An Analytical Study of Reading Difficulties among Secondary School Students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia

Nadia Ali Elsharief Adam[1], Abdul Ghaffar EL Hassan EL A min[2]

Abstract

This study explores the nature and causes of reading difficulties among secondary school students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the study identifies key barriers such as limited reading fluency, insufficient background knowledge, and inadequate instructional practices. The findings call for targeted pedagogical interventions, improved teacher training, and curriculum enhancement to support reading development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

Keywords: *reading difficulties, secondary students, EFL, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, reading strategies, fluency.*

Introduction

Reading is the process of deriving meaning from written or printed text by interpreting graphic symbols. It requires several supporting skills, such as recognizing the alphabet, connecting symbols to linguistic elements, understanding content intellectually, and coordinating eye movements. These components can be particularly challenging for learners of a foreign language, who often struggle to link sounds to symbols.

This study highlights the importance of reading skills in secondary education, where students must enhance their reading abilities through consistent practice. Teachers are encouraged to adopt methods aligned with students' reading goals and environments while ensuring that reading materials match learners' proficiency levels.

Teaching English as a foreign language is complex, and secondary school students frequently face significant challenges in reading. This issue is notably prevalent among students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia, both at the secondary and university levels. To address these challenges, teachers should develop comprehensive programs to identify and address areas of difficulty, thereby improving reading instruction and guiding future research.

The study sample consisted of 120 secondary school students, including 60 from Saudi Arabia and 60 from Sudan. To diagnose the problem, the researchers employed tests, interviews, and questionnaires involving both students and teachers.

Statement Of The Problem

A considerable number of secondary school students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia face difficulties in acquiring proficiency in English reading skills, which negatively impacts their academic performance. These students often struggle to employ effective reading strategies and exhibit generally low reading competence.

Empirical observations reveal that students at the secondary level in both countries frequently commit errors when engaging with English texts and answering related comprehension questions. This study examines the schematic knowledge of Sudanese and Saudi learners in English reading, focusing on the factors contributing to slow reading and comprehension difficulties. The aim is to identify strategies to improve reading speed and comprehension.

[1]English Language Department, Preparatory Year Deanship, Najran University, Saudi Arabi (corresponding author).
[2] English Language Department, Preparatory Year Deanship, Najran University, Saudi Arabi.

Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Investigate reading difficulties among secondary school students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia.

2. Enhance students' reading fluency in both contexts.

3. Identify effective instructional techniques for improving reading skills.

4. Recommend suitable reading materials to support skill development.

Questions

1. To what extent do students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia encounter reading difficulties?

2. What are the primary factors contributing to these difficulties?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in reading skills between students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia?

4. How do first language (L1) habits influence the development of reading skills in both countries?

5. Does the application of note-taking strategies enhance students' reading speed and proficiency?

Hypotheses

H1: Students in both Sudan and Saudi Arabia face significant difficulties in reading skills.
H2: Multiple interrelated factors, including instructional quality, linguistic background, and socio-cultural context, significantly contribute to students' reading difficulties in both countries.
H3: There is a statistically significant difference in reading skills between students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia.
H4: First language (L1) habits significantly influence second language reading development.
H5: The application of note-taking strategies significantly enhances reading speed and proficiency.

What Is Reading?

Reading is a foundational language skill that introduces learners to new vocabulary, patterns, and structures, while supporting other language abilities. However, a universally agreed-upon definition of reading remains elusive.

- Pincas (1980): Reading involves recognizing patterns and shapes in text.

- Johnson (1981): Definitions have evolved with research and educational trends.

- Kaplan (2002): Reading is the process of deriving understanding from text.

Nuttall (1996) categorizes reading into three components:

1. Identifying and decoding words quickly

2. Linking spoken and written language

3. Understanding text meaningfully

Other perspectives highlight reading as an interactive process involving prior knowledge and text structure (Carrell, 1986; Catherine, 1990). Comprehension relies heavily on reader proficiency and background knowledge (Cook, 1998; Byram, 2000).

Reading serves two main purposes:

- Reading for pleasure

- Reading for information

Francoise (1981) famously described reading as an "infectious disease" acquired through exposure.

Methods of Teaching Reading Skills

Common methods include:

- Synthetic method: Building words from phonemes.

- Alphabetic method: Emphasizing letter names (less effective due to spelling irregularities).

- Phonic method: Linking sounds to letters or groups.

Text simplification reduces learner anxiety and enhances motivation. Schema theory emphasizes the role of background knowledge.

Effective strategies include:

- Skimming

- Scanning

- Identifying key ideas

- Silent reading (preferred for fluency)

Text selection considerations:

- Readability

- Exploitability

- Lexical complexity

- Interest level

- General reading skills (e.g., punctuation, structure)

- Balance between speed and comprehension

Review of The Literature

Reading is essential for EFL learning, promoting language acquisition, autonomy, and cultural awareness. It is an interactive process (Nuttall, 1996).

Pre-reading strategies include:

- Brainstorming

- Vocabulary preparation

- Goal setting

Types of reading:

- Skimming

- Scanning

- Close reading

Extensive reading promotes:

- Fluency

- Motivation

- Independent learning

Successful programs combine teacher modeling with in- and out-of-class reading activities.

Reading Strategies and Techniques

- Intensive reading: Focus on short texts for detailed meaning

- Skipping insignificant parts: Time-saving

- Re-reading: Enhances understanding

- Contextual guessing: Infers meaning

- Word analysis: Decoding prefixes/suffixes

- Chunking: Reading in phrases

- Strategic pausing: Reflective breaks

- Paraphrasing: Internal rewording

- Monitoring: Self-checking comprehension

Effective Reading

Effective reading fosters cognitive and academic growth. According to Kemp (1992), reading without reflection is like eating without digestion.

Good readers:

- Use varied strategies

- Engage cognitively and contextually

- Read efficiently (previewing, extracting main ideas, using text structure)

Intervention Strategies For Struggling Readers

- Early, tailored instruction

- Grouping by skill level

- Using meaningful, real-life texts

Reading speed norms (Richards, 1985):

- Academic: 200–300 wpm

- Casual: 250–500 wpm

- High-speed: up to 800 wpm (with reduced comprehension)

Fluent readers read with expression and ease. Techniques like re-reading and readers' theater improve fluency (AU & Mason, 1981).

Vocabulary Development

- Indirect: Through interaction and reading

- Direct: Explicit teaching and repeated exposure

Speed Reading, Subvocalization, Concentration

Speed reading involves:

- Faster eye movement

- Reduced subvocalization

- Improved concentration through goal-setting

Visual Processing

Key elements:

- Visual span

- Eye coordination

- Vocabulary and grammar knowledge

Poor visual skills and inadequate practice impair reading speed.

Methodology

Design:
Descriptive and analytical, incorporating SPSS for statistical analysis

Population:
Third-year secondary students from Sudan and Saudi Arabia

Instruments:

- Reading comprehension passages from curricula

- Questions assessing skimming, scanning, and comprehension

Sample:
60 students (30 from each country)

- Sudan: SPINE English series

- Saudi Arabia: English for Saudi Arabia

Procedure:
Tests were administered after ethical approval. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

Analysis, Results, And Discussion

An analysis using SPSS indicated that the majority of students scored below average in reading comprehension. In Sudan, 40% of students achieved passing scores, compared to only 24% in Saudi Arabia. The mean reading speed for Sudanese students was 86 words per minute (wpm), while Saudi students averaged 56 wpm—both far below the international benchmark of 230–300 wpm (Richards, 1985). These results suggest an urgent need for enhanced instructional techniques, curriculum reform, and access to appropriate reading materials."

4-2 Section (1)
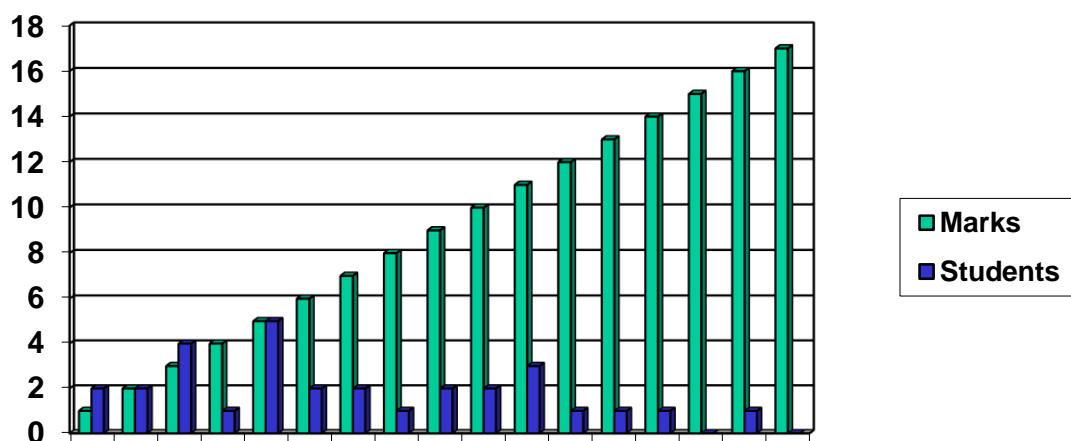
Table (1) Students' score in Sudan

The results indicate that the majority of students in both countries did not pass the test. Since the main goal of reading is to understand the ideas presented in the material, reading loses its value without proper comprehension.
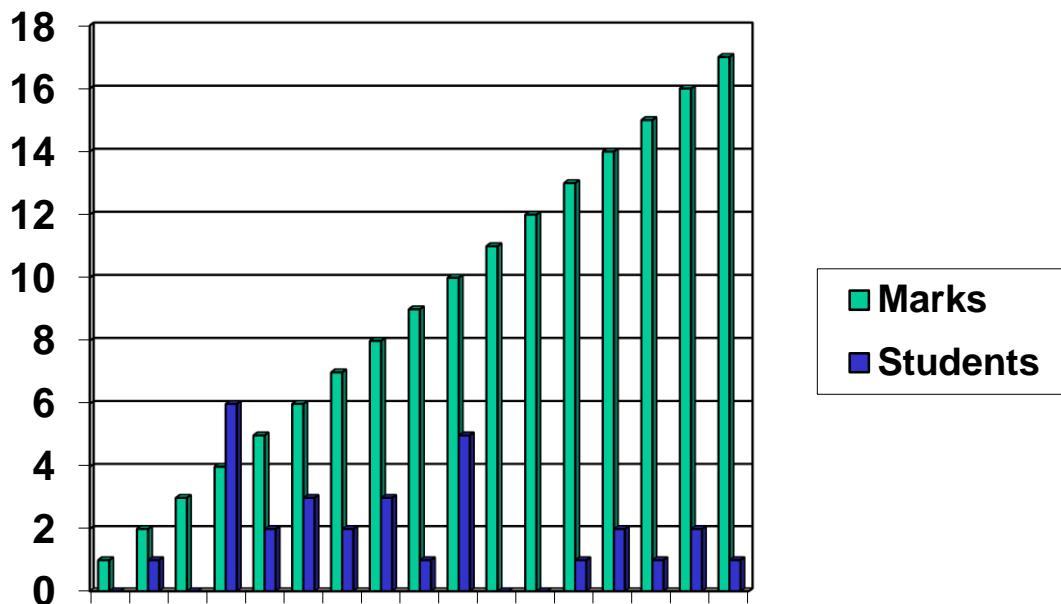
Table (2) Students' score in Saudi Arabia

The reading speeds of Sudanese and Saudi students are significantly lower than international standards. With Sudanese students averaging 86 w.p.m. and Saudi students 56 w.p.m., both fall well below rates observed in countries like the U.S. (230 w.p.m.), Britain (280 w.p.m.), and Canada (300 w.p.m.). According to Ellis and Tomlinson (1970), these figures classify as very low. Consequently, there is a clear need for improved methods, techniques, and materials to enhance reading speed in both countries.

The distribution of students' scores in Sudan and Saudi Arabia following the test.

An analysis of student performance, detailing the distribution of marks achieved by students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia following the examination."

Table No. (3)

Marks	Number of students in Sudan	Number of students in Saudi Arabia
1	-----	2
2	1	2
3	-----	4
4	6	1
5	2	5
6	3	2
7	2	2
8	3	1
9	1	2
10	5	2
11	-----	3
12	-----	1

13	1	1
14	2	1
15	1	-----
16	2	1
17	1	-----
18	------	-----
19	------	-----
20	-----	-----
Total	30	30

Table No. (4)

Table of standard speed rate of Williams 1980

Table 4

This table presents the standard speed rates as established by Williams in 1980.

Country	w.p.m.	Quality of reading
America	230 -260	Fast
Britain	280 - 310	Fast
Canada	300 -330	fast

Ellis and Tomlinson: (1970:25) Describe a scale of reading speed for comprehension and understanding . They have these scales of standard speed rate below :

Ellis and Tomlinson (1970:25) outline a scale that measures reading speed in relation to how well a reader comprehends and understands a text. They categorize different levels of standard reading rates, helping to show how varying speeds can affect a reader's grasp of the material.

Table No. (5)

Table standard speed rate Ellis and Tomlinson (1970:26)

Table 5

According to Ellis and Tomlinson (1970, p. 26), reading speeds are categorized into nine levels based on words per minute (WPM). The classifications range from **very slow** (170–200 WPM) to **superbly fast** (650–800 WPM). These categories help assess reading proficiency, with each level assigned a sequence number from 1 to 9 — where higher sequence numbers correspond to faster reading abilities.

Quality of Reading	Words Per Minute (WPM)	Sequence
Very slow	170–200	1
Slow	200–230	2
Average	230–250	3
Above average	250–300	4
Medium average	300–350	5
Medium fast	350–450	6
Very fast	450–550	7
Exceptionally fast	550–650	8
Superbly fast	650–800	9

Sequence	W. P . M	Quality of Reading
1	170-200	Very slow
2	200-230	Slow
3	230-250	A average
4	250-300	A above a average
5	300-350	Medium average
6	350-450	Medium fast
7	450-550	Very fast
8	550-650	Exceptional fast
9	650-800	Superbly fast

Table 5

Standard Reading Speed Categories *(Ellis and Tomlinson, 1970, p. 26)*

This table categorizes reading speeds into nine distinct levels based on words per minute (WPM). These categories provide benchmarks for assessing reading proficiency, ranging from very slow to superbly fast rates of reading.

Quality of Reading	Words Per Minute (WPM)	Sequence
Very Slow	170–200	1
Slow	200–230	2
Average	230–250	3
Above Average	250–300	4
Medium Average	300–350	5
Medium Fast	350–450	6
Very Fast	450–550	7
Exceptionally Fast	550–650	8
Superbly Fast	650–800	9

Note: Higher sequence numbers correspond to faster reading speeds.

Section (2)

Students lack of practice in reading in and out of the class.

Students do not engage in enough reading activities both during lessons and in their own time outside the classroom.

As illustrated in Figure 1, 90% of Sudanese English teachers expressed agreement with the statement, while 5% disagreed and another 5% remained uncertain. In comparison, 94% of English teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) agreed with the statement, with 3% indicating disagreement and 3% expressing uncertainty. When considering responses from both groups collectively, 92% of the English teachers were in agreement, whereas 4% disagreed and 4% were unsure.

Students fear of losing comprehension, causing to deliberately read more slowly.

As illustrated in Figure 1:

- Among Sudanese English teachers, 90% expressed agreement with the statement, whereas 5% disagreed and another 5% indicated uncertainty.

- Similarly, 94% of English teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) agreed, with 3% disagreeing and an additional 3% remaining unsure.

- When considering both groups collectively, 92% of the teachers agreed with the statement, while 4% disagreed and 4% were uncertain.

**2.** Students tend to intentionally reduce their reading speed due to apprehension about losing comprehension.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of responses among English language teachers from Sudan and Saudi Arabia regarding the given statement. Specifically, 85% of Sudanese teachers expressed agreement, while 8% disagreed and 7% remained uncertain. Among Saudi teachers, 91% indicated agreement, with 4% disagreeing and 5% uncertain. When aggregating the responses from both countries, 88% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 6% disagreed, and another 6% were unsure.

A. In Sudan, 85% of English teachers agreed with the statement, while 8% disagreed and 7% were uncertain.
B. Among Saudi teachers, 91% agreed, 4% disagreed, and 5% were unsure.
C. Overall, combining both countries, 88% of teachers agreed, 6% disagreed, and another 6% were uncertain.

Students in Saudi Arabia have the syllabuses and materials ready for them . Additionally, Saudi students have their syllabuses and materials readily available.
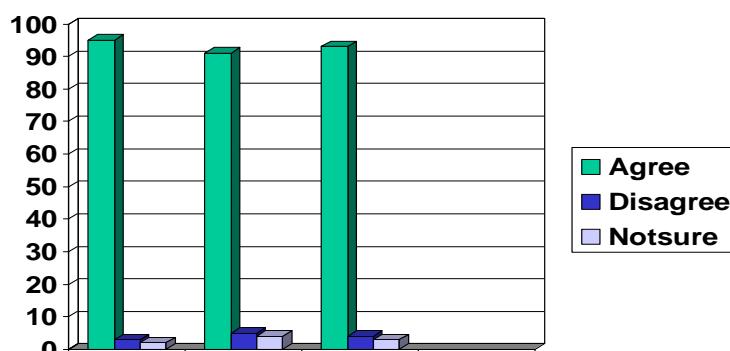
From the figure (3) above 95% of Sudanese English teachers agree about the statement above , 3% disagree and only 2% not sure about it . B: However, English teachers of K.S.A. 91% agree about the statement above , 5% disagree and 4% not sure about it . C: Both English teachers of Sudan and K.S.A. 93% agree, 4% disagree and 3% not sure about the statement above, too.

According to Figure 3, 95% of Sudanese English teachers agree with the statement, while 3% disagree and 2% are uncertain. In comparison, 91% of English teachers in K.S.A. agree, with 5% disagreeing and 4% unsure. Overall, when combining responses from both groups, 93% agree, 4% disagree, and 3% remain uncertain about the statement.

According to the data presented in Figure 3, 95% of Sudanese English language teachers expressed agreement with the statement, whereas 3% expressed disagreement and 2% indicated uncertainty. Similarly, 91% of English language teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) agreed with the statement, while 5% disagreed and 4% were uncertain. When considering the combined responses from both groups, 93% of the teachers were in agreement, 4% expressed disagreement, and 3% reported uncertainty regarding the statement.

Students have poor evaluation of which aspects are important or unimportant

Students have poor evaluation of which aspects are important or unimportant.
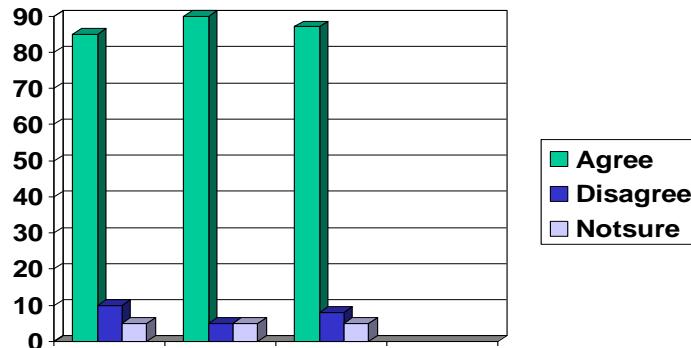
In Figure 4, the data shows that 85% of Sudanese English teachers agreed with the given statement, while 10% disagreed and 5% were uncertain. Among Saudi English teachers, 90% agreed, 5% disagreed, and another 5% were unsure. When combining responses from both groups, 87% of the teachers agreed, 8% disagreed, and 5% were uncertain about the statement.

According to the data presented in Figure 4, 85% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the stated proposition, whereas 10% disagreed and 5% indicated uncertainty. Among their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, 90% agreed with the statement, 5% disagreed, and 5% were undecided. When considering the combined responses from both groups, 87% of the teachers were in agreement, 8% expressed disagreement, and 5% reported being unsure regarding the statement

Students have faulty habits of attention and concentration during the stage of reading

Students often struggle with poor attention and weak concentration skills while they are engaged in reading activities.

As illustrated in Figure 5, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, whereas 5% expressed disagreement and an additional 5% indicated uncertainty. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 94% of English language teachers agreed with the statement, while 3% disagreed and 3% were uncertain. When considering the combined responses from both countries, 92% of the teachers affirmed their agreement, 4% disagreed, and 4% reported being unsure.

Teachers pay much attention to grammar than reading during the lesson
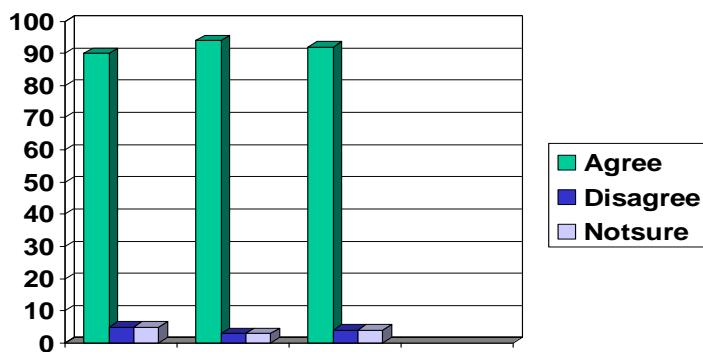
TTeachers focus more on grammar than on reading during their lessons
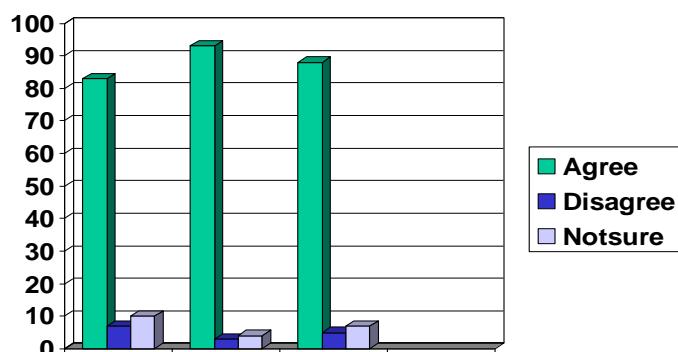
According to the data presented in Figure 6, 83% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements, whereas 7% expressed disagreement and 10% indicated uncertainty. In comparison, 93% of English language teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statements, with 3% disagreeing and 4% remaining uncertain. When considering the combined responses from both countries, 88% of the participants agreed, 5% disagreed, and 7% were uncertain.

Students have difficulty in comprehending what they read .

Students struggle to understand the material they read.

Students encounter challenges in effectively comprehending and interpreting the texts they engage with.
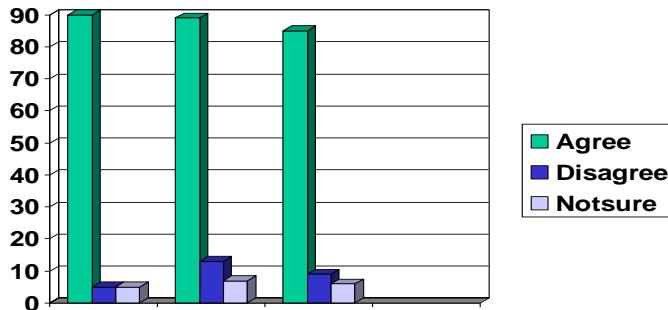
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As illustrated in Figure 7, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement under consideration, whereas 5% expressed disagreement and a further 5% indicated uncertainty. Among English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 80% agreed with the statement, 13% disagreed, and 7% were uncertain. When aggregating the responses from both countries, 85% of the participants indicated agreement, 9% expressed disagreement, and 6% reported uncertainty.

The reading material is a problem students weakness the language.

The reading material presents a challenge due to students' limited proficiency in the language
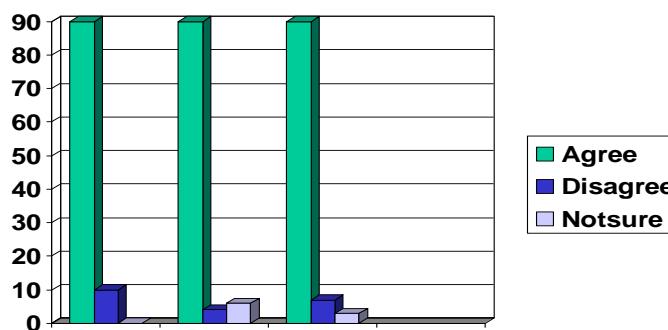
In Sudan, 90% of English teachers agreed with the statement, 10% disagreed, and none were uncertain.

In Saudi Arabia, 90% of English teachers also agreed, while 4% disagreed and 6% were unsure.

Overall, across both countries, 90% of the teachers agreed, 7% disagreed, and 3% were uncertain.

As illustrated in Figure 8 90% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 10% disagreed and none reported uncertainty. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, 90% of English teachers agreed, 4% disagreed, and 6% were unsure. When combining responses from both countries, 90% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 7% disagreed, and 3% were uncertain.

Students difficulties in reading may be related to shortage prior of knowledge not only to the lexical problems.

Students' reading difficulties may stem not just from vocabulary issues but also from a lack of prior knowledge.

Students' difficulties in reading comprehension may be attributed not only to limitations in lexical knowledge but also to insufficient background knowledge.
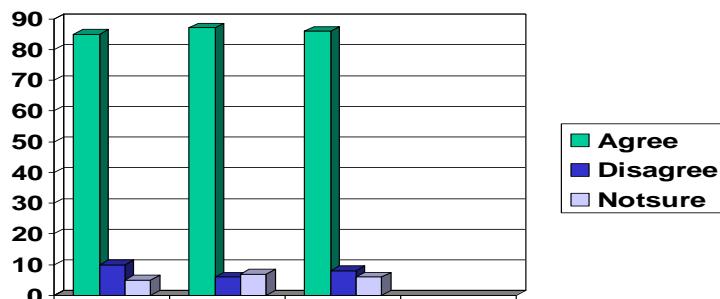
According to Figure 9, a substantial majority (85%) of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, whereas 10% expressed disagreement and 5% remained undecided. Similarly, among English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 87% indicated agreement, 6% disagreed, and 7% were uncertain. When aggregating the responses from both countries, 86% of the teachers were in agreement, 8% disagreed, and 6% expressed uncertainty.

Students are assigned small reading tasks both inside and outside of their classes.
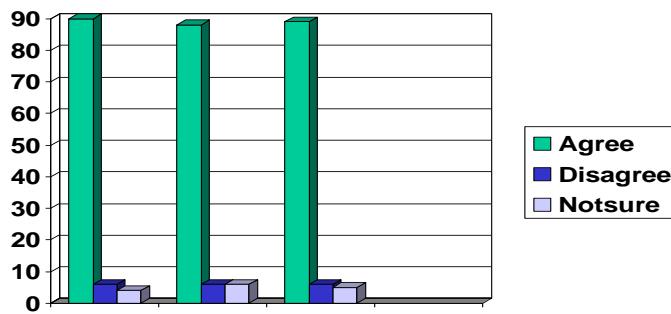
According to Figure 10, 90% of English teachers in Sudan agreed with the statement, while 6% disagreed and 4% were uncertain. In Saudi Arabia, 88% of English teachers agreed, with 6% disagreeing and another 6% unsure. When combining responses from both countries, 89% of the teachers agreed, 6% disagreed, and 5% were unsure.

Backward   and   forward   eye   movement   slow   down   the   reading   speed
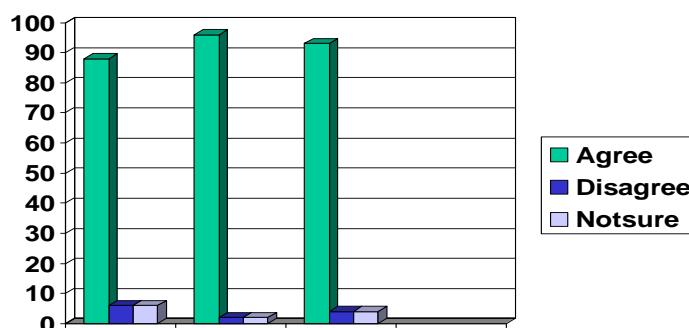

According to Figure 11:

A: In Sudan, 88% of English language teachers expressed agreement with the statement, whereas 6% expressed disagreement and another 6% indicated uncertainty.
B: Among English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 96% agreed with the statement, while 2% disagreed and 2% were unsure.
C: When considering responses from both countries collectively, 93% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 4% reported being uncertain.

Students use fingers during reading slow down reading speed.
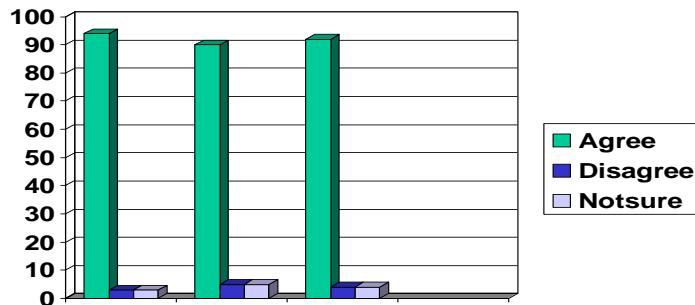

Based on Figure 12, 94% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements presented, while 3% disagreed and another 3% were uncertain. Similarly, 90% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statements, whereas 5% disagreed and 5% were unsure. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 92% of the teachers agreed with the statements, 4% disagreed, and 4% indicated uncertain

Students span, read word by word when reading.
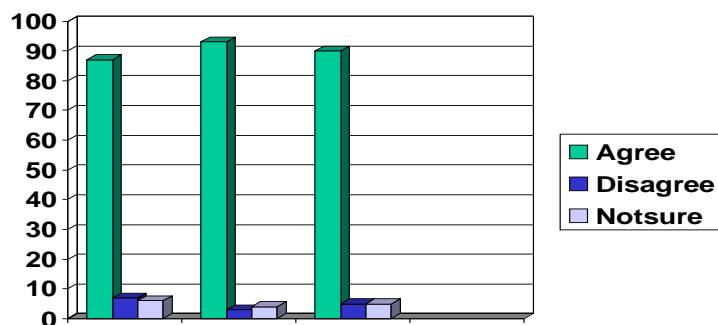
According to Figure 13, 87% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements presented, while 7% disagreed and 6% remained uncertain. In comparison, 93% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statements, 3% disagreed, and 4% were unsure. When considering respondents from both countries collectively, 90% agreed with the statements, 5% disagreed, and 5% indicated uncertainty.

Vocalization, including the need to vocalize in order to achieve comprehension
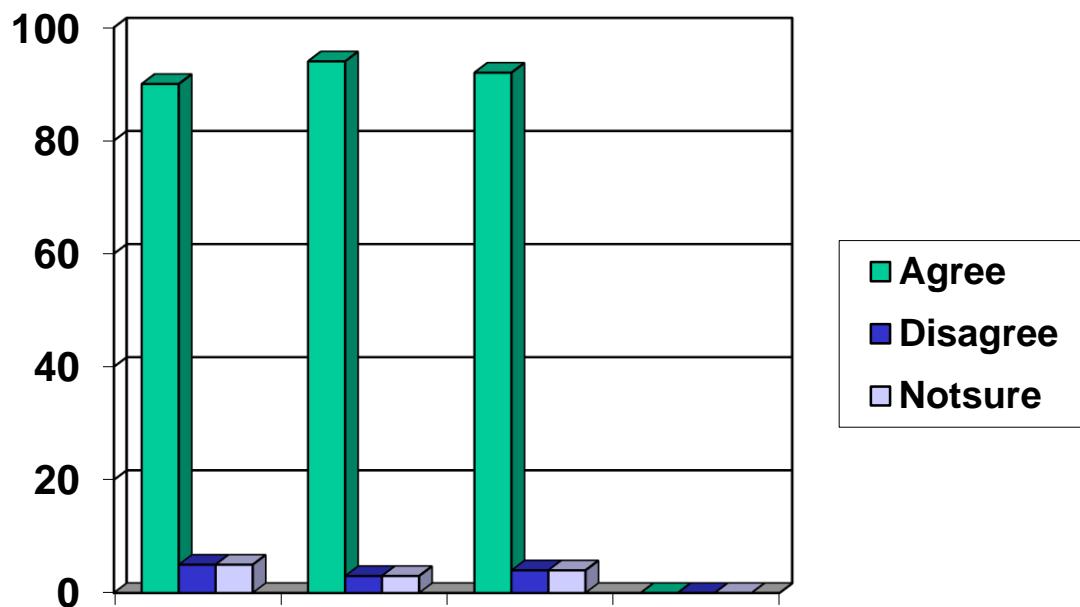
Based on Figure 14

A. 90% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 5% disagreed and another 5% reported uncertainty.

B. Among Saudi teachers, 94% agreed with the statement, whereas 3% disagreed and 3% were uncertain.

C. When considering teachers from both countries collectively, 92% agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 4% indicated uncertainty as well.

Method of teaching reading in secondary schools can improve students fast reading speed.
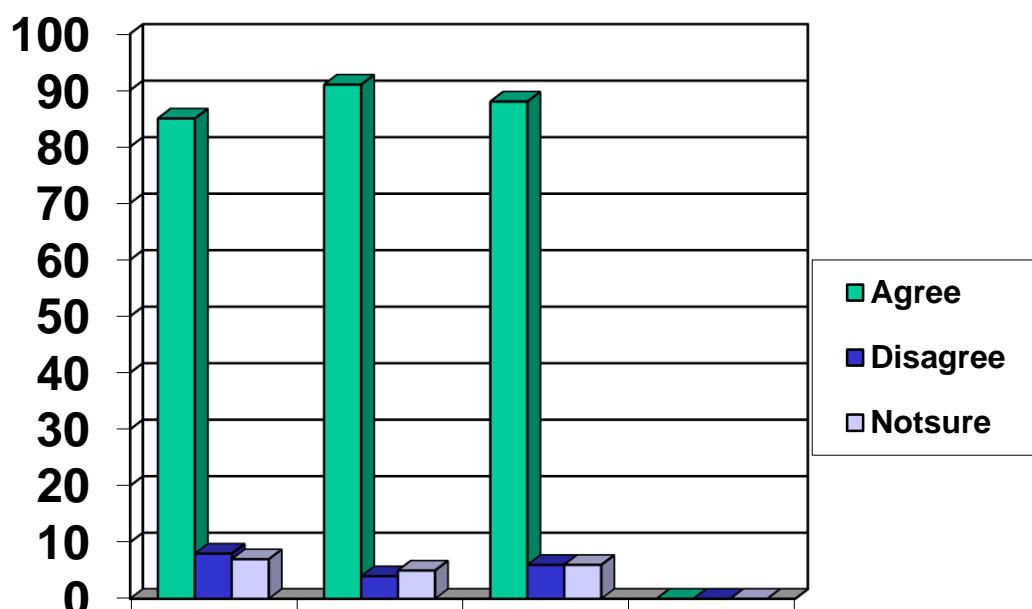
As illustrated in Figure 15, 85% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement under consideration, while 8% indicated disagreement and 7% reported uncertainty. Similarly, among English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 91% agreed with the statement, with 4% disagreeing and 5% uncertain. When the responses from both countries are combined, 88% of the teachers expressed agreement, whereas 6% disagreed and another 6% were unsure.

Reading techniques can develop students reading speed
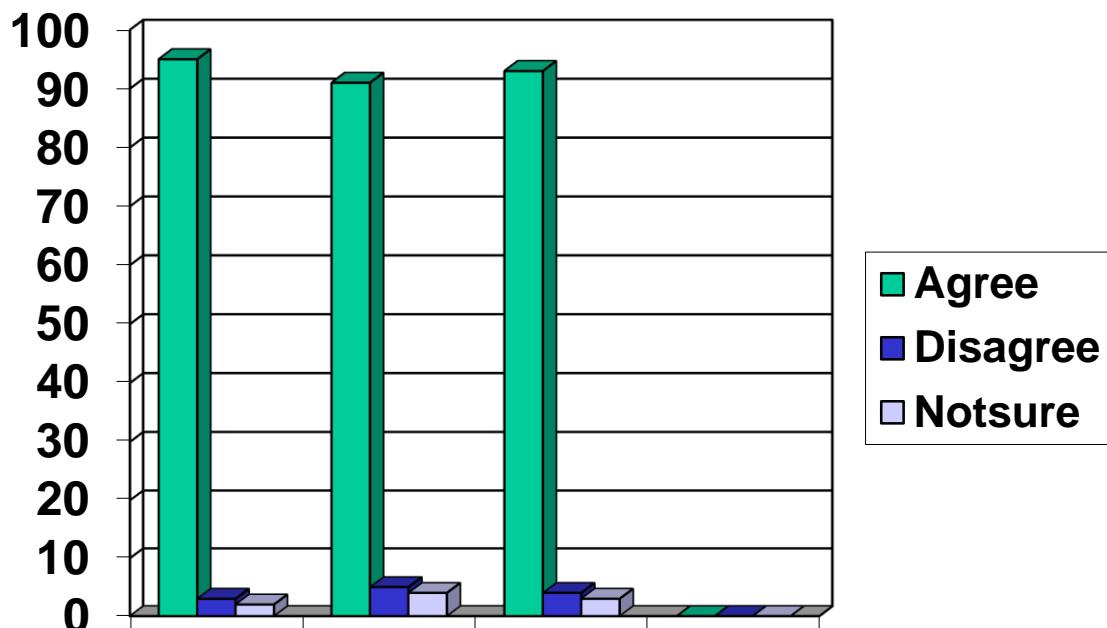
Based on Figure 16 above

A: 95% of English teachers in Sudan agreed with the statement, while 3% disagreed and 2% were uncertain.
B: 91% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed, 5% disagreed, and 4% were unsure.
C: Overall, combining both countries, 93% of the English teachers agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 3% were uncertain.

Students in Sudan start English reading earlier than students of Saudi Arabia
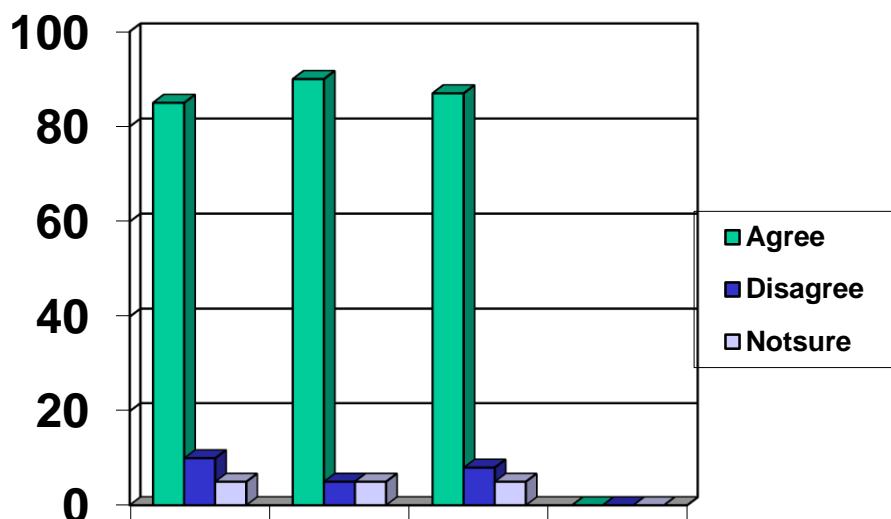
According to Figure 17

A: 85% of English teachers in Sudan agreed with the statements, while 10% disagreed and 5% were uncertain.
B: In Saudi Arabia, 90% of English teachers agreed, 5% disagreed, and 5% were unsure.
C: Overall, combining responses from both countries, 87% of the English teachers agreed with the statement, 8% disagreed, and 5% were uncertain.

**There are some libraries of English reading in the schools of Sudan**
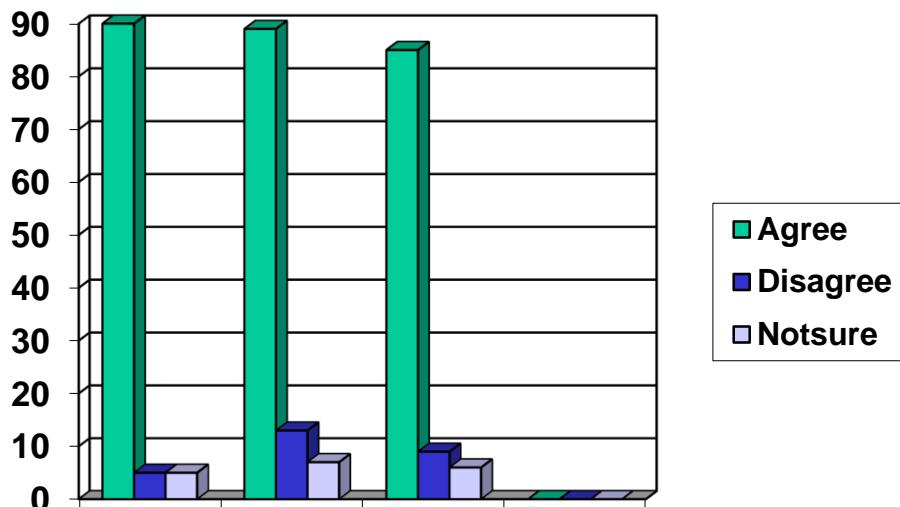
According to Figure 18, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements, while 5% disagreed and another 5% remained uncertain. In Saudi Arabia, 80% of English teachers agreed with the statements, 13% disagreed, and 7% were uncertain. When considering teachers from both countries collectively, 85% agreed with the statements, 9% disagreed, and 6% indicated uncertainty

Students in Saudi Arabia have the syllabuses and materials ready for them
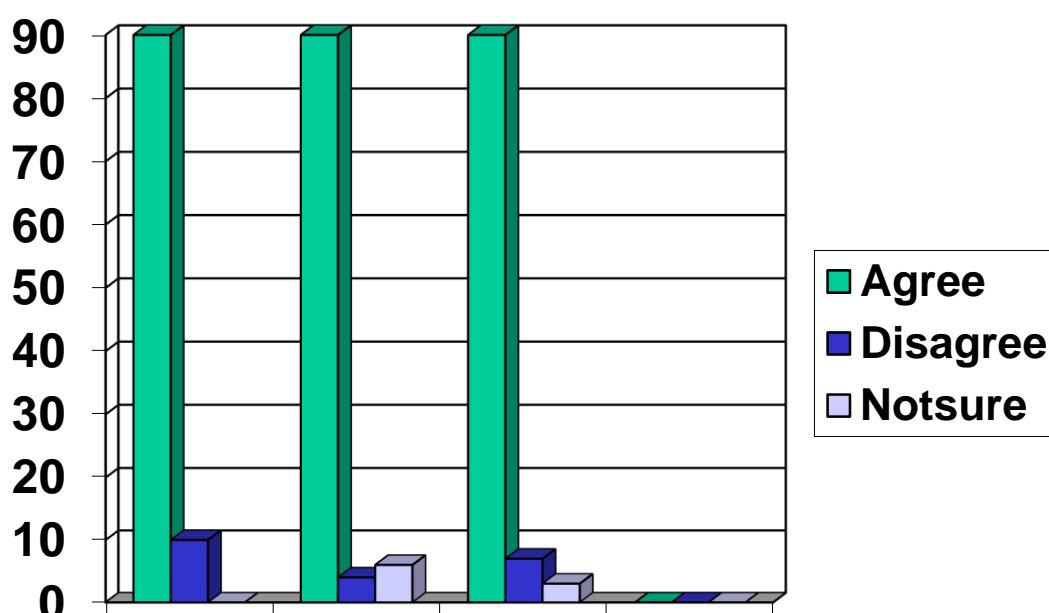
According to Figure 19, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 10% disagreed and none indicated uncertainty. Similarly, 90% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, whereas 4% disagreed and 6% reported being unsure. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 90% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 7% disagreed, and 3% were uncertain.

Students in Sudan lack the syllabus and textbooks
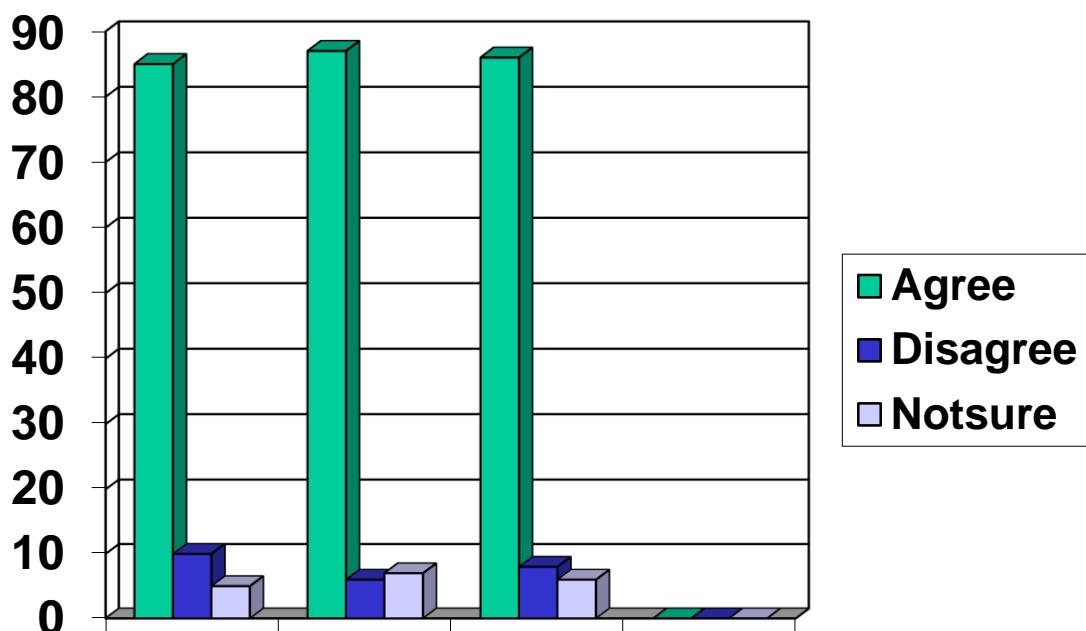
From this figure(20) above

According to Figure 20, 85% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements, while 10% disagreed and 5% were uncertain. Similarly, 87% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed, whereas 6% disagreed and 7% remained unsure. When considering respondents from both countries combined, 86% agreed with the statement, 8% disagreed, and 6% were uncertain.

**Students in Sudan have little chance of reading, so the classes are very crowded**
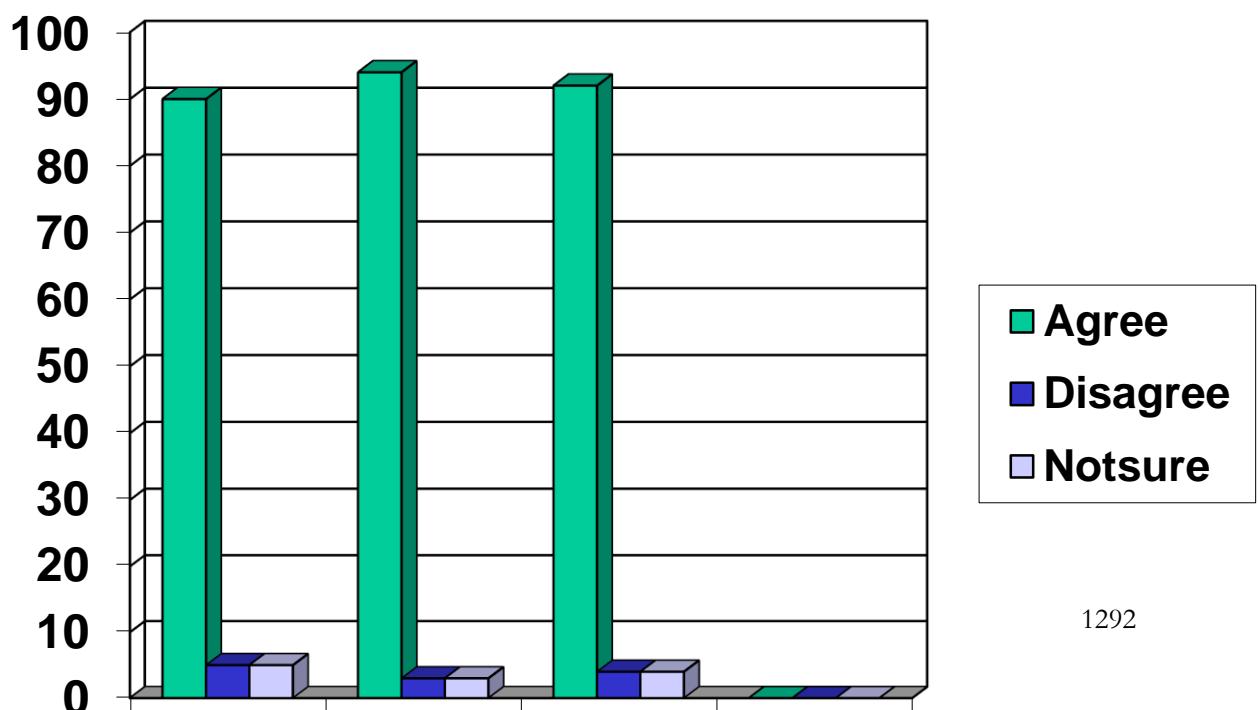
According to Figure 21

A: 90% of English teachers expressed agreement with the statement, while 5% disagreed and another 5% were uncertain.

B: In Saudi Arabia, 94% of English teachers agreed with the statement, whereas 3% disagreed and 3% indicated uncertainty.

C: When considering teachers from both countries collectively, 92% agreed with the statement, with 4% disagreeing and 4% remaining unsure.

**In both countries the students have shortage of literature books.**
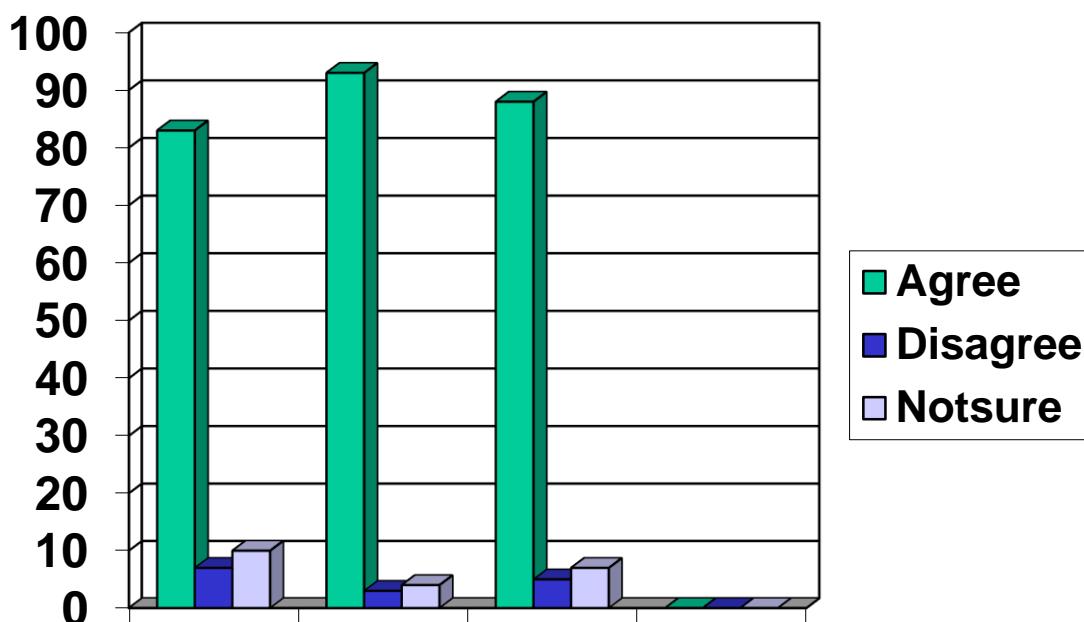
As illustrated in Figure 22, 83% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 7% disagreed and 10% were uncertain. In contrast, 93% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, 3% disagreed, and 4% were unsure. When considering both groups collectively, 88% of the teachers from the two countries agreed with the statement, 5% disagreed, and 7% reported uncertainty.

**Students have poor techniques of reading skills in both countries.**
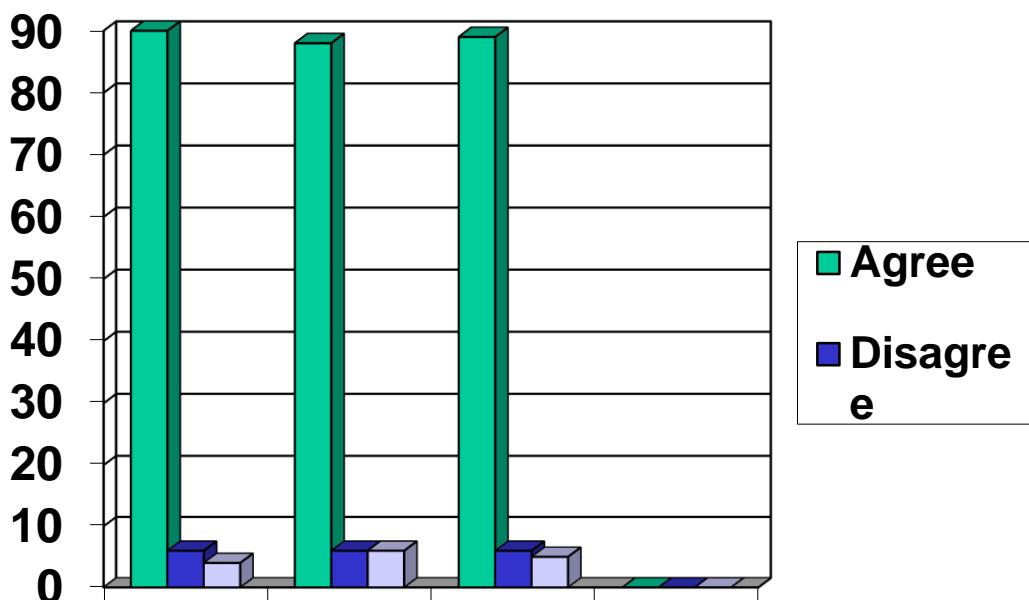
As illustrated in Figure 23, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement under consideration, while 6% indicated disagreement and 4% reported uncertainty. Similarly, among English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 88% agreed with the statement, whereas 6% disagreed and another 6% were uncertain. When aggregating responses from both countries, 89% of the teachers demonstrated agreement, 6% expressed disagreement, and 5% remained uncertain regarding the statement.

Reading aloud tends to prevent the students from developing efficient reading strategies .
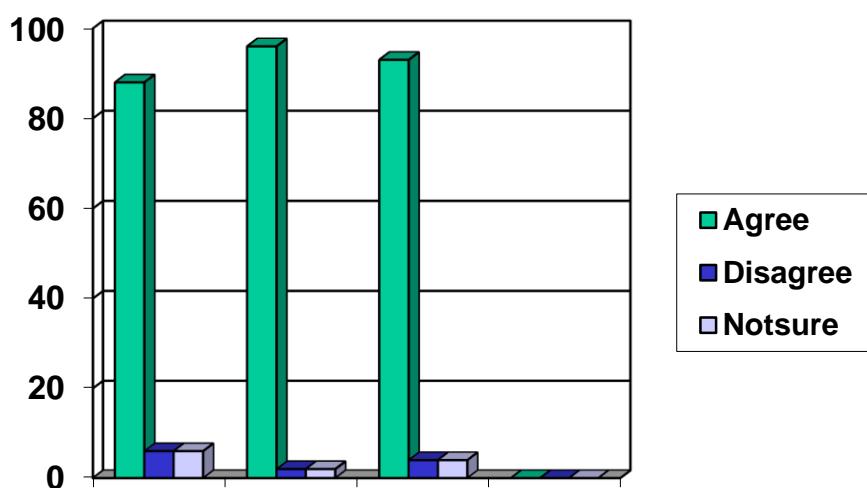
According to Figure (24), 88% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 6% disagreed and another 6% were uncertain. In contrast, 96% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, with only 2% disagreeing and 2% indicating uncertainty. When considering the combined responses from both countries, 92% of the teachers agreed, whereas 4% disagreed and 4% were unsure.

**Reading habits are transferred to L 1.**
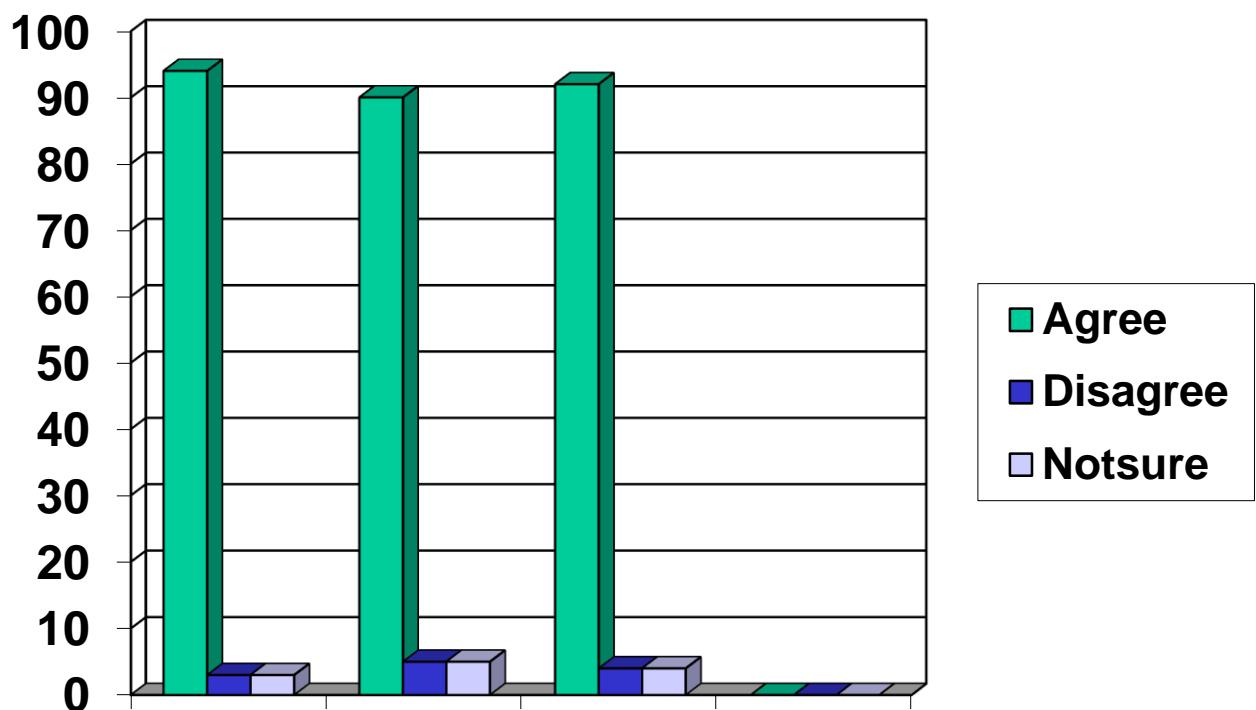
As illustrated in Figure (25) above:

A: 94% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 3% disagreed and another 3% were uncertain.

B: In Saudi Arabia, 90% of English language teachers agreed with the statement, whereas 5% disagreed and 5% were undecided.

C: When considering teachers from both countries collectively, 92% agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 4% reported uncertainty.

Finger pointing is one of faulty habits and it appears when L1and foreign language writing systems differ.
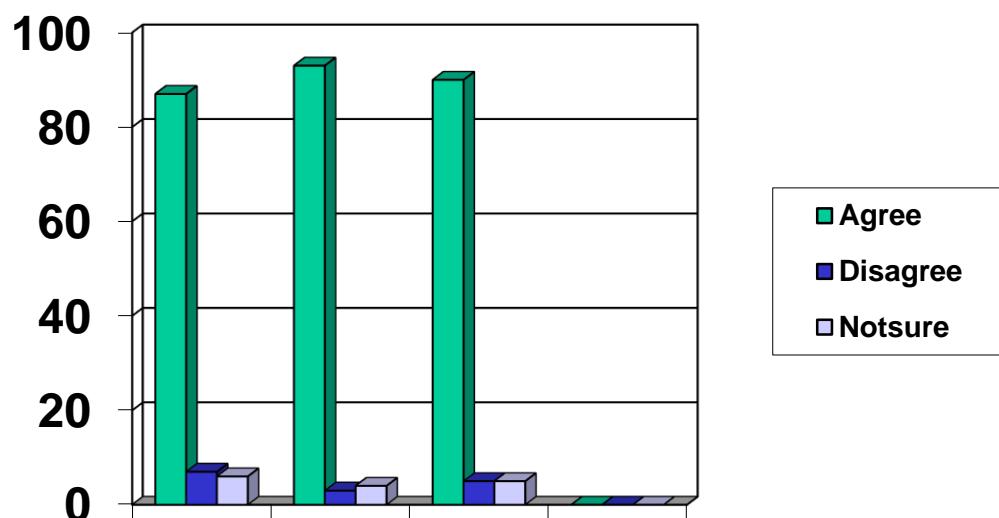
According to Figure 26, **87%** of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while **7%** disagreed and **6%** were uncertain. In comparison, **93%** of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, with **3%** disagreeing and **4%** indicating uncertainty. When considering the combined responses from both countries, **90%** of the teachers agreed with the statement, **5%** disagreed, and the remaining **5%** were unsure.

**Faulty habits of attention and concentration of L1 affect the reading skills.**
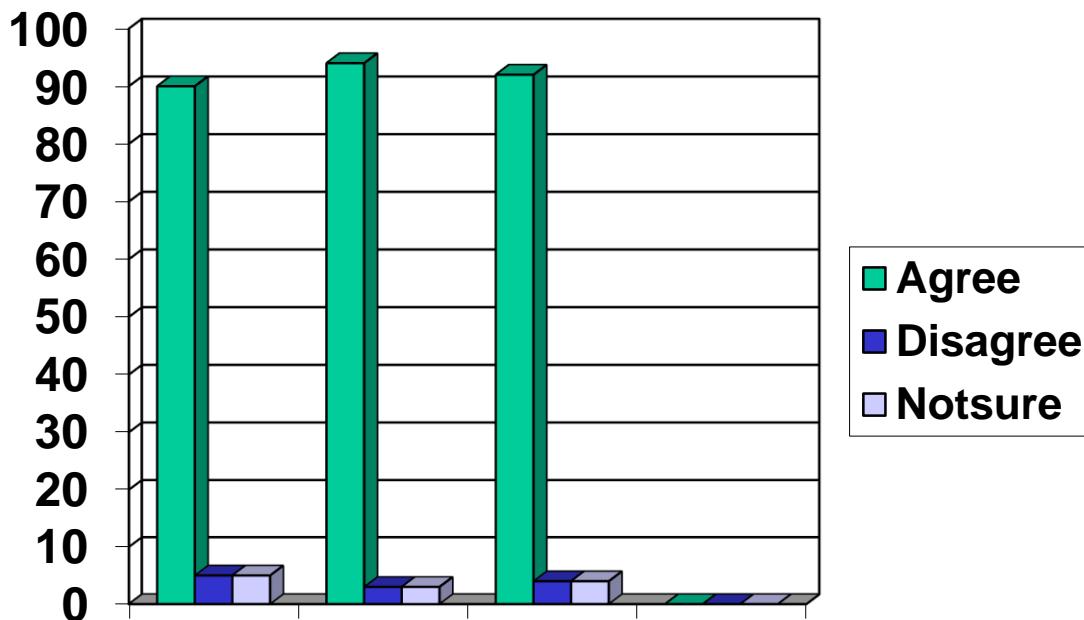
According to Figure (27), 90% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements presented, while 5% disagreed and another 5% remained uncertain. In Saudi Arabia, 94% of English teachers agreed with the statements, whereas 3% disagreed and 3% were unsure. When considering respondents from both countries collectively, 92% of the teachers agreed, 4% disagreed, and 4% indicated uncertainty regarding the statement

**The situation and the customs affect L2.**
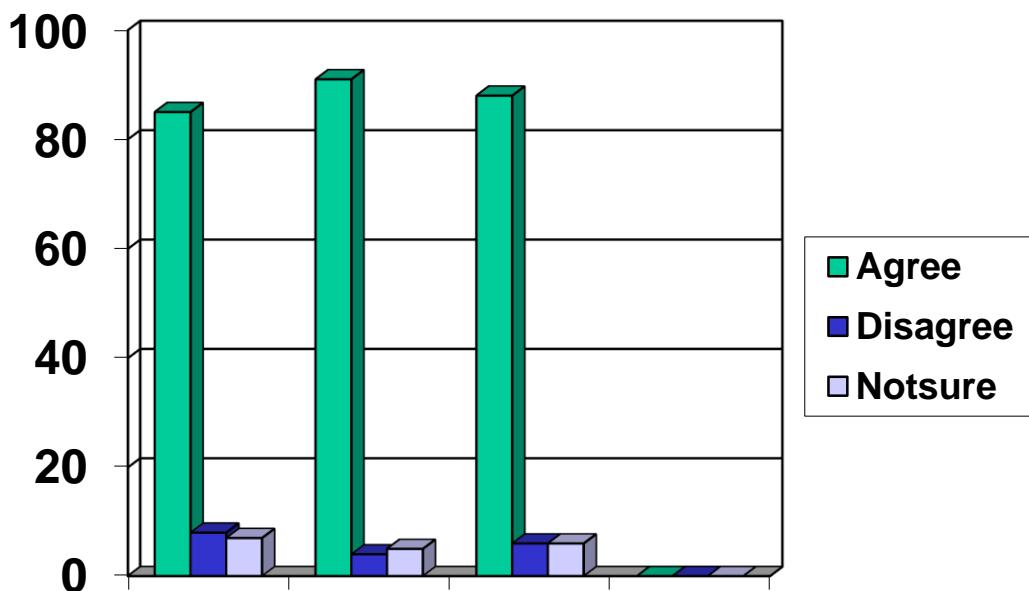
According to Figure (28), 85% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 8% disagreed and 7% remained uncertain. In comparison, 91% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 5% were unsure. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 88% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 6% disagreed, and another 6% indicated uncertainty.

Method of teaching L1 affects the reading skills of the students.
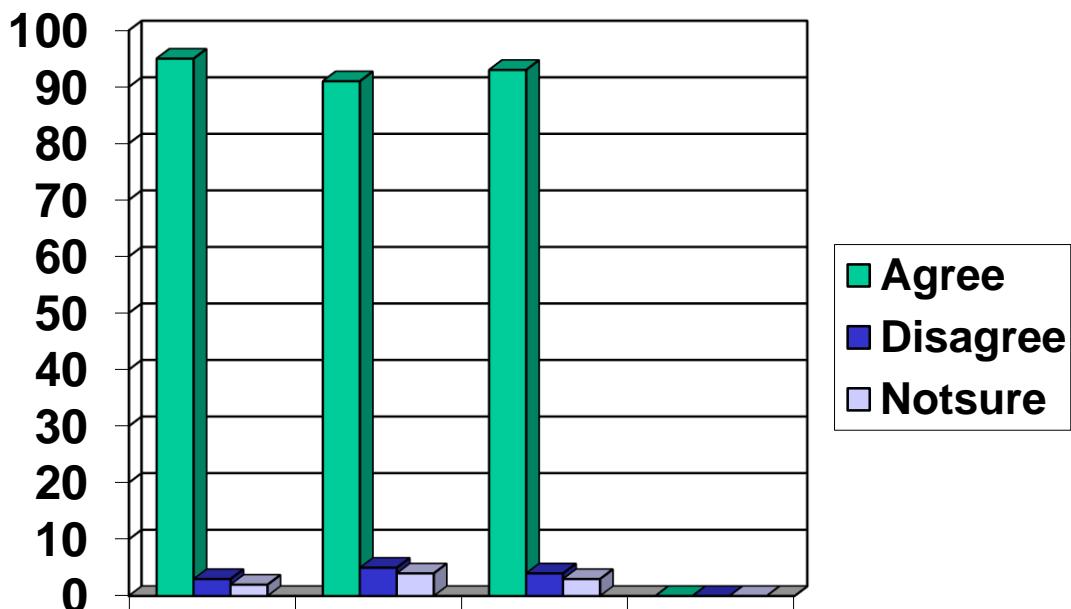
According to Figure (28), 85% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 8% disagreed and 7% remained uncertain. In comparison, 91% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 5% were unsure. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 88% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 6% disagreed, and another 6% indicated uncertaint

**The teacher translates what the students want to say in chunks.**
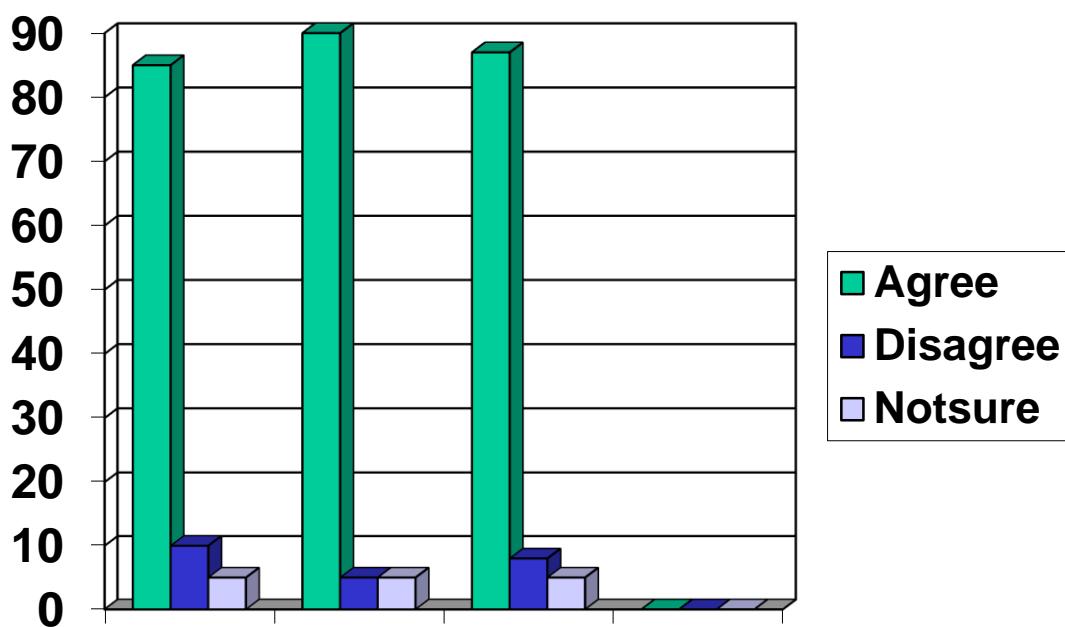
According to Figure (30), 85% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 10% disagreed and 5% remained uncertain. In contrast, 90% of English language teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, with 5% disagreeing and another 5% indicating uncertainty. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 87% of the teachers agreed with the statement, 8% disagreed, and 5% were unsure.

**Students native language is used to make the meaning clear .**
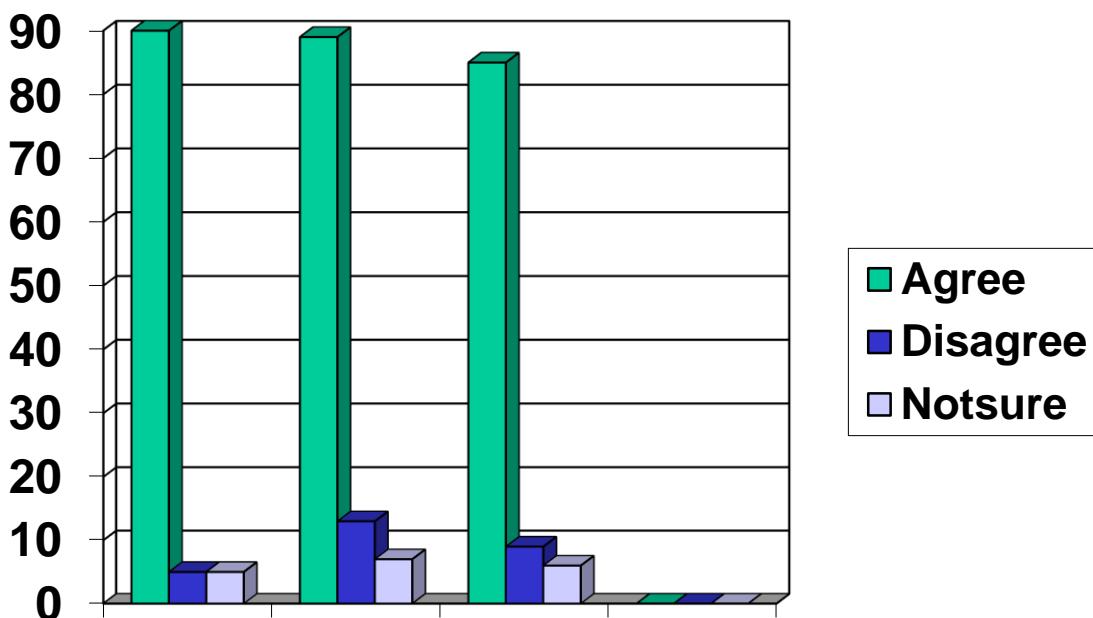
According to Figure (31), 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 5% disagreed and another 5% remained uncertain. In Saudi Arabia, 80% of English teachers agreed with the statement, 13% disagreed, and 7% were unsure. When considering both groups collectively, 85% of the teachers from the two countries agreed with the statement, 9% disagreed, and 6% indicated uncertainty.

**Students should be encouraged to express their ideas and opinions**
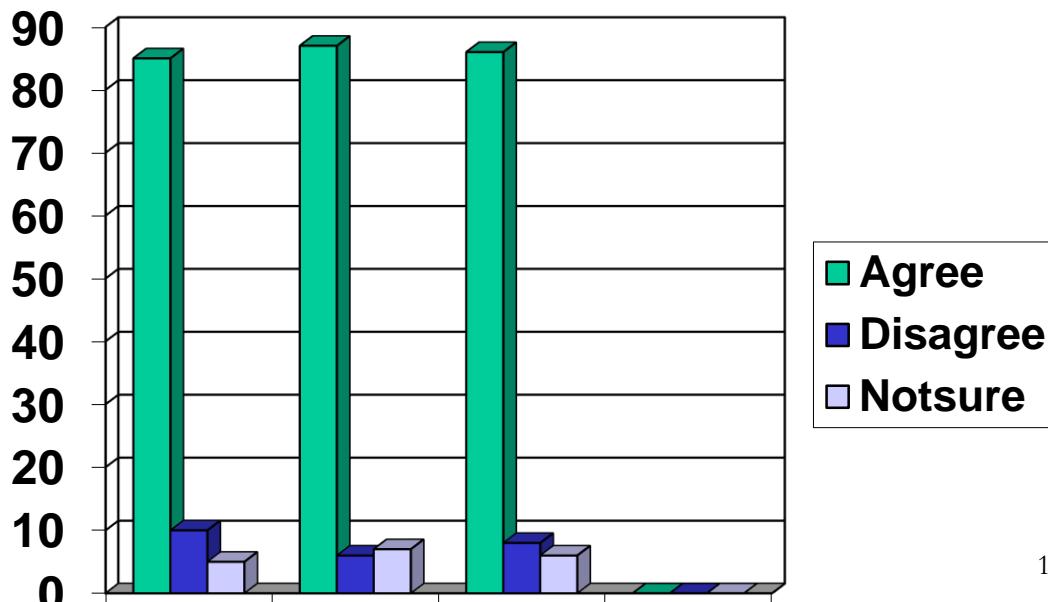
As illustrated in Figure (32), 85% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statements, while 10% disagreed and 5% were uncertain. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, 87% of English teachers agreed, 6% disagreed, and 7% were unsure. When considering respondents from both countries collectively, 86% indicated agreement with the statements, 8% expressed disagreement, and 6% reported uncertainty.

A great care is taking to prevent learners errors in reading
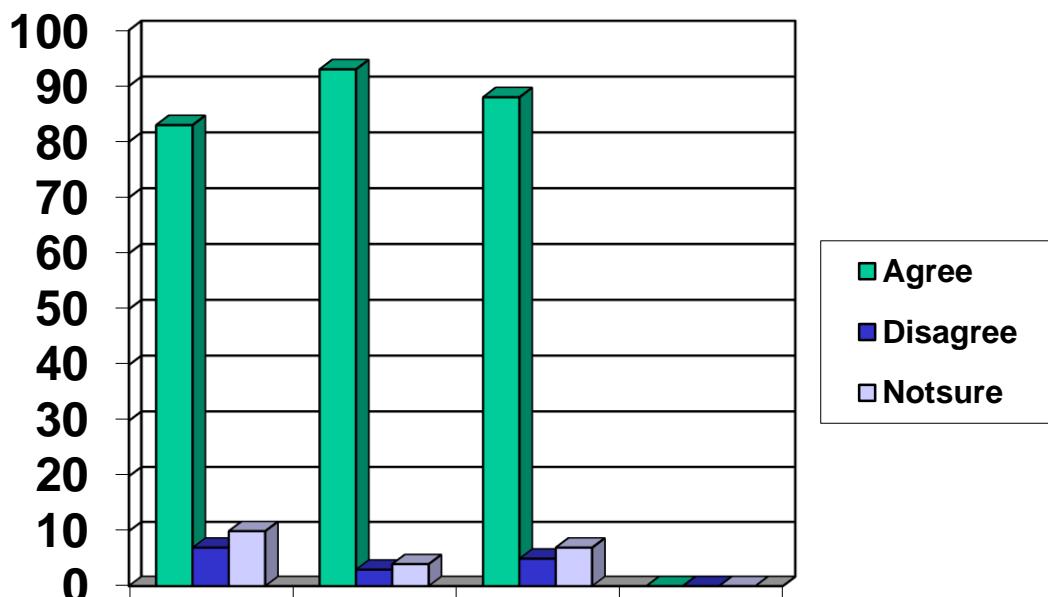
According to Figure (33), 83% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 7% disagreed and 10% were uncertain. In Saudi Arabia, 93% of English teachers agreed with the statement, whereas 3% disagreed and 4% were unsure. When considering the responses from both countries collectively, 88% of the teachers agreed, 5% disagreed, and 7% reported uncertainty regarding the statement.

**The emphasis should be on the process of reading rather than mastering of language.**
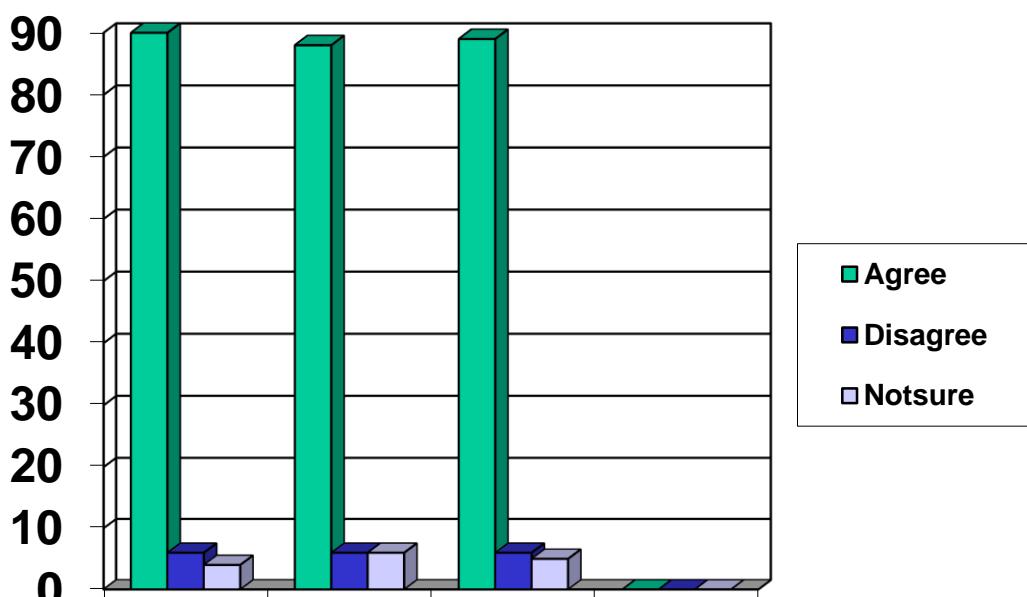
According to Figure 34, 90% of English teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 6% disagreed and 4% were uncertain. Similarly, 88% of English teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, whereas 6% disagreed and another 6% were unsure. When considering respondents from both countries collectively, 89% agreed with the statement, 6% disagreed, and 5% indicated uncertainty.

Silent Reading tends to help the students develop efficient reading strategies
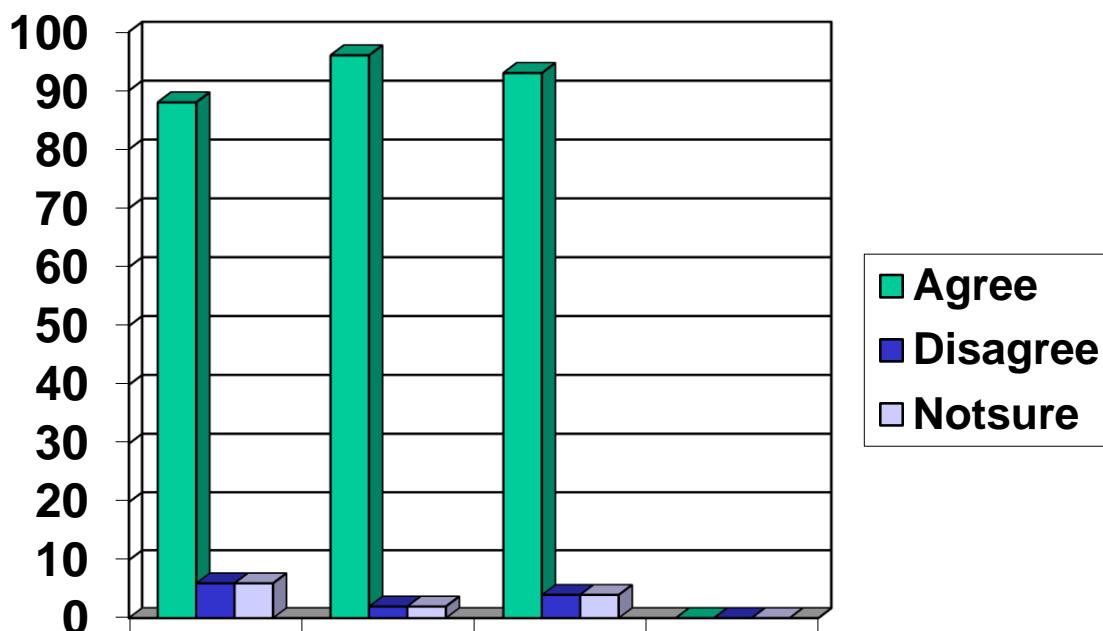
As illustrated in Figure 35, 88% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 6% disagreed and another 6% indicated uncertainty. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, 96% of English teachers agreed with the statement, whereas 2% disagreed and 2% were uncertain. When considering both groups collectively, 92% of the English teachers across the two countries agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 4% reported being unsure.

**Variety in reading techniques improves students reading speed.**
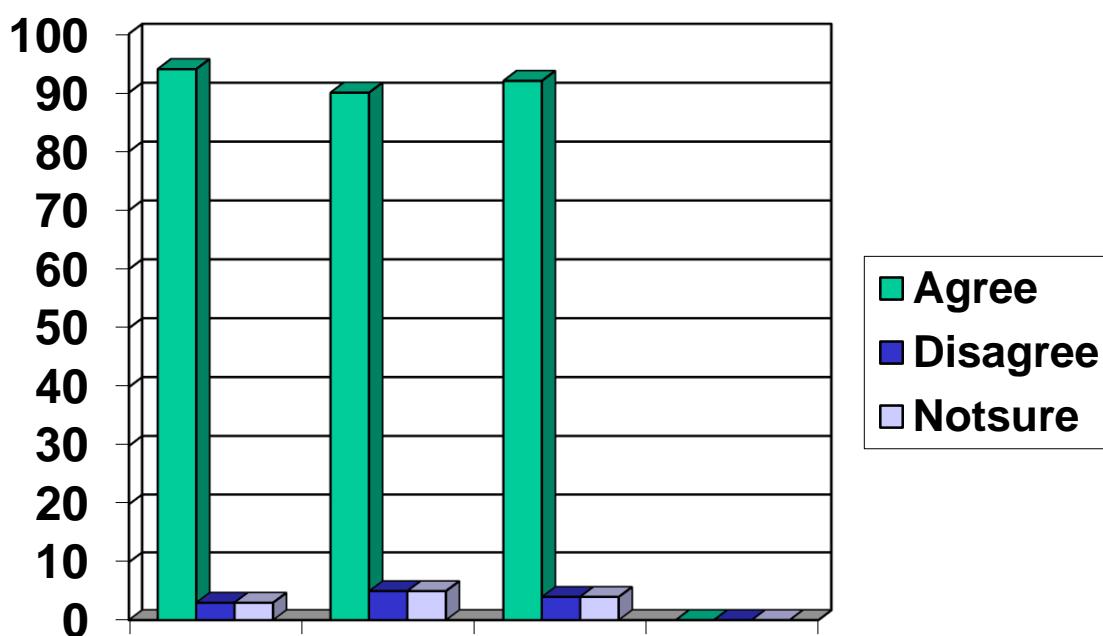
Based on Figure 36

A: 94% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 3% expressed disagreement and another 3% remained uncertain.

B: In Saudi Arabia, 90% of English language teachers agreed with the statement, whereas 5% disagreed and 5% were unsure.

C: When considering the combined responses from both countries, 92% of the English language teachers agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 4% indicated uncertainty.

Students like to read interesting and entertaining topics
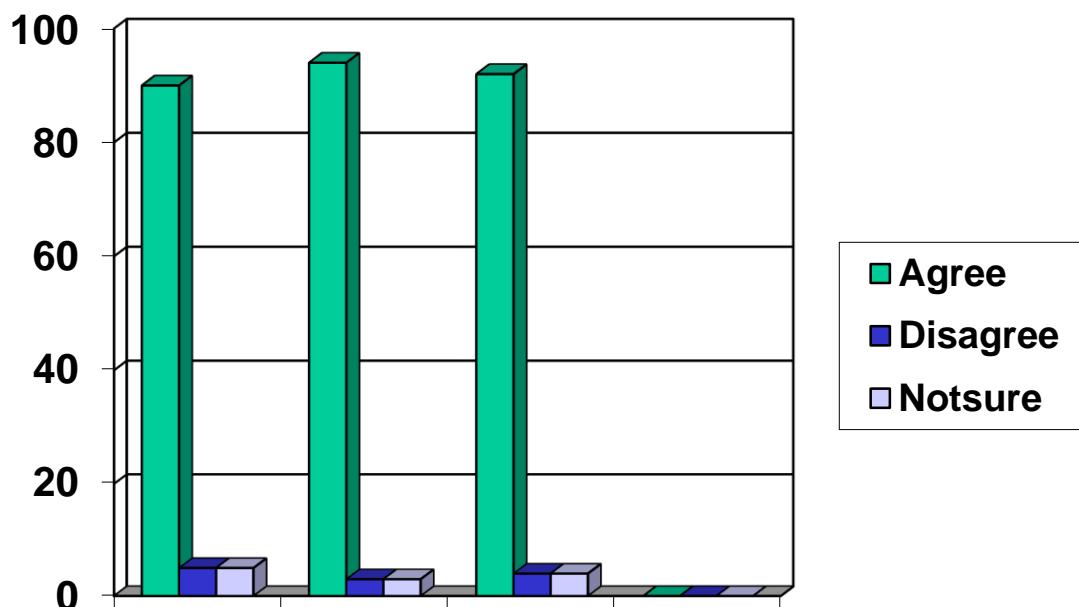
According to Figure 37, 90% of English language teachers in Sudan expressed agreement with the statement, while 5% expressed disagreement and another 5% remained uncertain. Similarly, 94% of English language teachers in Saudi Arabia agreed with the statement, whereas 3% disagreed and 3% were unsure. When considering both groups collectively, 92% of the teachers from both countries agreed with the statement, with 4% disagreeing and 4% indicating uncertainty.

Pictures and beautiful drawings attract students to the textbook
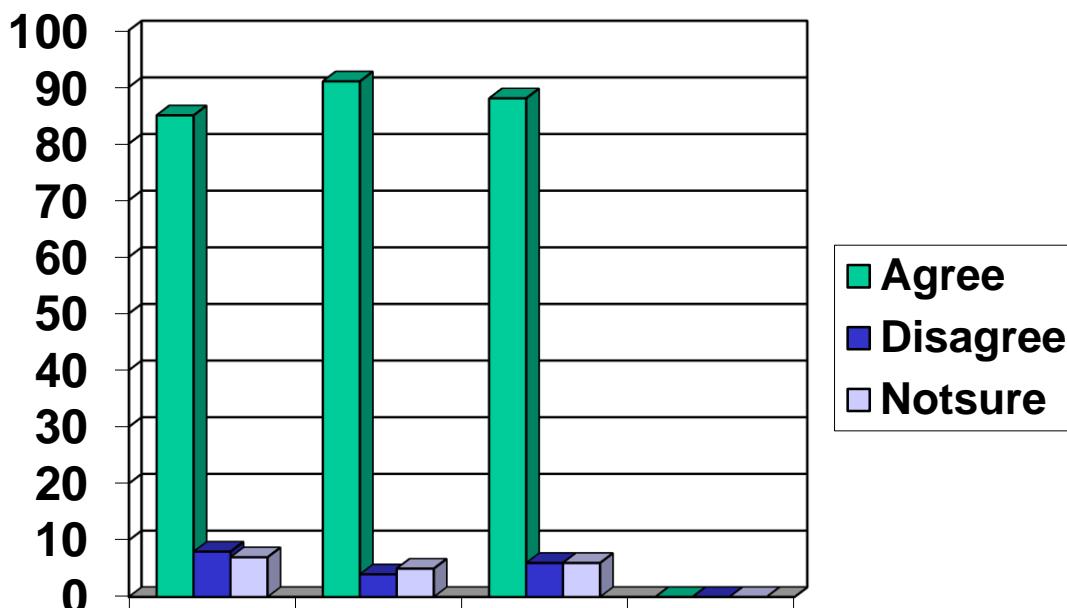
As illustrated in Figure 38, **(A)** 85% of English language teachers in Sudan indicated agreement with the statement, whereas 8% expressed disagreement and 7% reported uncertainty. **(B)** In the case of English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, 91% agreed with the statement, 4% disagreed, and 5% were uncertain. **(C)** When aggregating the responses from both countries, 88% of the teachers agreed with the statement, while 6% disagreed and another 6% expressed uncertainty.

Summary of Findings

This study examined factors influencing reading achievement, with a particular emphasis on negative reading habits that impede reading speed. The researcher employed both tests and questionnaires as data collection tools. The findings revealed that reading in a second language is inherently complex, and learners' reading speeds were notably slow. Participants lacked prior experiences and background knowledge in reading, compounded by shortages in textbooks and library resources. In Sudan, overcrowded classrooms further hampered progress, whereas in Saudi Arabia, although classrooms were better equipped—with fewer students and more comfortable learning environments—students still demonstrated slow reading speeds due to the absence of accessible libraries for extensive reading. The study highlighted a critical need for systematic training in reading skills and exposure to diverse reading materials to enhance reading fluency. Key findings included:

- A majority of teachers lacked formal training in effective reading instruction methodologies.
- English was frequently taught by non-specialist teachers.
- Reading tasks often lacked relevance to students' everyday lives.
- Classroom instruction tended to prioritize grammar over reading activities.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The study concluded that several factors negatively influence reading speed:

- Reading habits are often transferred from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2).
- Engaging and visually appealing materials can enhance students' reading speed.
- Complex texts tend to reduce reading pace.

- A significant proportion of students frequently regressed to earlier words or phrases, used finger-pointing, and engaged in vocalization and sub-vocalization, all of which slowed their reading.
Both Sudanese and Saudi students require specialized, well-trained teachers and access to appropriate syllabi and materials to improve their reading proficiency. Although Sudanese students outperformed their Saudi counterparts in reading, further efforts are still necessary to enhance their reading skills and speed.

In light of the study's findings, the researcher proposes several recommendations aimed at bridging the identified gaps. Students should receive comprehensive support to enhance their reading speed, including training in various reading strategies such as silent reading, identifying main ideas and details, summarization, skimming, and scanning. Teachers should actively guide students in applying these reading techniques. It is recommended that syllabi be revised to better align with learners' proficiency levels and to place greater emphasis on reading comprehension. Secondary school English teachers should receive specialized training in reading instruction methodologies. Additionally, classroom instruction should allocate sufficient time for practicing reading skills. Schools should also be equipped with appropriate visual aids and other supportive teaching materials to facilitate effective reading instruction. While this study concentrated on reading challenges faced by teachers and students in Sudan and Saudi Arabia, it is suggested that future research explore difficulties in other language domains, particularly speaking skills, which are vital for enhancing students' communicative competence and fluency.

Acknowledgement

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