The Impact of English Printed Books on Improving Students' English Reading Skills in Twelve Years of Basic Education in Remote Areas: A Case Study of Muhanga District, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have examined the effect of English-language printed books on students' English language competency, despite the fact that several studies on textbooks are available in many different languages across the globe. In fact, the objectives of this study are to investigate the role of printed books in the teaching and learning of reading skills in the English language, as well as to evaluate effective strategies to enhance reading skills among students enrolled in a 12-year basic education program from remote areas. Due to the nature of the research question set, this study employs a descriptive research design with a mixed approach. The survey was conducted among the students and teachers from the remote areas of Muhanga district in two schools from the sectors of Kibangu and Rongi. This study was undertaken with students from two schools. While collecting the data, the sampling technique used was stratified sampling under the probability sampling method, where every member of the 305 population had the chance to be taken from 1280. So as to collect data, questionnaires and interviews were used as the main tools of data collection. Interpretation was done within the lens of cognitive reading theory, assessing the impacts of printed books on students' reading skills in the English language. The main findings have shown that a lack of English-printed books has an impact on the students' reading skills and their performance in terms of English language proficiency. The results indicated that the availability of printed English books is problematic in schools located in rural areas, even if they play an integral part in academic success and positively impact students' reading skills. Education stakeholders are postulated to reinforce textbooks in remote areas and control their maintenance. The current study also tends to recommend key educational planners and stakeholders take this issue of printed books into consideration. Finally, class teachers are recommended to apply the suggested reading strategies while teaching reading sessions in order to improve students' reading skills and their performance as well.

Keywords: *Effective Strategies, Printed Books, Reading Skills, Remote Area*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of the world, books were first written in Ancient Greek in relation to educational texts. An important factor in the early stage of the development of foreign language teaching is the role of Latin as the lingua franca of educated Europe in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Tsurtsilina, 2018). Johannes Gutenberg printed the first book in Latin, which was used by tutors, teachers, and individuals who wanted to teach themselves. The Bible looks to be the first book printed in the world, but England's first book was published between 1690 and 1930. It was followed by the Blue-Backed Speller of Noah Webster from 1790 until 1836, and it was replaced by McGuffey readers (Man, 2002).

During the colonization of Africa around the 19th century, the British colonial period brought education through missionaries. There were French-administered schools under French control and British-administered schools that emphasized the English language in their colony. In Kenya's part called Kikuyu, English was their language of instruction, and the birth of democracy in 1994 led to the establishment of a new dispensation and a concomitant need for the democratization of the education system (Mogashoa, 2017).

Researchers like Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022) examined how printed books play an important role in language teaching and learning. It is easier for the students to retain what they have read from printed books than what they have read from online materials (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022). This viewpoint can be linked with the situation in rural areas in Muhanga district and other different parts of the country, especially rural areas where the current generation uses various resources (printed books and e-books) to access English language materials.

The user and reader of some of these printed books and e-books stated that printed books are better because it is easier to retain vocabulary and the plot of the story obtained from printed books compared to e-books (Alfiras & Bojiah, 2020). The main aim of this study is to explore the impact of English-printed books on the students' English reading skills and language proficiency. How printed books are used in the teaching and learning process and their contribution to boosting and reinforcing English reading skills and language mastery.

1.1 Problem Statement

Even though textbooks are the central component of the daily instructional practice of English language teachers, relatively little research has been conducted on how teachers actually use textbooks (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022). English is a language taught in schools in Rwanda as well as in nine- and twelve-year basic education in Rwanda. The government of Rwanda, through the ministry of education, has set different policies to be implemented in order to help Rwandan students learn this language and achieve a certain level of proficiency (STELIR years 1–2022, 2023). Teaching English as a second language in twelve years' basic education means to deliver its expectations as teachers. English Printed books contribute to the achievement of the desired objectives as well as helping the students who need to be fluent in the target language.

While the government of Rwanda has made a number of readjustments and reshapings of the education system, including the introduction of competence-based curricula, for the purpose of improving the standard and quality of education, competence-based curriculum (CBC) emphasizes a learner-centered method where a learner plays a big role in the teaching and learning process. According to Ayu (2020), some problems arise, whether to keep up the source culture or to clarify more about the target culture.

In English lessons, a learner needs different books to read, do exercises, group work, and present findings. In addition, a learner acquires new vocabulary from the textbook he or she reads. On the other hand, book distribution in school libraries has been reduced, leaving schools with no other choice but to read from e-books, which are available online (Niyibizi et al., 2020). The problem here is that most schools in rural areas do not have internet facilities. The shortage of printed books in school libraries is the biggest challenge that hinders the achievement of the desired goals, especially those related to teaching and learning reading skills in the English language, which is taught as a lesson and used as a medium of instruction as well.

This issue of textbooks is more critical to the English language teaching and learning process as it affects the students' performance as well as the achievement of teachers' objectives. So, this problem of not having enough books leads to the graduation of incompetent students, who graduate with a limited reading culture, which leads to poor research competence and reading laziness (Niyibizi et al., 2020). However, different research has shown that the readers of printed books absorb and remember more of the plot than the readers of e-books (Alfiras & Bojiah, 2020).

Thus, Rwandan education partners, especially the ministry of education, should take the lead in printing out the books found on the website of REB (www.reb.gov.rw/e-recourses) for all schools concerned and follow up on their implementation. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of printed English books on the students' English reading skills. In order to critically reflect on the research questions, the study will adopt an analytical approach, which will be used to provide insights into current teaching and learning activities and issues of printed books by analyzing and evaluating the facts from the field and constructing interpretive explanations for those facts.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to explore the impact of English-printed books on the students' English reading skills and language proficiency. Below are the specific objectives and their corresponding research questions:
  i.   To identify the impact of English printed textbooks on students' English reading skills in twelve years' basic education.
  ii. To suggest potential strategies that can help to improve students' English reading skills.

1.3 Research Questions
  i.   What are the contributions of English printed books on students' reading skills in twelve years' basic education?
  ii. What are strategies that can be implemented to enhance students' reading skills?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework
2.1.1. Cognitive reading theory

This study is based on the cognitive reading theory proposed by Jean Piaget. It is built from the cognitive point of view of learning to read and reading comprehension and is about the capacity to construct linguistic meaning from printed materials (Fitzgerald, 1995). Reading is thinking inspired by printed books (Grow, 1996). This means that readers enjoy reading printed works as they motivate them and awaken their thoughts. According to Yilmaz (2011), the theory of cognitive reading investigates how people interpret, comprehend, and remember written material. It includes many different cognitive functions, such as perception, memory, understanding, and metacognition. Reading through (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022) suggests the capacity to read properly, accurately, and quickly. Because fluency builds a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, readers are free to concentrate on reading comprehension rather than word decoding. Methods that readers use to improve comprehension include asking, summarizing, and forecasting.

According to Mutiara (2020), the awareness and management of readers' cognitive processes are utilized while they read. Skilled readers keep an eye on their comprehension and apply techniques to overcome obstacles. (Yilmaz, 2011) suggests that decoding (word recognition) and linguistic comprehension (understanding spoken language) are the two main processes that lead to reading comprehension. It draws attention to the intricate interactions between various cognitive processes and stresses the value of using both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. This idea guides educational strategies and treatments meant to develop a deeper comprehension of written language and enhance reading abilities (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022).

2.1.2 Printed Books with English Language Teaching and Learning

Through the lens of experiential learning theory by David Kolb, which says that experiential learning involves the transformation of experience into effective learning, he also stresses how experiences, including our thoughts, emotions, and environment, impact the learning process. According to Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022), printed books are widely recognized as important tools in English language teaching. This is obviously true because teachers use textbooks as a guideline and resource when planning and delivering their lessons. In reference to Alfiras and Bojiah (2020), as the days go on, it has started its invasion into the textbook materials too, as the students of today are considered by Alfiras and Bojiah (2020) to be "digital natives.

"Most course books include the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as pronunciation. A good book caters for different learning styles through varied activities, whereas your lesson plans probably tend to play to your own strengths and learning style—it's only natural. So, for example, if you like learning visually, you teach most of your lessons that way too. Using a book helps you include activities that suit all types of learners (Maxom, 2009)."

In addition, the availability of textbooks promotes reading. As far as reading is concerned, it exposes language learners to new vocabulary. Whether the reader understands every word or not, he or she gets something from the context that may boost understanding the next time the word is used. Moreover, reading aloud to children allows them to hear correct pronunciation as they see the words on the page, even if they can't yet read the words on their own (Fuller, n.d.). With reference to these facts, textbooks are very important in language teaching and learning, as using them leads to meeting learners' and teachers' expectations and improving students' reading skills as well.

However, access to textbooks for schools depends mostly on the location, among other factors. Nowadays, access to internet infrastructure affects access to textbooks because, currently, e-textbooks are more easily accessed than printed books. According to Alfiras and Bojiah (2020), e-textbooks are more affordable than regular college textbooks. To view most textbooks, one needs to have smart devices like a laptop, a smartphone, or an e-reader. In addition, students need their devices to be available and fully functioning. They may be able to print a limited number of pages instead of the entire material, which leads to the need for access to a power outlet and an internet connection.

2.1.3 The Impact of Printed Books on Students' English Language Proficiency

In general, pupils' reading comprehension and skills in language development can be greatly impacted by printed English literature. Students are exposed to a broad variety of vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical patterns in English textbooks. Students gain more language proficiency and a deeper comprehension of English syntax and semantics by reading printed textbooks (Mitari et al., 2024). Elmiyati (2019) states that reading printed books can have the following effects on students' learning processes:

Critical Thinking Skills: Students must analyze, assess, and interpret information when they interact with English textbooks. The development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills is frequently promoted by the comprehension questions, exercises, and activities found in textbooks. Research and information gathering can be

greatly aided by the use of English textbooks. In order to improve their information literacy and research abilities, students learn how to find pertinent material, identify important points, and synthesize knowledge from many sources (Ban et al., 2023).

Lifelong Learning: A lifelong love of learning is fostered by English textbooks that help readers develop good reading habits. Students who explore a variety of subjects and genres cultivate a curiosity-driven approach to learning that benefits them both intellectually and personally outside of the classroom. English-language printed books are essential for fostering students' critical thinking, language, reading, and general academic success. According to Niyibizi et al. (2020), they function as fundamental tools that support learning in a variety of areas and promote a greater respect for language, culture, and information.

2.1.4 Printed Books in Remote Areas

Examining how printed textbooks affect students' ability to read better in remote locations is the main goal of this research project. To be more specific, the majority of schools in rural areas lack the infrastructure needed to access electronic textbooks. As such, they are forced to use printed textbooks; yet, in spite of the fact that textbooks are essential for teaching and learning languages, there is still a problem with the scarcity of printed textbooks (Niyibizi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, not every student has access to the necessary equipment at all times; thus, the few schools that do have the infrastructure to access e-textbooks are unable to fully benefit from the relevance of textbooks in English language instruction. In this context, a shortage of printed textbooks remains a challenge to teaching and learning the English language in twelve years' basic education in remote areas (Niyibizi et al., 2020). Thus, short-term physical reading books have a great impact on literacy development.

2.1.5 Strategies that can to Help Improve Students' Reading Skills

Students' proficiency with the English language determines their performance level, according to Mitari et al. (2024). Teachers and administrators must therefore have efficient methods to help students acquire these skills and assess how well they are doing in terms of getting ready for future performance. This means that there is a need to look at strategies to improve students' reading skills as one of the four language skills. This will help students improve their language proficiency and their performance as well.

Küçükoğlu (2013) conducted a study with the goal of examining efficient reading techniques to enhance students' reading proficiency in language classes. The study was conducted as action research on a group of fourteen students enrolled in an integrated skills course at the intermediate level. According to the study's findings, the pupils significantly improved after receiving instruction in reading skills. According to the study's findings, educators must be knowledgeable about creating and imparting successful comprehension techniques to their students.

Furthermore, Küçükoğlu (2013) enumerated and covered the following reading strategies in his study: summarizing, querying, inferring, visualizing, anticipating, and drawing connections. When students are taught all of these techniques and assisted in putting them into practice when reading, students' reading abilities will increase, and they will become proficient readers.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design of a study is the design that offers the general framework for data collection. Therefore, because of how the research questions were formulated, this study used a descriptive research design using a mixed approach. Mitari et al. (2024) stated that researchers can examine the study problem in both a wide and in-depth manner while using a mixed-methodological approach. As a result, the goal of this research's design is to uncover the impact of English-printed books on teaching and learning the English language in 9th and 12th grade basic education in remote areas, as in the case of Muhanga district. In order to solve the problem, we set up an investigation in schools in the KIBANGU and RANGI areas since it is a typical example of a remote area.

3.2 Data Collection

This is the summary of the main tools that will be taken into consideration. Below are all those methods and details about how they can be used.

3.2.1 Questionnaires

This technique is known as a research instrument, which consists of a series of questions (or other types of prompts) for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. This is elucidated by the fact that, in the fact that, in addition to that, the use of questionnaires is to give the participants freedom and enough time for reflection (Abawi,

2017). Within this process of collecting information, we used both closed and open questions since they replied to questions displaying the impact of English-printed books on the improvement of students' English reading skills.

3.2.2 Interview
An interview is a structured conversation where one participant asks questions and the other provides answers. In common parlance, the word "interview" refers to a one-on-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee (Abawi, 2017). Defines an interview as a face-to-face conversation conducted between an interviewer and a respondent to obtain information. Interviews involve face-to-face or telephone contact. Interviews will be used for the students and administration staff respondents. Therefore, the interview will be oriented toward learners with the intention of revealing their interest in reading books. This will help the impact of English-printed books on the improvement of students' English reading skills.

3.3 Target Population
3.3.1 Sampling and Sample Size
The population was 1280 including students and teachers. The sample size was obtained from the 1280 population by using Slovin's formula of sampling method to identify and estimate a sampling size. Thus the sample size was 305

n= sampling size 305
N= population size equal 1280
e=error of margin/margin of error is 5%

Formula: $\frac{1280}{1+1280(0.05)^2} = 304.7$ respondents ≈ 305 respondents

The total number of the population is 305 including students and their teachers.

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures
This study was undertaken with students from two schools. While collecting the data, the sampling technique used was stratified sampling under the probability sampling method, where every member of the population had the chance to be taken. The target population involved students and teachers. The total number of respondents is three hundred and five (305), including two hundred and ninety-five (295) students and ten (10) teachers.

3.4 Data Analyses
The finding of the study is analyzed in statistical ways by tables for quantitative and for qualitative data will be analyzed thematically by discourse.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS
4.1 Findings
4.1.1 Response Rate
All 305 sampled participants participated in the study. This gave a response rate of 100%, which was considered sufficient for analysis. The study went on to carry out data analysis. The findings were presented in this section.

Table 1
Response Rate

Sampled	Responded	Response Rate
305	305	100%

4.1.2 Respondents' Profiles
The findings in Table 2 showed that 203 respondents (65.9%) were between 20 and 25 years old, 64 respondents (20.9%) were between 25 and 30 years old, and 38 respondents (12.4%) were 35 years and above. Among the 99 respondents, 24 respondents (24.4%) were between 20 and 25 years old, 51 respondents (51.5%) were between 25 and 30 years old, and 24 respondents (24.2%) were 35 years and above.

Table 2
The Age of Respondents

Range of age	N of respondents	Percentage
20-25	203	65.9%
25-30	64	20.9%
35 and above	38	12.4%

The results on the respondents' gender (Table 3) showed that 111 students were male, whereas 189 were female. The total number of students was 290, accounting for 95.0% of the respondents. Among the 15 teachers, who made up 5.0% of the respondents, 5 were male and 10 were female. Both genders were well represented.

Table 3
The Gender of Respondents

Level	M	F	Total	Percentage
Students	111	189	290	95.0%
Teachers	5	19	15	5.0%

The results showed that 60% of the teachers were holders of an A2 certificate, 2 teachers (13.3%) held an A1 diploma, and 6 teachers (40%) held an A0 bachelor's degree. This indicates that the respondents were qualified to teach reading skills.

Table 3
Teachers Qualifications

Level	N of respondents	Percentage
A2	9	60%
A1	2	13.3%
A0	6	40%
Masters	1	6.6%
Total	15	100.0%

Table 4 demonstrates the participation of males and females in this study. The participants included 305 students and their teachers. Altogether, as shown in the table above, 193 (63%) were females, whereas 112 (37%) were males.

Table 4
Participants and their Gender

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Males	112	37
Females	193	63
Total	305	100%

4.1.3 To Identify and Analyze the Impact of English Printed Books on Students' English Reading Skills in Twelve Years' Basic Education

The aim of the current study was to identify the impact of English-printed books on students' reading skills in twelve years' basic education in a remote area. Owing to this, the table below contains responses from teachers together on the questions related to the impact of English-printed books on students' reading skills in twelve years' basic education.

Table 5
The Impact of English Printed Books on Students' Reading Skills in Twelve Years' Basic Education from Remote Areas

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I strongly believe that printed books can play an important role in the reading skills of English language once the books are available.	265	87
believe that other online resources can be used in absence of printed books and play the same role with no gap	31	10
Respondent decided not to answer this question.	9	3
Total	305	100

In Table 5 above, the question assesses the contribution of printed textbooks to reading skills; 87% of the respondents strongly believe that printed books can play an important role in the reading skills of the English language once the books are available. Further, 10% of the respondents believe that other online resources can be used in the absence of printed books and play the same role with no gap while 3% of the respondents decided not to answer this question. As supported by Niyibizi et al. (2020), printed books are easy to use while teaching and learning reading skills.

Table 6
How Teaching and Learning Activities Are Done with No Physical Textbook

Number of respondents	Percentages	Responses
5	50%	Use old books which sometimes do not meet the current curriculum requirements.
3	30%	Go to borrow books somewhere else and make photocopies.
1	10%	Prepare their lessons using information retrieved from internet
1	10%	Teachers try their best to buy their own books and use them in teaching activities
Total 10	**100%**	

Table 6 showed the struggle that teachers and students went through in order to teach and learn the English language. However, the results were expected to be good irrespective of the conditions in which teaching and learning activities were conducted. The competence-based curriculum in Rwanda stated that the learner had to be the center of teaching and learning activities, with the teacher as the facilitator. It was wondered how a learner could be the center of activities in class with no books to use for learning and completing activities, projects, homework, and exercises. According to Küçükoğlu (2013), printed books still had cultural, historical, and aesthetic value in the current world, even though digital technology had revolutionized the way knowledge is obtained.

Table 7
Effects of Lack of English Printed Books have on Students' Reading Skills

Respondents' Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly believe that it is very hard to teach, learn, retain and improve reading skills without using textbooks.	201	66 %
Support the flexibility and adaptation to the situation and find new ways of teaching and learning reading skills.	94	30.8%
Agree that the vocabularies, inputs and other materials prepared and given by the teachers are enough to learn English language reading skills. No need for textbooks in case a teacher has prepared.	10	3.2%
Total	**305**	**100.0%**

The absence of English printed books has a significant impact on students' reading skills, as books serve as repositories of knowledge essential for the development of reading skills. Regardless of the methodology applied, the role of printed books cannot be replaced. The results revealed that 201 respondents, or 66%, strongly believed that teaching, learning, retaining, and improving reading skills without using textbooks is very challenging. Additionally, 94 respondents, or 30.8%, advocated for flexibility and adaptation to the situation, seeking new ways of teaching and learning reading skills. Furthermore, 10 respondents, or 3.2%, agreed that the vocabulary, inputs, and other materials provided by teachers are sufficient for learning English language reading skills, indicating no need for textbooks if adequately prepared by the teacher. According to Alfiras and Bojiah (2020), textbooks in print and other educational materials are valuable resources that teachers can utilize to support curriculum development and classroom practice.

Teachers' use of printed materials aids in implementing effective teaching techniques, which they employ to enhance lectures, guide discussions, and assess students' understanding.

4.1.4 To Suggest Potential Strategies that can to Help Improve Students' Reading Skills

The teachers display different challenges faced in developing their reading skills. Their position is illustrated in below table 8.

Table 8

The Challenges do Teachers Observe Students Facing in Developing their Reading Skills

Challenges	frequency	Percentage
Difficulty with phonics and decoding	4	40%
Limited vocabulary	3	30%
Poor comprehension	1	10%
Lack of fluency	1	10%
Lack of interest in reading	1	10%
Total	**10**	**100.0%**

Based on the feedback provided by teachers on the challenges observed in students' development of their reading skills, 4 teachers (40%) noted that students face difficulty with phonics and decoding, while 3 teachers (30%) reported that students have limited vocabulary. Only one teacher (10%) mentioned that students have poor comprehension, and another (10%) identified lack of fluency and interest in reading as challenges. Therefore, the primary challenges identified are difficulty with phonics and decoding, highlighted by the majority of 4 out of 10 teachers (40%). Elmiyati (2019) suggested that effective teaching techniques, ongoing professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and support from stakeholders and school administrators are all necessary to address these issues. By employing research-based reading strategies and addressing the diverse needs of their students, educators can create a supportive learning environment that fosters literacy development and success for all students.

Table 9

The Strategies Teachers Believe would be Most Effective in Improving Students' Reading Skills

The strategies	N of teachers	Percentage
Phonics instruction	1	10%
Vocabulary development activities	4	40%
Reading comprehension exercises	2	20%
Encouraging independent reading	1	10%
Reading aloud to students	0	0%
Providing access to a variety of reading materials	3	30%
Total	**10**	**100.0%**

Based on the teachers' feedback, one teacher (10%) found phonics instruction to be the most effective in improving students' reading skills, while four teachers (40%) reported that vocabulary development activities were most effective. Two teachers (20%) believed that encouraging independent reading was highly effective, although one teacher (10%) also acknowledged this. None of the teachers supported reading aloud to students as the most effective method for improving reading skills, and three teachers (30%) highlighted the importance of providing access to a variety of reading materials. This is in line with the findings of Mitari et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of using methods such as word families, morphology, context clues, and word analysis to teach vocabulary systematically. Making connections between new terms and students' existing knowledge and experiences, as well as providing opportunities for students to use new vocabulary words in meaningful contexts through projects, writing exercises, and conversations, were also recommended. Therefore, based on the majority, vocabulary development activities were deemed most effective in improving students' reading skills.

4.1.5 Basing on the Feedback from Teachers, Some Specific Strategies have been Implemented in the Past and have Shown Success in Improving Students' Reading Skills

Phonics Instruction: Systematic and explicit phonics instruction helps students develop phonemic awareness, understand letter-sound correspondences, and decode words more effectively. Vocabulary Development Activities: Engaging students in various vocabulary-building activities such as word games, context clue exercises, and word mapping can enhance their word knowledge and comprehension abilities. Reading Comprehension Strategies:

Teaching students specific comprehension strategies such as summarization, questioning, predicting, and making connections can improve their understanding of text. Fluency Practice: Providing opportunities for students to practice reading fluently through repeated readings, choral reading, and timed readings can increase their reading speed and expression.

Encouraging Independent Reading: Promoting a culture of independent reading by providing access to a wide range of books at appropriate reading levels and allowing students to choose their own reading materials fosters a love for reading and improves reading skills. Small Group Instruction: Implementing small group reading instruction allows teachers to differentiate instruction based on students' individual needs, providing targeted support and practice in specific reading skills. Technology Resources for Reading Support: Integrating educational apps, online reading programs, and digital libraries into instruction can offer personalized and interactive reading experiences that motivate students and address their unique learning needs. According to Maxom (2009), implemented thoughtfully and consistently, it can lead to significant improvements in students' reading skills and overall literacy proficiency. Overall, employing a variety of reading techniques tailored to students' needs and developmental stages is essential for fostering reading development and nurturing lifelong readers. By incorporating these techniques into instruction, educators can empower students to become proficient, confident, and enthusiastic readers.

Table 10
The Additional Support or Resources Teachers Believe would help implement Reading Improvement Strategies

Additional supportive or resources	Number of teachers	Percentage
Access to quality reading materials (books, articles, etc.)	2	20%
Technology resources for reading support (e.g., educational apps, online libraries)	5	50%
Parent/guardian involvement programs to support reading at home	1	10%
Funding for specialized reading intervention programs	2	20%
Total	**10**	**100.0%**

Table 10 illustrates that two teachers (20%) recognized access to quality reading materials (such as books, articles, etc.) as supportive resources for implementing reading improvement strategies. Meanwhile, five teachers (50%) identified technology resources for reading support (e.g., educational apps, online libraries) as helpful tools for implementing such strategies. One teacher (10%) believed that parent/guardian involvement programs to support reading at home could be beneficial, while two teachers (20%) emphasized the importance of funding for specialized reading intervention programs. Therefore, technology resources for reading support emerge as significant aids in implementing reading improvement strategies. This is corroborated by Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022), who noted that interactive e-books and reading applications with engaging features, such as audio narration, animations, interactive quizzes, and multimedia content, can enhance comprehension and engagement, particularly for struggling readers. These resources provide audio and visual support, scaffold reading lessons, and offer prompt feedback.

Teachers can enhance their reading improvement initiatives by forming supportive professional networks with peers, mentors, literacy coaches, and instructional specialists. Peer support networks offer opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and ongoing professional development. As Fitzgerald (1995) argued, leveraging these resources effectively enables teachers to cultivate a supportive learning environment conducive to reading improvement and literacy achievement for all students.

4.2 Discussions

The findings from the first objective, which analyzed the impact of English-printed books on students' reading skills in twelve years' basic education, underscored the significance of such books in enhancing students' English reading abilities, particularly in remote areas. A majority of respondents, comprising 265 students (87%), affirmed the crucial role of printed books in improving English reading skills when they are readily available. However, challenges arise when teaching and learning activities rely on outdated books that may not align with current curriculum standards. Yilmaz (2011) emphasized the profound impact of printed English books on students' reading abilities, highlighting their role in enhancing vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, cultural awareness, critical thinking, writing skills, and autonomous learning.

The second objective aimed to identify potential strategies for improving students' reading skills. The findings revealed that vocabulary development activities emerged as the most effective approach in enhancing students' reading abilities. Additionally, past successful strategies, such as phonics instruction and promoting independent reading, were recognized for their effectiveness in improving reading skills (Mogashoa, 2017). Furthermore, respondents emphasized the importance of incorporating technology resources for reading support, including educational apps and online libraries, as valuable tools in implementing reading improvement strategies. These findings highlight the

multifaceted approach required to enhance students' reading proficiency, incorporating diverse strategies and leveraging available resources to meet students' learning needs effectively.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

After reviewing the literature on physical textbooks, it is evident that printed books play a pivotal role in language teaching and learning. Real-world observations in educational settings further emphasize the indispensable need for printed books among both teachers and learners. Teachers rely on printed books to plan and deliver their lessons effectively, while students depend on them for revision, exercises, and self-study, as they lack alternative resources. However, the absence of books in school libraries presents a significant challenge. It is imperative for the Ministry of Education and other educational stakeholders to take proactive measures by providing free printed English books to ensure a conducive teaching and learning environment for current and future generations.

The identified challenges, primarily related to difficulties with phonics and decoding, underscore the importance of implementing effective strategies to enhance students' reading skills. Among these strategies, vocabulary development activities emerged as particularly effective, as supported by the majority of respondents. Thoughtful and consistent implementation of these strategies can lead to substantial improvements in students' reading proficiency and overall literacy.

Incorporating a diverse range of reading techniques tailored to students' individual needs and developmental stages is crucial for fostering lifelong readers. Moreover, leveraging technology resources for reading support, such as educational apps and online libraries, can further enhance the implementation of reading improvement strategies. By adopting these approaches, educators can empower students to become proficient, confident, and enthusiastic readers, thereby facilitating their academic success and lifelong learning journey.

5.2 Recommendations

After conducting this study and identifying the issues of insufficient printed books and their impacts on students' performance, the research provides the following recommendations:

The education ministry and its stakeholders should ensure the availability of English-printed books in school libraries. The school administration should take proactive measures to print the textbooks available on the REB website and supply copies for use in English instruction. To provide students with texts for reading and comprehension practice, teachers should actively search the internet for suitable materials that can be displayed on the chalkboard for their students. It is recommended that educators implement the reading practices outlined in this study to enhance their students' reading abilities. Since this study was conducted in a remote location, further research on the same subject in urban areas is recommended.

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