highlighted as a successful collaborative strategy.

It is known that teachers-supervisors have a vital role in assisting students who face reading challenges and conducting research. In this study, informants

help students by guiding them in choosing appropriate research methods, mainly related to outlining and referencing. Besides, they provide preliminary sessions to explain the research process through workshops to offer individualised support. Additionally, they practice together before working individually and review key points from research methodology courses, and they provide them with guidelines.

In terms of enhancing students' research experience, the suggestions provided by informants include formal training in thesis fulfilment and digital tools, emphasising the importance of extensive reading in the student's field of speciality. They also stressed the need to organise regular training sessions devoted to the different academic writing techniques, including reading and writing techniques such as note-taking, note-making, brainstorming, and mind mapping. They also suggested that students should have a purely practical module devoted to the art of writing and defending a thesis.

Results gathered from the semi-structured interview conducted with teachers-supervisors revealed crucial insights related to the issues students often struggle with while reading and conducting their research. Besides, valuable insights were also gathered, related to the type of resources students often use, the strategies they adopt, and the kind of assistance they seek from their supervisors. Informants also provided valuable recommendations to enhance the quality of the research conducted by students while improving the needed skills.

The study offers valuable insights to researchers who often seek to understand students' reading habits and practices in their second-year Master of British Civilisation. Today, with the advent of technology and based on the results of this study, the intricate relationship between technology and traditional reading methods needs to be reviewed. To meet this end, flexibility is a key parameter. This latter can be best practised by adopting a balanced approach between traditional and innovative approaches in our academic settings. Results also highlighted that students who examine issues in selecting appropriate materials, understanding complex ideas, lacking time, funding, and motivation, and facing difficulties critically reviewing the needed information must be addressed carefully.

To move further, it should be acknowledged that students often adopt essential techniques and strategies to overcome the already-mentioned difficulties. Among those strategies is the use of online resources for their accessibility. They also relied on their prior knowledge, motivated by the idea that having background knowledge would facilitate their understanding of the task. Adopting note-taking, summarising, and breaking down reading materials into small units will help them maintain their focus while reading. Results also show that students are open to

using AI tools, which they consider facilitating tools. Informants also acknowledge the need to use other solutions, including watching videos, reading translated materials, focusing on abstracts and conclusions, looking for definitions in different databases, and searching for the needed information individually.

As mentioned above, AI tools were perceived as facilitating tools students often use when reading and writing for conducting research purposes. This latter could reveal that incorporating those tools is no longer a personal choice but a must. In this regard, after carefully examining the techniques and strategies adopted by the informants, it is revealed that ongoing research is needed to adopt a positive view toward innovative ideas. The diverse range of strategies informants often resort to use also highlights the individualised nature of reading preferences and the need for a flexible approach in research-related reading practices.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, syllabus designers are invited to reconsider the inclusion of modules that offer formal preparation for students to use technology, especially AI, as a facilitating tool in education. Libraries should prioritise the acquisition and accessibility of diverse resource materials, encompassing both traditional and digital formats, to respond positively to different students' preferences. Furthermore, decision-makers at different institutions are recommended to equip their institutions with different Artificial Intelligence tools and packages to enhance the quality of student research.

Despite the already mentioned contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge, it is important to reveal the set of limitations of this study. These can be related to the following parameters: the sample size, the absence of an effective assessment of the learners' implemented strategies, and the lack of consideration for discipline-specific requirements. At this level, future research is needed. This latter should consider including larger-scale studies to explore other difficulties, assess the effectiveness of different strategies, and shed light on the demands of different disciplines. While adopting these recommendations, studies will contribute to a holistic understanding of the issues and perspectives related to reading for research purposes among students.

Finally, employing and adapting efficient reading techniques in traditional and digital research approaches is crucial. The implementation of these techniques is deemed to enhance learners' reading experiences. In this line of consideration, this paper provides significant insights for the learners, the teachers-supervisors, and syllabus designers who wish to understand and improve the reading experiences of students enrolled in their second-year Master's and who are

supposed to conduct research for thesis fulfilment. In this regard, teachers are advised to implement a practical approach focusing on the two key parameters, i.e., guidance and assistance in reading comprehension and research techniques. They are also encouraged to set up a positive environment that fosters the effective implementation of various strategies to successfully overcome obstacles in reading.

Based on the research findings that align with the existing literature (Hayashi, 1999; Duke & Pearson, 2009; Küçükoğlu, 2013), a set of recommendations are offered below for effective reading strategies that can be adapted for research purposes. It should be noted that the effectiveness of these strategies may vary depending on the reader. The suggested strategies are summarised as follows:

1. SQ3R Method

- Traditional: Use the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) method for in-depth reading. Survey the text, generate questions, read actively, recite or summarise key points, and review the material.
- Digital: Apply the SQ3R method to digital reading using digital tools to survey the text, generate digital annotations and questions, actively read and engage with the material, recite or summarise digitally, and review digital notes.

2. Skimming and Scanning

These two are related to the pre-reading phase and can be applied as follows:

- Traditional: Skim through physical text by quickly running your eyes over the pages to identify main ideas and key arguments.
- Digital: Use scrolling and visual scanning techniques to skim through digital text quickly, focusing on headings, subheadings, and highlighted information.

3. Summarising

- Traditional: After reading a physical text, summarise the main points by writing a concise summary or discussing it with others.
- Digital: Create digital summaries by highlighting and annotating important points within the text or using note-taking features in e-readers or reading apps.

4. Visual Representation

- Traditional: Create visual representations of information using pen and paper, such as mind maps or diagrams.

- Digital: Utilise digital tools like mind-mapping software, diagramming tools, or note-taking apps to create visual representations of information while reading digital texts. Text or using note-taking features in e-readers or reading apps.

5. Read a Variety of Texts

- Traditional: Explore various physical texts, including books, journals, and newspapers, across different genres, subjects, and authors.
- Digital: Access a variety of digital texts, such as e-books, online articles, or blogs, to diversify your reading experience and access a broader range of information.

6. Chunking

- Traditional: Break down the physical text into smaller, manageable chunks or sections. Read and comprehend each chunk before moving on to the next.
- Digital: Utilise digital features like page breaks, scrolling, or digital bookmarks to create virtual chunks within the digital text, aiding comprehension and focus.

7. Multi-modal Reading

A combination of traditional and digital is required by supplementing reading with other sensory experiences, such as listening to related podcasts, watching relevant videos, or exploring visual aids like maps or diagrams.

8. Collaborative Reading

- Traditional: Engage in reading groups or book clubs to discuss and exchange ideas with others who have read the same physical text.
- Digital: Participate in online forums, discussion boards, or virtual book clubs to connect with fellow readers and collaborate on reading digital texts.

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