

A Systematic Literature Review of Current Reading Strategies Employed among Primary Students in Reading

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Abstract

Reading is a complex yet essential skill in learning the English language. However, students are often found to be poor in reading and this has affected their performance in using the English language. Reading strategies are introduced to help students in improving reading, but literature on reading strategies used among primary students is scarce, and not much is known about the reading strategies that are being employed among the primary students. Addressing the problems, systematic literature review adhering to the PRISMA 2020 guideline is conducted. Eight articles from two prominent databases, ERIC and Google Scholar respectively are selected. Findings reveal that there are more than 20 reading strategies currently employed among primary students, with some studies using similar reading strategies. Although the reading strategies are effective, students have expressed personal preferences over the reading strategies. Future studies may consider comparing reading strategies employed among primary students before COVID-19 and during COVID-19 and determine the extent of the effectiveness of these reading strategies among the primary students.

Keywords: Reading, English Language, English as a Second Language, Reading Strategies, Primary Students

Introduction

The English language stands as a second language in many countries, especially those that were previously colonized by the British or Americans (Howatt and Smith 2014; Ponnuchamy, G. 2018), in which part of the countries involved is Malaysia. In the English language, it comprises mainly four skills that users of the English language must be proficient in, to which the four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Hashim and Yunu, 2018). Particularly, reading is a skill that involves a series of complex cognitive processes posed on language users (Ilter, 2017; Sonmez and Sulak, 2018; Tobia, and Bonifacci, 2020; Wong and Aziz, 2019).

Even though the English language is considered to have its status as the lingua franca, there are still many students from countries where English that serves as the second language are still weak on the command of the English language Wong and Aziz 2019. Specifically, one of the biggest problems identified is that many primary school students are still poor in reading skills Wong and Aziz 2019. As a reader engages into reading, there are two main processes in which the reader has to follow. First, the reader decodes the text where he or she identifies the words, phrases, and sentences seen. The first process is thus known as the low-level processing in reading (Ilter, 2017; Sonmez and Sulak, 2018; Tobia, and Bonifacci 2020; Wong and Aziz, 2019). Then, the reader enters the deriving process in which the reader derives meaning from the texts read through the use of various reading strategies and resources that are available (Ilter, 2017; Tobia, and Bonifacci, 2020; Wong and Aziz 2019). This second process is known as high-level processing (Ilter, I. 2017; Tobia, and Bonifacci 2020; Wong and Aziz 2019). During the reading process, understanding is also achieved when the reader brings his or prior knowledge into the text. When combined, an active reader is where the reader constantly engages with the text being read, interacts with all elements and sub-elements that are present in the text, and derives the meanings in the text to come to a deeper understanding of the text read (Ilter, I. 2017; Tobia, and Bonifacci, 2020). A part of reading is reading comprehension, in which it can be understood as a reader's comprehension towards contents synthesized from various sources available to generate new concepts (Sönmez and Sulak, 2018).

Despite the introduction of several reading strategies and theories to assist students in reading, research indicates that many readers struggle with reading (Tobia and Bonifacci, 2020; Wong and Aziz, 2019). Students are often unable to express the contents of books they have read, and thus fail to answer questions assessing their reading comprehension (Halim and Arif, 2020). Concerningly, most answers to the reading comprehension questions are irrelevant (Halim and Arif, 2020). Readers also have difficulty recognizing implicit meanings in texts and are unable to discover implicit meanings such as making conclusions from the available resources, critically evaluating the information offered, and failing to recognize contextual signals in the text (Halim and Arif, 2020). Simply, kids cannot demonstrate awareness of the materials they have read (Ilter, 2017). Reading is a skill that must be learned since it is essential for lifelong success (Scott and Saaiman, 2016). Yusof (2021) expressed worry that as technology continues to flourish across the world, kids are rapidly losing interest in reading in favour of being glued to their phone displays and communicating with others. Reading habits among students are increasingly deteriorating, and fewer students are visiting libraries (Yusof, 2021). Young language learners should begin reading as soon as possible since reading helps them become literate persons capable of functioning in society and pursuing academic success (Scott and Saaiman, 2016; Xiao and Hu, 2019). Reading is fundamental in enabling readers to get more information and experience to comprehend how the world functions (Yusof, 2021). Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging students to read well by using successful strategies such as questioning, drawing conclusions, and text comprehension (Ilter, 2017; Scott and Saaiman, 2016).

Further, there remains a scarcity of literature on reading strategies among primary school students. Many studies thus far over the past five years that are available in the literature often investigated reading strategies among secondary schools (Molotja and Themane 2020), higher educational institutions (Banditvilai, 2020; Becirovic and Brdarevic, 2017; Kose and Gunes, 2021; Salam and Sukarti, 2020), and special education (Grindle and Kurzeja, 2020; Karasu, 2020; Quezada, 2021; Thangarajathi, 2020). There seems to be a

neglect of how reading strategies are employed in the primary education setting, not to mention that there is a specification on the types of reading strategies currently employed in the primary education setting.

Researchers have asked for more studies to uncover effective reading strategies for assisting students with reading (Tobia and Bonifacci, 2020; Wong and Aziz, 2019; Xiao and Hu, 2019). The increased number of poor readers has necessitated the implementation of more effective reading practices in schools (Tobia and Bonifacci, 2020; Wong and Aziz, 2019; Xiao and Hu, 2019). While the literature on reading methods is normally abundant, the emphasis on reading strategies adopted in primary schools and among primary students continues to be limited.

Accordingly, the systematic literature review paper seeks to accomplish the following research questions:

1. *What are the current reading strategies employed among primary students in reading?*

Materials and Methods

To conduct the systematic literature review, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is used as a guide in selecting the literature. PRISMA is a well-known item that is often referred to where guides are used by the researchers to conduct systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses (Page and McKenzie, 2020; Shamseer and Moher, 2015; Tawfik and Dila, 2019). Accordingly, one such advantage that is offered by systematic literature review is that it allows researchers to gather the necessary data that are evidenced with details and synthesize pieces of research papers in determining how a topic is approached in different manners (Page and McKenzie, 2020; Shamseer and Moher, 2015; Tawfik and Dila, 2019).

The systematic literature review for this paper is guided by the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram that is made available in the official PRISMA website. Accordingly, the guideline for the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram is as attached in the Appendix A. Simply, the flow has a total of three steps wherein it begins with the identification of studies, followed by screening, and decision to include the studies. The following discusses the process of selecting the studies based on the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram.

The following table describes the inclusion and exclusion criteria during the selection of journal articles for the systematic literature review. Accordingly, in the inclusion criteria, only articles that are published in the recent five years which are between 2017 and 2022 are selected. Further, as being a country where the status of the English language is the second language, articles that involve English as a Second Language are selected. Then, the scope is further narrowed where the article must include reading and primary school students as part of the focus in the articles.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria are as follows: Only journal articles are referred for the systematic literature review, and that other genres like books, conferences, reviews, theses and dissertations, systematic reviews, and reports and documentaries are all automatically discarded. Next, research articles where population and samples are not from primary education setting are discarded. Finally, any research articles where the aims do not look solely on reading are automatically discarded. The brief summary of the inclusion and exclusion criteria is as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recent journal articles (years 2017 to 2022). ● Only ESL context is involved. ● Only reading is involved. ● Only primary education is involved. ● Must include primary school students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Books, conferences, reviews, theses and dissertations, systematic reviews, and reports and documentaries. ● Secondary education, higher education, special education, and adult education. ● Other language skills (listening, speaking and writing; integrated skills).

Even while the literature is flooded with many investigations in two major bibliographic databases – Web of Science and Scopus, most of this research, including literature reviews, are rather limited in scope or limited to a single subject. Therefore, articles are collected from two main databases, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Google Scholar, respectively. To meet the inclusion criteria as established, they keyword “primary reading strategy” is used to search for relevant articles. Then, from the results shown on the two databases, filtering is selected where only the articles from the recent five years: 2017 to 2022 are selected. After the results shown on the two databases based on the years selected, articles are then screened based on the exclusion criteria. Those articles that matched the exclusion criteria are automatically discarded.

Results*Study Selection*

Based on the results filtered, ERIC has shown a total of 45 articles while Google Scholar shows a total of 30 articles. By referring to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a final total of eight articles are selected for the systematic literature review, which a brief statistic on the articles obtained and selected is presented in the following table.

Table 2

Statistics Obtained through Screening of Studies

Databases	Frequency Shown Results	in Filtered Studies	Final Selected Studies
Educational Resources Information Center	45 studies	41 studies	4 studies
Google Scholar	30 studies	26 studies	4 studies

As such, through the screening process only eight studies, four respectively from each database, are selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria established. Based on the eight studies obtained after the screening process, a review is conducted on these studies to answer the research questions as aforementioned. Following the studies that are identified based on the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, Tables 3 and 4 list the summary of the articles selected where the purposes and corresponding findings are made available in them.

Table 3

Summary of Articles Obtained from ERIC

Authors & Title	Purpose of Study	Findings
(Boudreaux and Mooney, 2017) An evaluation of close reading with at-risk fourth-grade students in science content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researchers aimed at determining the effects of close reading strategy and Collaborative Strategic Reading on primary students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores in reading through close reading strategy are higher before its implementation. Scores in reading through Collaborative Strategic Reading are higher before its implementation. Students generally favor both reading strategies implemented based on the survey distributed. However, more students prefer Collaborative Strategic Reading over close reading strategy. Yet, students also mentioned that both are equally effective in preparing them to read well on texts.
(Halim and Arif, 2020) Enhancing reading comprehension through metacognitive reading strategies and peer tutoring among year 7 students at a home school centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researchers aimed at determining the effects of metacognitive reading strategies and peer tutoring on reading in home-school centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test scores indicate that students generally showed improvement after receiving the intervention of reading strategies. Students believe that metacognitive reading strategies are effective in aiding them to read. Students are found to use summarizing and paraphrasing methods to understand the text. Peer tutoring is found to be effective in helping students to understand the text. Peer tutoring is found to be also effective in boosting the students' motivation and confidence towards reading the text. However, it is found that students would seek for Chinese translation to better understand the text quickly.
(Ilter, 2017) Improving the reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The researcher aimed at teaching the students on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are generally able to generalize the paraphrasing

<p>comprehension of primary-school students at frustration-level reading through the paraphrasing strategy training: A multiple-probe design study.</p>	<p>reading comprehension using the RAP paraphrasing strategy and multiple-probes.</p>	<p>strategy to other different kinds of texts read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students are able to obtain high scores on short-answer tests after receiving training on text-recall strategy. ● Students are generally improving in their reading comprehension proficiency after receiving training. ● Students are generally performing poorly in reading expository texts especially on obtaining main ideas and specific details but improved greatly after receiving training. ● Students believe that the RAP paraphrasing strategy is applicable and effective in aiding them to comprehend reading texts.
<p>(Sonmez and Sulak, 2018) The effect of thinking-aloud strategy on the reading comprehension skills of 4th grade primary school students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The researchers aimed at examining if the thinking-aloud reading strategy has helped students to be proficient in reading comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thinking-aloud strategy has helped in improving the reading comprehension test scores among the students. ● Students who received the intervention on thinking-aloud strategy have improved significantly on the reading comprehension test scores. ● Students are found to develop positive reading comprehension skills after receiving the intervention on thinking-aloud reading strategy.

Table 4. Summary of articles obtained from Google Scholar.

Authors & Title	Purpose of Study	Findings
<p>(Jamal and Dehraj, 2018) Study of strategies for enhancement of reading skills: Perceptions of primary school teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The researchers aimed at investigating the reading skills and assessing the primary students' reading comprehension towards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocabulary reading is the most used strategy employed to help students in reading. ● Recognizing letter names is the second most used strategy employed to help students in reading. ● Identifying the phonemics, reading the passages, and

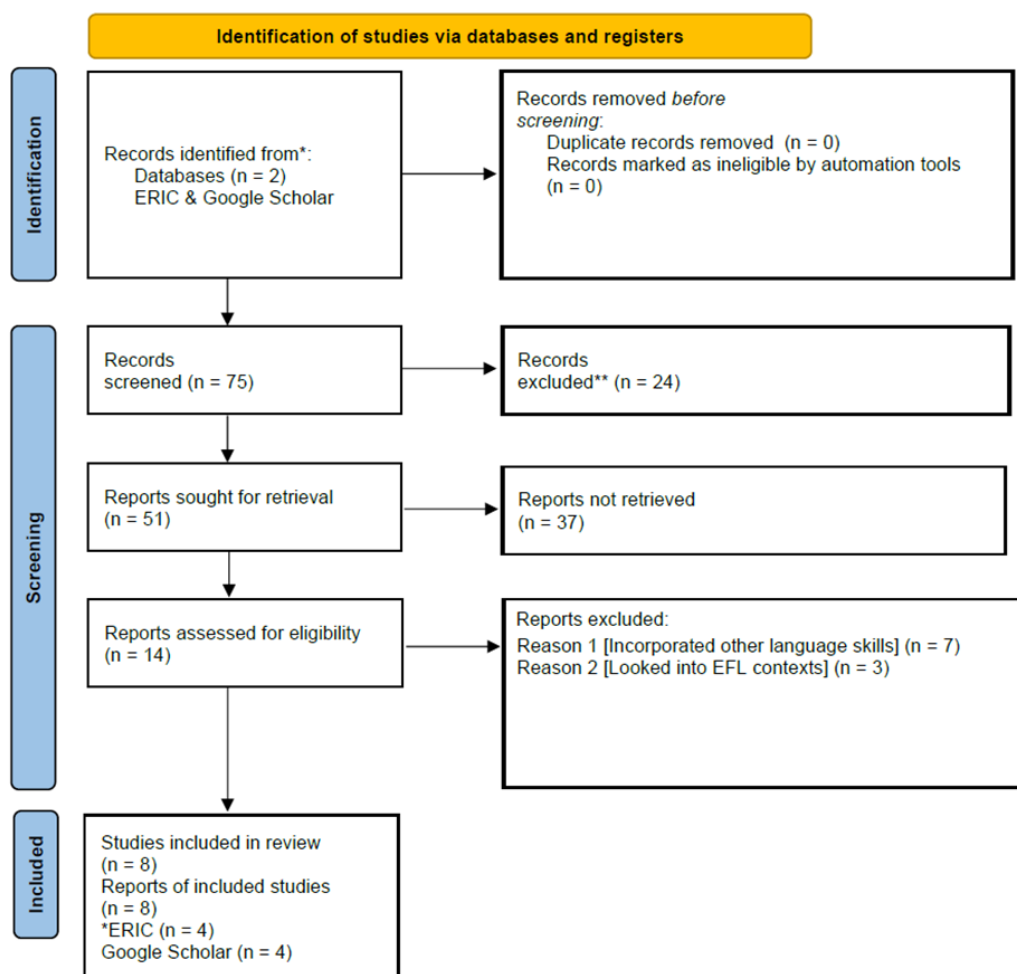
	understanding texts.	reading the syllables ranked third equally in terms of helping the students to read.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading long vowels is the least used reading strategy to help students in reading.
(Tobia, and Bonifacci, 2020) Look back at text or rely on memory? Efficacy of reading comprehension strategies in good and poor oral comprehenders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The researchers aimed at determining which strategy primary school children employ the most and compare the extent of strategy usage among good and poor readers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relying on memory as a reading strategy is significantly related to good readers. ● Relying on memory as a reading strategy is significantly better than looking-back at text reading strategy. ● Poor readers are found to frequently flipping back at pages to search for answers.
(Wong and Aziz, 2019) Scaffolding approach with reading strategies in teaching reading comprehension to rural year 3 ESL learners in Malaysia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The researchers aimed at exploring the reading strategies employed among primary ESL learners in the rural context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Predicting strategy has helped the students in making intelligent guesses based on the story read. ● Students are capable of confirming, verifying, and revising the predictions made through the information they have received. ● Connection strategy is used among the students in reading. ● Students are capable of relating the story read to real life experiences. ● Visualizing strategy has helped the students in imagining the events took place in the story. ● Inferencing strategy has helped the students in understanding unfamiliar words and the occurrence of certain events that they missed. ● Questioning strategy has helped the students in brainstorming to comprehend and understand the story being read. ● Students generally believed that the reading strategies employed are capable of improving their reading comprehension.

(Xiao and Hu, 2019)

Assessment of optimal pedagogical factors for Canadian ESL learners' reading literacy through artificial intelligence algorithms.

- The researchers aimed at identifying pedagogical factors that are effective in contributing to the high achievement of reading among ESL learners. SVM support vector machine modeling

- Seven reading strategies are found to be effective in helping students to achieve high proficiency in reading.
- The seven reading strategies are: (1) Matching reading materials to the students' interests; (2) describing the text to the students in terms of structure and style; (3) determining the perspectives or intentions of the author(s)'s writing to the students; (4) attempting in generalizing and inferring the contents read; (5) teaching students to skim and scan; (6) connecting the students' prior knowledge to new contents; (7) encouraging students into discussion of texts.



Referring to the identification, screening, and selecting of studies, a final total of eight journal articles are selected for the systematic literature review. This section thus begins by explaining the current reading strategies that are being employed and is then followed by determining if the reading strategies employed are effective among the primary school students.

RQ1: What are the current reading strategies employed among primary students?

The first research question seeks to identify the current reading strategies that are employed among primary students. As stated, the current reading strategies refer to strategies that are employed within the past five years, between 2017 and 2022. Accordingly, in the eight different journal articles and within the past five years, different reading strategies are employed among primary students in schools. Table 5 summarizes the reading strategies identified among the journal articles from ERIC and Google Scholar, respectively.

Table 4

Reading Strategies Identified from ERIC and Google Scholar Journal Articles.

ERIC		Google Scholar	
Authors	Strategies	Authors	g Strategies
(Boudreaux and Mooney, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Strategic Reading • Close reading strategy 	(Jamal and Dehraj 2017; Tsai and Wu 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary reading • Recognizing letter names • Identifying phonemics • Reading passages and syllables • Reading long vowels
(Halim and Arif, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metacognitive reading strategies • Peer tutoring 	(Tobia and Bonifacci 2020; Thongwichit and Buripakdi 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory relying strategy • Looking-back strategy
(Ilter, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAP paraphrasing strategy • Text-recall strategy 	(Wong and Aziz 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicting strategy • Connection strategy • Visualizing strategy • Inferencing strategy • Questioning strategy
(Sonmez and Sulak, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking-aloud strategy 	(Xiao and Hu 2019; Sáez and Vidal 2022; Tolhah and Sugirin 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching reading materials to students' interests • Describing text structure and style • Determining authors' perspective and intentions • Generalizing and inferencing contents

-
- Skimming and scanning
 - Connecting prior knowledge to new contents
 - Encouraging discussion
-

From Table 5, there are a total of 26 different reading strategies identified and employed among primary school students. Most journal articles only investigated two types of reading strategies used by the primary school students (Ilter, I 2017; Tobia and Bonifacci, 2020; Halim and Arif, 2020; Boudreaux and Mooney, 2017). There is one journal article that specifically investigates one reading strategy only, which is the article by Sönmez and Sulak (Sönmez and Sulak 2018) where the reading strategy researched is the thinking-aloud strategy. However, the remaining three journal articles investigate more than three reading strategies within one research (Wong and Aziz, 2019; Xiao and Hu, 2019; Jamal and Dehraj, 2018).

Discussions

A detailed look into the reading strategies used among the primary students across these studies showed that some share similar strategies. Evidently, both Wong and Aziz (2019); Yusof (2021) investigated inferencing strategy as a form of reading strategy to develop reading among primary education students. The subtle difference is that Xiao and Hu's Xiao and Hu (2019) study has its inferencing strategy incorporated with generalizing strategy. Next, Ilter's [4] and Tobia and Bonifacci's [6] study included reading strategies that are related to memory. Accordingly, Ilter's (Ilter, I. 2017) study involves looking into text-recall strategy and (Tobia and Bonifacci 2020) study looks into the memory relying strategy.

The reading strategies researched by (Boudreaux et al., 2017), Halim et al. (2020); Xiao and Hu (2019) involved primary students working together in understanding reading texts. In (Boudreaux and Johnson et al. 2017), the reading strategy investigated was the Collaborative Strategy Reading where students were given a reading material and asked to brainstorm and discuss the topics in it; (Halim and Arif, 2020) researched on peer tutoring as the reading strategy, in which students work as pairs with roles assigned, one being the tutor and the other as the tutee to assist and cooperate each other in achieving and improving learning; (Boudreaux and Mooney, 2017) looked into engaging into discussions as the reading strategy, by which students engage into discussions, interpret and share information, and scaffold each other's understanding towards the text read.

It can thus be seen that, across the past five years, there remains some similarity over the reading strategies being employed among the primary school students in schools. Despite the similarity, it must be uncovered whether these reading strategies are indeed effective in aiding the primary school students to read.

As mentioned earlier, there are three strategies (Collaborative Strategic Reading, peer tutoring, and engaging into discussion) involving students cooperating with each other in understanding reading texts. These three strategies are logically a form of student-centered learning, where students are responsible and have authority over their learning process further placing them into meaningful learning experiences into achieving desired learning outcomes (Hoidn, 2016; Keiler, 2018). In the 21st century, education and the corresponding curricular have experienced reforms, to which teacher-centered methods are no longer relevant as their lessons are conducted in a one-way manner and see students as passive

recipients of learning (Hoidn, 2016; Keiler, 2018). Further, student-centered methods allow students themselves to do reflection and evaluation of their learning (Hoidn, S. 2016; Keiler, L. 2018), in which this is true in all three reading strategies involving the students to work with each other in understanding the text (Halim and Arif, 2020; Xiao and Hu, 2019; Boudreaux and Mooney, 2017).

Memory is a cognitive process that plays a crucial role in understanding texts, in which it helps a reader to identify and recognize the elements that are presented in the texts (Carreteiro and Figueira, 2017; Novaes and Zuanetti, 2019). While there are different types of memories occurring in a reader's mind, these memories are crucial in helping the reader to be proficient in reading (Carreteiro and Figueira, 2017; Novaes and Zuanetti, 2019). Accordingly in the studies reviewed, two of the studies employed two reading strategies which are memory-related, which these two are the text-recall strategy (Ilter, 2017) and memory relying strategy (Tobia and Bonifacci, 2020). Both reading strategies involved the students to use their memories on recalling elements in the texts in further understanding the contents presented.

Finally, there are also two studies that investigate the use of inferencing strategies when reading (Wong and Aziz, 2019; Xiao and Hu, 2019). Using such strategy requires readers to search for hidden message and meaning as well as contextual clues to understand the underlying message in the text (Wong and Aziz, 2019; Xiao and Hu, 2019). Inferencing is a skill that is greatly needed among ESL students in the present day, since language learning is not just on a surface manner as it requires thinking and processing information before producing language (Lee, 2013). Developing inferencing skill from young is necessary as it is a higher-order thinking skill essential in achieving high reading proficiency suitable for lifelong reading (Lee, 2013; Prior and Goldina, 2014). When children learn how to infer in reading, they can make educated guesses on novel words, further leading to better understanding of the text being read (Prior and Goldina, 2014).

Conclusions

Reading is a complex skill that must be acquired by primary school students, since the habit of reading should begin at a young age. Using the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, a systematic evaluation of journal articles examining the reading strategies adopted by primary school students over the last five years is done (2017-2022). It is evident that primary school students are aware of and using more than 20 reading strategies when reading texts, some of which are relatively similar. It can also be seen that the reading strategies adopted by primary school students required teamwork, cooperation, and cognitive processes to comprehend the supplied material. In today's primary school classes, there is often a high level of student engagement in reading, as opposed to passive, teacher-centered instruction. However, the comprehensive literature evaluation is not devoid of limitations.

Even though the examined reading primary school students are within the recent five years, the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has resulted in the temporary closure of schools globally to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As reading strategies are established in physical classrooms, many of the journal publications analyzed in this work were produced prior to the occurrence of the pandemic. Unknown are the reading strategies adopted by primary school students throughout the epidemic and whether these reading strategies have changed. Future studies may perform a thorough evaluation of the literature on the reading strategies utilized by primary school students in the context of the COVID-19

epidemic and during the lockdown period. Additionally, researchers may analyze the variations between the reading strategies used in physical classrooms and online learning.

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