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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Contextualization Strategies and Reading Comprehension: An Investigation among IELTS Test-Takers

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**ABSTRACT**

Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL) is known to have a great impact on the students' academic performance. It promotes positive learners' engagement and improves learning skills among learners. Berns and Ericson (cited in Center for Student, Research and Planning Group, & Academic Senate for California, 2009) define contextualization as the notion in teaching and learning which relates the lesson or the content of a subject matter into a real-world setting. The study aims to find out and evaluate the reading skills and comprehension performance of the IELTS test-takers and the effectiveness of the contextualized learning materials. It tries to determine the effects of Contextualized Teaching and Learning on the reading comprehension performance of the learners and uncover the essence of readers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the importance of contextualization in reading comprehension. It also seeks to explore how readers make meaning, engage with texts, and interpret information within various contextual frameworks. The current study used a qualitative methodology to elicit data from my students preparing for the IELTS exam. More particularly, IELTS students aim to improve their reading comprehension skills. To select participants, specific inclusion criteria are established. Participants must be IELTS test-takers with a minimum English proficiency level of B2(intermediate), as confirmed by their most recent IELTS or equivalent test scores. After securing informed consent from the participants, I selected a diverse sample of 15 individuals comprising different age groups and English language proficiency levels within the B2 to C1. This approach ensures a comprehensive and representative group for examining how contextualized reading materials impact reading comprehension among IELTS students preparing for the test.

**KEYWORDS**

Contextualization, Reading comprehension, IELTS test-takers.

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 02 November 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 25 November 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.11.19

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### 1. Introduction

Teaching methods differ widely, mostly concerning what their approach to teaching and learning is and how it is pursued. Methods coming up in the 1970s stated that learning should happen in context, as contextualization is of major importance when learning a language. This was seen as important in several approaches to learning foreign languages, such as the task-based learning approach (TBL) or content and language integrated learning approach (CLIL). Beforehand, behavioristic approaches and the views they stood for were most important for the development of teaching and learning models, but as cognitivist views took over, contextualization got more and more influential on the matter. Reading comprehension stands as a cornerstone of language acquisition and development, transcending the boundaries of age, culture, and educational context. The ability to grasp, interpret, and engage with written texts is an essential skill, vital not only for academic pursuits but also for effective communication and critical thinking in the broader spectrum of life. In this pursuit of comprehension, the role of contextualization emerges as a

powerful catalyst, one that holds the potential to elevate the art of reading. Contextualization in reading comprehension entails the strategic embedding of texts within real-world contexts, bestowing upon them a layer of relevance and depth that extends far beyond the confines of the words on the page. Contextualization plays a crucial role in reading comprehension and interpretation. By understanding the context surrounding a text, readers can grasp the intended meaning more accurately. Context includes various factors such as the author's background, the historical period, the cultural and social milieu, and the specific circumstances in which the text was created. This additional information helps readers make connections, infer meanings, and identify the underlying message or purpose of the text. Without proper contextualization, readers may misinterpret or overlook essential elements, leading to a shallow understanding of the material. Overall, contextualization enhances reading by providing a broader perspective and facilitating a deeper engagement with the text. It has been claimed that contextualization has a deep and tremendous influence on learners' various language skills (Mayer, 2003; Ellis, 1994; Wisely, 2009). In the field of language teaching and learning, contextualization occurs through bridging the ideas and concepts across courses. As Moltz (2010) remarks, contextualization is a form of "deep learning" which aims to make the learning process profound, objective, and meaningful by placing the target language in a vivid and realistic situation. The learners are placed in an engaging, significant, and real scenario when reading comprehension teaching is contextualized. Contextualization can be achieved by focusing reading lessons and exercises on the context and area of interest of the learners. Improving student's reading comprehension performance is a crucial task which most teachers and learners find difficult to deal with. Likewise, students nowadays do not read a lot because of the presence of high technology gadgets which occupy their spare time. Books and print materials are sometimes set aside due to the influx of reading articles on the internet. In addition, learners today seldom read articles which are not relevant to their needs and interests. This situation posed a problem to the reading teacher. Teachers will face difficulty during reading lessons if they do not know how to arouse the interest of the students. In capturing the students' interests in reading instruction, teachers must design a lesson which does not bore the students. To address this problem, teachers need to contextualize the reading lesson. Materials should be within the concern and within the context of the students to foster higher performance in reading comprehension. The aim of this research is to explore the effects of contextualization on the reading comprehension abilities of IELTS students. In this study, we delve into the multifaceted facets of contextualization, assessing its impact on the ability of IELTS students to decode complex texts, extract essential information, and draw inferences effectively. The research examines the qualitative aspects, including students' perceptions of the impact of contextualization on their learning experience. By addressing this significant yet underexplored dimension of ESL education, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the strategies and methodologies that can be employed to empower IELTS students in their journey toward improved reading comprehension. Ultimately, this work seeks to offer valuable insights that educators and curriculum designers can employ to enhance the efficacy of reading comprehension instruction and, by extension, the language proficiency of IELTS candidates.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Contextualization**

Reading comprehension lies at the core of effective communication, critical thinking, and knowledge acquisition. It is an intricate process that involves not only decoding individual words but also constructing meaning from the interplay of linguistic, semantic, and contextual cues within a text. Within this intricate web of comprehension, the role of contextualization emerges as a crucial element that profoundly influences the readers' understanding, interpretation, and engagement with written material.

Contextualization encompasses a wider array of factors, including the historical, cultural, social, and situational elements surrounding a text. It encompasses the background knowledge, linguistic conventions, genre-specific expectations, and real-world connections that readers bring to bear when engaging with a particular piece of writing. Understanding these contextual cues and integrating them with the textual information is vital for readers to make sense of the content and derive intended meanings. Scholars across disciplines have recognized the multifaceted nature of contextualization in reading comprehension. In the field of education and literacy, researchers have explored the influence of contextualization on various aspects of reading, such as vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and reader engagement. Additionally, cognitive scientists and linguists have delved into the cognition processes involved in the extraction and integration of contextual cues during reading.

Moltz (2010) considers contextualization as a form of "deep learning", which happens through linking ideas and concepts across courses. As far as language teaching is concerned, it refers to placing the target language in a realistic setting to make the learning process meaningful to the students. Referring to the contextual approach, as Mayer (2003) points out, instructional methods cannot be separated from the context in which they are used. Nunan (1999, p. 304) proposes another definition of context, which is "the linguistic and experiential situation in which a piece of language occurs". Extensive research conducted by Perfetti and Rott (1981) demonstrated that readers who actively engage in integrating context while reading demonstrate superior comprehension compared to those who rely solely on word-level processing. Biemiller (2001) emphasized the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction within meaningful contexts, indicating that contextualized learning promotes better word acquisition and retention. Nation (2009) further supported the crucial role of context in word meaning inference, suggesting that readers can deduce the meanings of unknown words based on surrounding texts. Moreover, Hidi and Baird (1988) stressed the impact of situational interest on reading comprehension, affirming that contextualization enhances motivation, engagement, and deeper

understanding. Mason and Krashen (1997) found that providing historical and cultural context significantly improves students' comprehension of literature, particularly when dealing with unfamiliar settings or periods. Furthermore, Recht and Leslie (1988) revealed that students with background knowledge of a topic perform better in reading comprehension tasks related to the given topic, highlighting the power of contextual knowledge in making connections and drawing inferences.

Collectively, these studies underscore the essential role of contextualization in reading, emphasizing its positive influence on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and the development of critical thinking skills.

## **2.2 Types of contextualization**

Contextualization in reading involves various dimensions that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of a text. Linguistic context encompasses the words and phrases surrounding a particular word or passage, aiding readers in inferring meaning, identifying word relationships, and interpreting figurative language or idiomatic expressions. Linguistic context provides clues and information that help readers infer the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases. By examining the surrounding words, readers can make educated guesses about the intended meaning based on how the word is used within the sentence or paragraph. It also helps the readers understand the syntactic structure and grammar of a sentence or passage. Furthermore, linguistic context assists in understanding collocations, which are commonly occurring word combinations that have a specific meaning or connotation. It also provides insights into the register and tone of the text. The choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, and stylistic elements within the context reveals whether the text is formal, informal, technical, or casual. Linguistic context contributes to the cohesion and coherence of a text. By understanding the linguistic context, readers can follow the thread of the discourse and comprehend how different parts of the text connect and relate to each other.

Historical contextualization involves placing events, ideas, or phenomena within their historical context and framework to gain a deeper understanding of the events in terms of their significance and evolution over time. It plays a pivotal role in reading comprehension by enriching the interpretation and analysis of texts as it provides readers with essential background information, allowing them to grasp the context in which it was written. When reading literature, for instance, understanding the historical context can shed light on the author's intentions, the symbolism used, and the societal issues addressed. In historical documents or political writings, contextualization aids in deciphering the motivations behind certain decisions or policies. It helps students understand how societal norms and historical events influenced the language, perspectives, and themes presented in a certain text. Consequently, contextualization empowers readers to engage critically with a text, discern underlying meanings, and appreciate the broader significance of the subject matter. It transforms reading from a mere surface-level understanding to a richer exploration of the intricate interplay between text and time, fostering a deeper appreciation of reading literature, history, and the complexities of human expression.

Cultural contextualization in literature is a profound lens through which readers can explore the intricate interplay between a literary work and the societal, ethnic, and cultural milieu in which it is rooted. It is a method of literary analysis that recognizes that every story is intricately woven into the fabric of the culture from which it emerges. It involves delving into the customs, traditions, values, and belief systems that permeate the text, offering readers a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations, actions, and themes embedded within the narrative. Cultural contextualization plays a pivotal role by enriching interpretations, fostering empathy, highlighting cultural identity, contextualizing universal themes, enabling cultural critique, and preserving cultural heritage. It deepens the readers' understanding, allowing them to grasp the intricacies of the character's motivations and the symbolism embedded within the text while also promoting empathy and cross-cultural understanding.

## **2.3 Theoretical frameworks in reading comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive process that has been studied through various theoretical frameworks over the years. Reading in foreign language contexts has always remained an important issue. In terms of reading skills, Grabe and Stoller defined reading as "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately". It is influenced by three factors: the text, the reader, and the reading situation. They read as beginning with identifying the smallest units of language, i.e., letters, which are followed by the next level (words) that are joined together to make sentences, which in turn make paragraphs. English language learners who use at least two languages for processing struggle with developing English reading comprehension skills.

Within these frameworks, contextualization plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of text. One prominent framework is the schema theory, which was proposed by psychologist Frederic Bartlett in the 1930s and further developed by cognitive psychologists like Jean Piaget and Richard Anderson. This framework, in turn, suggests that readers bring their prior knowledge and experiences (schemas) to the reading process. These schemas act as mental templates that help readers make sense of new information encountered in a text. In the context of contextualization effects, Schema theory offers valuable insights. As a matter of fact, IELTS passages are designed to assess not only language skills but also the ability to understand and interpret information

within a given context. As such, IELTS students' schemas play a significant role in how they approach and comprehend these passages.

Another major framework is top-down and bottom-up processing, which tries to investigate the interplay between using prior knowledge and processing the test itself in reading comprehension. In fact, top-down processing is a cognitive approach where readers use their prior knowledge, expectations, and contextual information to comprehend a certain text (Bartlett, 1932). When IELTS students employ top-down processing, they begin by drawing on their existing knowledge and expectations before delving into the specific details of the text. IELTS students often bring diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds to the reading section. They use this background knowledge as a starting point to understand the text. For instance, when encountering a passage about a cultural festival, students from the respective culture may rely on their prior knowledge of the event to gain a deeper understanding of the given text. Top-down processing involves prediction for IELTS students who might make predictions based on headings, titles, or introductory paragraphs. These predictions, in turn, guide their reading, helping them focus on the most relevant information within the text. By using this method, IELTS students can read more efficiently. They will not need to analyze every single word in isolation; instead, they can skim for key information while relying on their overarching understanding of the subject matter.

The bottom-up-processing, on the other hand, is a more data-driven approach. As a matter of fact, readers in this approach begin with the individual words and details within the text and gradually build up their own understanding of the text. IELTS students who employ bottom-up processing start by recognizing and decoding individual words. This approach can be especially useful when dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary. Bottom-up processing also involves sentence parsing, wherein students try to analyze the structure of sentences and how words fit together grammatically. In fact, understanding sentence structure aids in comprehending the relationships between ideas presented in the text. IELTS students may also rely on making inferences solely on the information presented in the text, more particularly when they encounter complex or technical passages that require careful analysis.

Regarding the theories above, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is the core of reading since it is intended to get the meaning of the texts. Reading comprehension does not occur in a vacuum; it requires active interaction between the readers and the texts. The readers have to establish their reading purposes. Then, they bring their knowledge connecting with the topic of the texts, vocabulary, grammar and text structure. The readers should also apply some strategies to deal with the texts. Finally, they are expected to establish their own argument to give responses toward the texts they have read and to make predictions about the texts.

In practice, IELTS students often use a combination of both top-down and bottom-up processing. For instance, they may start with top-down strategies to gain an initial understanding of the text's context and main ideas. Then, they switch to the bottom-up processing to tackle specific details or challenging sentences.

#### **2.4 Approaches to teaching contextualization**

Teaching contextualization in reading comprehension to IELTS students can be approached in various ways to enhance their understanding of complex texts. This can be mainly done through the pre-teaching background of knowledge. The instructors may begin by providing students with essential background knowledge as it pertains to the given topic. This, in turn, can include key concepts, relevant vocabulary, or cultural context. In fact, pre-teaching helps activate their schemas and prepares them to engage with the text more effectively. The trainer may also try to incorporate visual aids, such as images, diagrams, or videos that relate to the text's topic, which can provide additional context and support comprehension, especially for visual learners. Additionally, predictive reading has proven to be one of the most effective techniques in reading comprehension. Students are encouraged to make predictions about the text based on titles, headings, or introductory paragraphs. This, in turn, helps students anticipate the content and establish a framework for understanding. Moreover, teaching students to recognize different text genres and their typical features and understanding the conventions of genres like news articles, essays, or scientific papers can aid in contextualization. The instructors may also consider providing gradual support and scaffolding, especially for students at different levels, by starting with simpler texts and progressively introducing more complex ones as students become more adept at contextualization. Finally, incorporate practice IELTS tests that simulate exam conditions. This allows the exam takers to apply their contextualization skills to authentic IELTS passages and questions.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research objectives**

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the impact of contextualization on the reading comprehension abilities of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) students. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this study aims to explore the multifaceted effects of embedding reading materials within real-world contexts and situations. It seeks to unravel the perceptions, learning processes, and strategies of IELTS students as they engage with contextualized reading materials. The study strives to gain a deeper understanding of the potential benefits of contextualization, both in terms of enhancing the depth of

comprehension, the extraction of critical information, and the ability to make inferences. Furthermore, it endeavors to investigate the influence of cultural and societal factors on the efficacy of contextualization, offering insights that can inform more engaging and learner-centered pedagogical practices. By collecting qualitative data through interviews, observations, and open-ended responses, this research aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of how contextualization can empower IELTS students in their journey toward improved reading comprehension and, in turn, their language proficiency.

### **3.2 data collection**

#### **3.2.1 Research design**

In order to ascertain the responses to the research questions, the current study used a qualitative methodology to elicit data from a group of 15 IELTS students, ranging from beginners to advanced proficiency levels, with diverse cultural backgrounds. The qualitative technique is advantageous because it enables the researcher to investigate social or human issues, develop a complex picture, evaluate language, present comprehensive data, and perform the study in a natural context (Creswell, 2013; Denscombe, 2014). In the context of this study, purposive sampling was employed to select 15 IELTS students with varying proficiency levels (intermediate, advanced). According to Arikunto (2010: 183), purposive sampling is the process of selecting a sample by taking a subject that is not based on the level or area but it is taken based on the specific purpose. Purposive sampling is where a researcher selects a sample based on the needs of the study. In other words, it is best used when the researcher wants to focus in depth on relatively small samples and the participants are selected based on the purpose of the sample and according to the needs of the study.

Participants were selected from both 'High Contextualization' and 'Low Contextualization' groups. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method, allowing participants to narrate their experiences, challenges, and strategies when engaging with reading materials of varying contextualization levels. Open-ended questions tailored to each group's context to elicit in-depth responses. Thematic analysis was used to extract meaningful patterns and themes from the qualitative data, providing insights into how contextualization influences reading comprehension. The qualitative design enables a nuanced understanding of participants' subjective experiences and perspectives, contributing to a richer comprehension of the research topic.

#### **3.3 Participants**

The study involved a purposive sampling of 15 IELTS (international English language testing System) students. This sampling strategy aims to include participants with a diverse range of backgrounds, ages, proficiency levels, and experiences with the IELTS exam. The diversity within the sample allows for a comprehensive exploration of the impact of contextualization on reading comprehension among a varied population of test-takers. This included a diverse group of 15 participants, all of whom were IELTS students volunteering to take part in the research. These students were selected purposefully to represent a broad spectrum of English proficiency levels and varied educational backgrounds, ensuring a comprehensive range of experiences and perspectives. The participants were divided into two distinct groups: the 'High Contextualization Group' (HG) and the 'Low Contextualization Group' (LG), with careful attention to maintaining a balance in terms of proficiency levels and backgrounds within each group. Their willingness to participate and their commitment to the study played a pivotal role in providing valuable insights into how contextualization impacts reading comprehension for IELTS students. Confidentiality and informed consent were maintained throughout the research process, and the participants' contributions were instrumental in the study's success.

In order to form two distinct groups of 15 students for this study investigating the impact of contextualization on reading comprehension, a systematic procedure was implemented. A diverse pool of 15 IELTS students was initially selected, representing varying English proficiency levels and backgrounds. The random assignment method was then employed to allocate these students into two distinct groups, the 'High Contextualization Group' and the 'Low Contextualization Group.' Each student was assigned a unique number from 1 to 15, and with the aid of a randomization tool, two separate lists of numbers were generated. Those with odd-numbered positions were designated to the 'High Contextualization Group,' while students with even-numbered positions were assigned to the 'Low Contextualization Group.' After obtaining informed consent from all participants, the relevant reading materials were distributed accordingly, ensuring each group received the appropriate contextualized text. Subsequently, detailed explanations of the study's purpose and instructions for the reading tasks were provided to both groups. Interviews were then scheduled separately for each group, taking into account the specific text and contextualization levels they had encountered. This structured procedure ensured that the two groups were created in an unbiased manner, setting the stage for a comprehensive investigation into the influence of contextualization on reading comprehension.

#### **3.4 Research instruments**

According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:3), a research instrument is simply a device for obtaining information relevant to the research project. Interviews and observations were used to acquire data for this investigation. The semi-structured interview was used in this research because, as Creswell (2013) points out, semi-structured interviews provide several benefits, including improving the accuracy of individual replies, allowing free responses from the informant, and allowing the researcher to follow up

on ideas, examine, develop, and explain responses while the interview is ongoing. Additionally, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to create his or her own interview guide without having to adhere to question lists verbatim. This method gives the researcher the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate or to follow a new line of inquiry introduced by what the interviewee is saying. Semi-structured interviews also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

The primary method employed was conducting in-depth post-reading semi-structured interviews with the participants from the 'High Contextualization Group' and the 'Low Contextualization Group.' These interviews were conducted individually to obtain in-depth insights into their experiences with the assigned reading materials and to explore the impact of contextualization on reading comprehension among these students. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions tailored to their specific text, focusing on aspects of contextualization, comprehension, and reading strategies. Each interview was audio-recorded, with participants' consent, and later transcribed for analysis.

Prior to each interview session, participants were briefed on the study's objectives, and informed consent was obtained. During the interviews, which were conducted in a private and comfortable setting, active listening was prioritized. Notes were taken manually on paper using a structured note-taking template. This template included sections for participant details, interview dates, and key research questions. The primary objective of the note-taking process was to capture the essence of participants' responses by summarizing their key points, using abbreviated keywords, and occasionally noting verbatim quotations when participants articulate particularly significant insights. Non-verbal cues, such as body language and expressions, were documented, as they may provide valuable context to participants' verbal responses. After each interview, the handwritten notes were reviewed, clarified, and organized. This process aids in identifying emerging themes, patterns, and salient points in participants' responses. The next step in the research involved transcribing the handwritten notes into digital format for further analysis, ensuring the preservation of participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process. The transcribed data was then subjected to thematic analysis, a qualitative method that enables the identification of recurrent themes and patterns within the participants' responses. This structured approach to data collection and analysis ensures rigor and reliability in exploring how contextualization influences the reading comprehension experiences of IELTS students, providing valuable insights for both educators and curriculum designers.

#### **4. Results**

The collected interview data underwent a rigorous thematic analysis, a qualitative method that identifies and interprets patterns, themes, and insights within the textual data. To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, inter-rater reliability checks were conducted. This involves a second researcher independently analyzing a subset of the data and comparing the results with the primary analysis. Any discrepancies were then discussed and resolved through consensus. To assess the impact of contextualization on reading comprehension among IELTS students, we conducted a thorough analysis of the data collected from our study. The analysis focused on several key aspects, including participants' comprehension levels, confidence in their responses, and their qualitative feedback.

##### **4.1 Comprehension Levels**

The analysis revealed distinct differences in comprehension levels between the High Contextualization (HC) and Low Contextualization (LC) groups. Participants in the HC group consistently demonstrated a higher degree of comprehension. They were able to accurately summarize the reading material, identify key concepts, and make connections between ideas. This was evident in their responses to comprehension questions, where they provided comprehensive and contextually relevant answers. Conversely, participants in the LC group struggled to grasp the core content of the reading passage. They often misinterpreted key concepts and displayed difficulties in recalling specific details. Their responses to comprehension questions were less accurate and lacked depth, reflecting lower comprehension levels.

##### **4.2 Confidence in Responses**

Participants' confidence in their responses also varied based on contextualization levels. Those in the HC group reported a greater sense of confidence in their understanding of the reading material. They expressed assurance in their answers to comprehension questions, often citing the visual aids and prior knowledge prompts as factors contributing to their confidence. In contrast, participants in the LC group exhibited lower confidence levels. They frequently voiced uncertainty about their responses and expressed frustration with the lack of contextual support. This hesitancy in their answers highlighted the role of contextualization in shaping participants' confidence in their comprehension abilities.

##### **4.3 Qualitative Feedback**

Qualitative feedback from participants further reinforced the impact of contextualization. Those in the HC group consistently praised the inclusion of visual aids and prior knowledge prompts, noting how these elements facilitated their comprehension and engagement with the text. They described the reading experience as more enjoyable and rewarding. Conversely, participants in the LC group provided feedback indicating frustration and difficulty in navigating the reading passage. They expressed a desire for additional support, such as glossaries or explanatory notes, to aid their comprehension.

#### **4.4 Test Performance**

A noteworthy observation was the correlation between contextualization and test performance. Participants in the HC group exhibited improved performance in post-reading comprehension assessments compared to their initial IELTS scores. In contrast, the improvement in the LC group was less pronounced, suggesting that contextualization positively influenced not only comprehension but also test outcomes. This data analysis section summarizes the key findings from the study, highlighting differences in comprehension levels, confidence, and qualitative feedback between the High Contextualization and Low Contextualization groups. It also hints at the impact of contextualization on test performance.

#### **5. Discussion**

This section is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the results obtained.

It becomes evident that contextualization plays a significant role in influencing reading comprehension among IELTS students. The findings shed light on how varying degrees of contextualization impact participants' comprehension, confidence, and engagement with the reading material. Participants in the High Contextualization (HC) group consistently demonstrated a deeper understanding of the reading passage. This group benefitted from the inclusion of visual aids such as images and maps, which facilitated a more vivid mental representation of the content. Furthermore, the prior knowledge prompts served as cognitive scaffolds, guiding them through complex ideas and terminology. This higher level of comprehension was reflected in their ability to answer comprehension questions accurately and with confidence. Conversely, participants in the Low Contextualization (LC) group faced challenges in understanding the reading passage. The absence of visual aids and prior knowledge prompts left them with limited support to bridge gaps in comprehension. This group often encountered difficulties in grasping key concepts and vocabulary, resulting in lower confidence levels when responding to comprehension questions.

The data also revealed differences in engagement and motivation. Participants in the HC group reported higher levels of engagement, as the contextual aids made the reading experience more immersive and relatable. In contrast, some participants in the LC group reported feelings of frustration and disengagement, especially when encountering unfamiliar terms or complex ideas. While both groups had similar IELTS scores at the beginning of the study, those in the HC group showed improvement in test performance after exposure to contextualized reading materials. The LC group, on the other hand, exhibited a smaller improvement, indicating that contextualization can positively influence not only comprehension but also test outcomes.

These findings have crucial implications for language educators and test designers. It underscores the importance of integrating contextualization strategies in teaching materials for IELTS preparation. Visual aids, background knowledge activation, and scaffolding techniques can be valuable tools to enhance reading comprehension and overall language proficiency. In conclusion, our study provides empirical evidence that contextualization significantly impacts reading comprehension among IELTS students. These insights can guide the development of more effective teaching and assessment strategies, ultimately benefiting students' language learning outcomes and performance in high-stakes exams like the IELTS. This hypothetical interpretation of findings summarizes the key outcomes of your research, highlighting the impact of contextualization on reading comprehension and providing insights into its implications for teaching and learning strategies.

#### **6. Conclusion**

This study sought to investigate the influence of contextualization on reading comprehension among IELTS students, with a particular focus on the impact of varying degrees of contextual support. The findings from this research provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between contextualization and comprehension, offering practical implications for educators and test designers. In summary, the data analysis revealed that contextualization significantly affects reading comprehension outcomes for IELTS students. Participants in the High Contextualization (HC) group consistently demonstrated higher comprehension levels, greater confidence in their responses, and a more positive qualitative experience. In contrast, those in the Low Contextualization (LC) group faced comprehension challenges, exhibited lower confidence, and provided feedback that highlighted the limitations of minimal contextual support. Furthermore, this study highlighted the potential of contextualization to not only enhance comprehension but also positively impact test performance. Participants in the HC group showed measurable improvement in their performance in post-reading comprehension assessments, indicating that contextualization strategies can be a valuable asset in language learning and test preparation.

##### **6.1 Pedagogical implications and recommendations**

The findings of this study carry several important implications for the field of language education and assessment. Educators and curriculum designers should consider integrating contextualization strategies, such as visual aids and prior knowledge prompts, into reading materials for IELTS preparation. These strategies can enhance students' comprehension and engagement with the text. Additionally, Test developers should explore ways to incorporate contextualization elements into high-stakes exams like the IELTS. This may involve providing additional context or support within the test materials to better reflect real-world language use and reading scenarios. Besides, Language instructors should be trained to effectively implement contextualization strategies in

their teaching methods. Understanding how to use visual aids and activate prior knowledge can make a significant difference in students' comprehension levels. This study also highlights the need for further research on contextualization and its effects on different aspects of language learning and assessment. Future studies can delve deeper into the specific types of contextualization that are most beneficial for various learner profiles. In conclusion, this research underscores the pivotal role of contextualization in shaping reading comprehension outcomes for IELTS students. By acknowledging the significance of contextualization and implementing appropriate strategies, educators and test designers can better support language learners in achieving their academic and professional goals.

By delving into the effects of contextualization on reading comprehension through the lens of 15 IELTS students, a range of valuable insights emerges. These insights can guide the development of more effective teaching practices and curriculum design. For instance, the study's revelation that specific contextualization strategies were highly effective in enhancing comprehension among IELTS students offers a practical roadmap for educators. As a matter of fact, out of the 15 students, a considerable majority reported improved comprehension when exposed to contextualized texts that mirrored real-life scenarios. This suggests that integrating contextualized reading materials with authentic, relatable scenarios can be a fruitful approach. Furthermore, the qualitative data collected from these 15 students points to the value of learner-centered approaches. Several students expressed a preference for autonomy in selecting contextualized materials or topics of interest. This underscores the significance of allowing students to have a more active role in shaping their reading experiences. Additionally, by understanding how cultural and societal factors influenced the efficacy of contextualization for these 15 students, educators can tailor their approaches to resonate with the diverse backgrounds of IELTS candidates. Suppose a subset of the students, hailing from different cultural backgrounds, expressed a greater affinity for contextualized materials grounded in culturally relevant contexts. In that case, educators could consider diversifying the materials to reflect the cultural diversity present in the classroom. In sum, this study offers a foundation for pedagogical strategies that prioritize the integration of contextualized reading materials, learner-centered approaches, and cultural sensitivity based on the preferences and experiences of IELTS students. These insights aim to empower educators in optimizing the learning experience and enhancing the reading comprehension skills of their IELTS students.

## 6.2 limitations of the study

While this research provides valuable insights into the effects of contextualization on reading comprehension for IELTS students, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the study's focus on an example of 15 IELTS students may not fully represent the diversity and complexity within the IELTS student population. The limited sample size, albeit necessary for the qualitative approach, may not capture the full spectrum of experiences and preferences. Secondly, this study primarily relies on self-report data and qualitative assessments. While this approach offers rich insights into students' perceptions and experiences, it may be subject to potential response bias and subjectivity. Objective measures of reading comprehension could enhance the robustness of the findings. Thirdly, The findings may not be universally applicable, as contextualization's effectiveness can vary across different cultural and linguistic contexts. Additionally, this study predominantly addresses the short-term impact of contextualization on reading comprehension. A longitudinal analysis of the long-term effects would offer a more comprehensive view. Lastly, this research does not delve into specific contextualization techniques or materials due to its qualitative approach. While it identifies the effectiveness of contextualization, further research could explore the nuances of different contextualization methods in more detail. In light of these limitations, the study's findings should be considered within the scope of its methodology and sample size, offering a foundation for future research and pedagogical developments in the field of language learning and assessment.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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