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## **The Effectiveness of Speed Reading in Improving EFL Students' Reading Comprehension**

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### **Abstract**

The aims of this research to examine the effectiveness of speed reading technique in improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' reading comprehension through a literature review approach. Reading comprehension has significant challenge for EFL learners due to limited vocabulary, slow reading habits, and ineffective strategies. This research used library research design by analyzing previous journal articles, and academic books published between 2010–2026. The results reveal that speed reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, chunking, and reducing subvocalization significantly improve reading fluency, comprehension, and learner motivation. However, the effectiveness is influenced by learners' proficiency levels, instructional design, and text complexity. Therefore, speed reading is recommended as a complementary instructional strategy in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Speed Reading, Reading Comprehension, EFL

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji efektivitas teknik membaca cepat dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing melalui tinjauan pustaka. Pemahaman membaca sangat menantang bagi siswa EFL dikarenakan kosakata yang terbatas, kebiasaan membaca yang lambat, dan kurang efektifnya strategi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kepustakaan dengan menganalisis jurnal yang sudah dipublikasikan, dan buku akademis yang sudah terpublikasi dari tahun 2010-2026. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwasanya teknik membaca cepat seperti skimming, scanning, chunking, dan mengurangi subvokalisasi sangat signifikan meningkatkan kemahiran membaca, pemahaman, dan motivasi siswa. Namun, efektivitasnya dipengaruhi dari kemampuan belajar siswa, desain pembelajaran, dan kompleksitas teks. Oleh karena itu, membaca cepat sangat direkomendasikan sebagai strategi pembelajaran pelengkap bagi kelas EFL.

Keywords: Membaca Cepat, Pemahaman Membaca, Bahasa Inggris Sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL)

## **Introduction**

Reading Comprehension is the core of reading processes, the educational system actually supports students to have this skill to make them more aware of the importance of reading skill that enable them to understand the vocabulary. Because reading comprehension also help students to perceive the different meanings of the reading text, and the ability to analyze and evaluate. Reading comprehension one of the important skills in determining the success or failure of the student in academic life. The development of reading speed skills for students is quickly, and they are expected to read to benefit from new information.(Khasawneh, 2021)

Comprehension is achieved through activities that train students to read with a purpose, such as answering questions about the text to ensure understanding. This active process involves multiple levels of comprehension: literal (surface understanding), interpretive (deep analysis), and critical (evaluative judgment).(Munir et al., 2024)

Recent pedagogical developments emphasize the importance of efficient reading strategies, including speed reading. Reading efficiency, with speed-reading techniques emerging as a promising approach. Speed-reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, guided reading, and chunking have been recognized for their potential to improve both reading speed and comprehension, these techniques allow learners to minimize decoding efforts and allocate greater cognitive resources toward understanding texts, thereby fostering reading fluency and academic success.(Zahira, 2026)

Beale (2013) wrote ideas about speed reading strategies as “people who know how to skim and scan are flexible readers. They read according to their purpose and get information they need quickly without wasting time. They do not need everything which increases their reading speed. Their skill lies in knowing what specific information to read and which method to read.

Despite its benefits, debates persist regarding whether increased reading speed compromises comprehension. Some scholars argue that speed reading reduces understanding, while others suggest that trained readers can achieve both speed and comprehension.

## **Method**

This research employed a literature review method by analyzing and comparing two empirical studies related to the effectiveness of speed reading in students' reading comprehension. The focus was on examining how the effectiveness of speed reading in students' reading comprehension were applied EFL students. The research is categorized as library research, focusing on analyzing and synthesizing previous studies related to speed reading and reading comprehension.

## **Data Sources**

The data were obtained from:

- Peer-reviewed Sinta journals
- Academic books on ELT and reading strategies

## **Inclusion Criteria**

- Published between 2010–2026
- Focus on EFL/ESL contexts
- Discuss speed reading or reading fluency

## **Data Collection Technique**

Documentation method was used by selecting, reviewing, and organizing relevant literature.

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## **Literature Review and Discussion**

### **Concept of Speed Reading**

In the modern era, the rapid development of science and technology has led to an overwhelming amount of information that must be processed daily. Students, especially at the university level, are required to read various academic texts such as journals, books, and articles within a limited time. However, many individuals still face challenges such as low reading interest, limited vocabulary, and difficulty understanding complex language structures. These factors make reading slow and inefficient. Speed reading refers to techniques that enhance reading efficiency by increasing speed without significantly reducing comprehension (Nation, 2015). It involves eliminating inefficient habits such as regression and subvocalization.

Key techniques include: Skimming (reading for gist), Scanning (searching for specific information), Chunking (reading word groups) and Reducing subvocalization. According to Maxwell skimming as getting the main idea or gist of a selection quickly in a written text where the student develop powers of inference through systematic practice which encourages them to anticipate of a text.(Aritonang et al., 2019) So, skimming can help the students to find the key words that permit them to infer the general sense of a text to interpret text faster and advance the reading process.

Scanning is unlike skimming, because readers are not concerned with the broader meaning of the text, but the detail. In this technique, the readers look for specific information within a text such as dates, names, and places, among others. Scanning is effective in the process of quickly searching for particular piece or pieces of information in a text.(Pendidikan, 2023).

## **Reading Comprehension in EFL Context**

Reading comprehension is the ability to construct meaning from written texts. In EFL contexts, comprehension is influenced by linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and strategic competence (Grabe, 2009).

Students often struggle due to slow reading habits and over-reliance on translation, which reduces efficiency and comprehension.

## **Review of Previous Studies**

A considerable number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of speed reading in improving reading comprehension among EFL learners, with most findings indicating positive outcomes, although with certain limitations depending on context and learner variables.

Early research by Chang (2010) demonstrated that timed reading activities significantly improved both reading rate and comprehension among EFL students. The study emphasized that repeated exposure to reading materials under time constraints helps learners develop automaticity, which reduces cognitive load during the reading process. Similarly, Nation (2015) argued that fluency development is a critical component of reading proficiency, highlighting that speed reading practices allow learners to process language more efficiently by minimizing word-by-word decoding.

Furthermore, Alessi and Dwyer (2008) examined the impact of structured speed reading training and found that students who received systematic instruction showed notable improvement in reading efficiency compared to those who did not. Their findings suggest that training plays a crucial role in ensuring that increased speed does not compromise comprehension. This aligns with the view that speed reading is not an innate ability but a skill that can be developed through guided practice.

In more recent studies, Munir et al. (2024) investigated the application of speed reading techniques in an Indonesian EFL classroom and reported significant improvements in students' reading comprehension. The study also highlighted increased student engagement and motivation, indicating that speed reading can positively influence affective factors in language learning. Similarly, Khasawneh (2021) focused on students with learning difficulties and found that speed reading strategies contributed to better comprehension outcomes, particularly when combined with supportive instructional approaches.

Additionally, Aritonang et al. (2019) explored the effectiveness of skimming and scanning techniques, revealing that these strategies enable students to identify main ideas and specific information more efficiently. The study emphasized that such techniques enhance students' ability to interact with texts strategically rather than passively. This is supported by Pendidikan (2023), which noted that scanning is particularly useful in academic contexts where learners need to locate specific information quickly.

Recent developments also show the integration of technology in speed reading instruction. Zahira (2026) reported that digital-based speed reading tools significantly enhance students' reading speed and comprehension while also increasing engagement.

These tools provide interactive and adaptive learning environments that allow learners to practice reading skills more intensively and independently.

Despite the predominantly positive findings, some studies raise concerns regarding the potential trade-off between speed and comprehension, especially for lower-proficiency learners. Beginners often struggle to maintain understanding when focusing excessively on speed, particularly when dealing with complex or unfamiliar texts. Therefore, several researchers emphasize the importance of balancing speed and comprehension through gradual training and appropriate material selection.

Overall, the reviewed studies consistently support the effectiveness of speed reading in improving reading performance. However, they also underline that its success depends on factors such as learner proficiency, instructional design, practice consistency, and the integration of supportive technologies. This body of research provides a strong foundation for considering speed reading as a valuable strategy in EFL reading instruction.

### **Effectiveness of Speed Reading**

Based on the analysis, speed reading contributes to:

1. Increased reading speed
2. Improved comprehension through repeated exposure
3. Enhanced motivation and confidence
4. Development of strategic reading skills

However, effectiveness depends on:

- Learner proficiency
- Instructional support
- Practice consistency

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Despite its advantages, several challenges exist:

- Beginners may experience reduced comprehension
- Complex academic texts require slower reading
- Lack of teacher guidance may lead to ineffective practice

Therefore, structured implementation is necessary.

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### **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings suggest that speed reading should be integrated into EFL instruction through:

- Timed reading activities
- Digital reading platforms
- Strategy-based instruction

Teachers should provide gradual training and adapt materials to students' levels.

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## Conclusion

This literature review highlights that speed reading is a highly effective instructional strategy for enhancing EFL students' reading comprehension when implemented systematically and appropriately. The synthesis of previous studies indicates that speed reading techniques—such as skimming, scanning, chunking, and reducing subvocalization—not only increase reading speed but also contribute significantly to deeper comprehension, improved reading fluency, and greater learner motivation.

However, the effectiveness of speed reading is not universal and is influenced by several key factors. Learners' proficiency levels play a crucial role, as beginners may struggle to maintain comprehension when reading at higher speeds. Additionally, the complexity of the text and the availability of instructional support significantly determine the success of speed reading implementation. Without proper guidance, students may apply these techniques incorrectly, leading to superficial understanding.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating speed reading into EFL instruction as a complementary—not replacement—strategy. Teachers are encouraged to provide structured and gradual training, utilize level-appropriate materials, and incorporate technology-based tools to enhance engagement and practice consistency. Moreover, combining speed reading with other comprehension strategies can create a more balanced and effective reading instruction framework.

In conclusion, speed reading holds substantial potential in improving EFL students' reading performance, particularly in academic contexts that demand efficient information processing. Nevertheless, its success depends on thoughtful implementation, continuous practice, and alignment with learners' needs. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct experimental and longitudinal studies, as well as to explore the integration of digital technologies, in order to further validate and expand the application of speed reading in diverse EFL learning environments.

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