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English Students and Active Reading
Exploring the Reading Strategies of Master's Students at the Department of
English at University Abbes Laghrou, Khenchela

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Reading is one of the four significant skills that students need to learn. Yet, it is very challenging for them to acquire due to the passive learning strategies they tend to use when they read. Hence, there are many active reading strategies that can be used to enhance and facilitate the students' reading. The aim of this study was to explore the active reading strategies used by English Master II students at University Abbas Laghrou, Khenchela. This paper opted for a descriptive method in order to get insight into the reading practices of the population under study. Data of a 43-students sample were collected using an online questionnaire; results revealed that not all students were aware of the distinction between active and passive reading strategies. Moreover, those who were did not demonstrate a rich knowledge of the active strategies. Although they claimed regular practice of active reading, the active reading strategies they mentioned seemed to be limited to highlighting and visualizing while reading. They also showed a positive attitude toward the effectiveness of these strategies.

***Key words:* higher education; reading; reading strategies; active reading**

Acknowledgment

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Dedication

We dedicate this work to our beloved families, who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up. Thank you for all the unconditional love, guidance, and support that you have always given us. We love you!

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1. General Introduction

1.1. Overview:

Learning had long been considered as a “teacher centered” process where lectures and new materials are directly presented to the students. However, it did not necessarily promote the desired outcomes and academic achievements. In order to make the learning process easier and more efficient, students have recently been directed to use several learning strategies that best suit their styles and personalities. Hence, across time, higher education practice has noticed a big controversy concerning learning strategies, for learning at the university level happens through both passive and active modes.

There are passive learning strategies that are characterized by passively feeding information from instructors to students. As Dean (2001) claimed, “students are assumed to enter the course with minds like empty vessels or sponges to be filled with knowledge” (p. 424). Though this passive way of learning has been the dominant teaching method for ages, it may not be effective for most students because it eliminates them from participating in the learning process. As the teacher is the center of attention, the classroom’s passive atmosphere often leads them to lose motivation, and forget what they have learned easily. Moreover, “students are expected to disagree little from the instructor and to learn the material as the instructor did years before, without having to experience or apply the facts or concepts” Dean (2001, p. 424).

On the other hand, many scholars have grown to support the approach of active learning, a student-centered method, which describes the process whereby students participate in activities that are allowed to think about ideas in a critical way, and about how to apply them, while also assessing their own comprehension and skills (Michael, 2006). Furthermore, Freeman et al. (2014) have done a lot of research on active learning strategies, and the results have shown that students' learning has become successful and more efficient after using active learning strategies. Indeed, for Lima et al. (2017) many international organizations and associations supported the use of active learning in education because, for them, it reinforces the learning process.

Thus, scholars favored the approach of active learning over the traditional, passive methods of instructions because it involves rich activities such as: group work and discussions. Currently, active learning strategies are becoming more popular at universities, especially when it comes to reading: a skill that had been in the past mis-conceived as a passive skill.

Despite the fact that scholars investigated several ways for teaching reading to students (Ruiz, 2015), the majority of them still face difficulties with reading comprehension. The reason is that the common method used by most learners is passive learning, which made them not interested in learning in general, and reading in particular. However, reading comprehension skills are a vital element that students need in order to fulfill their goals at the

university level, since understanding a text is the crucial element that makes learners able to recognize, focus on the most significant information, and ignore the irrelevant ones (Clarke et al, 2013 & Wong, 2011). Therefore, being able to obtain the essence of a reading product is an important skill that enables learners to achieve success in academic life.

Unlike passive learning, active learning theory provided strategies for learners to be active readers. Being an active reader means engaging entirely with a text to make meaning out of it, throughout using different active reading strategies such as previewing, visualizing, annotating, questioning, and summarizing. These strategies simplified learning and made it more enjoyable and effective.

1.2. Statement of the Problem:

Reading, thus, is one of the four basic skills that learners need for communication and, from the active reading theory perspective, it is an interactive process between the reader and the written material. However, for students, it is considered as one of the most difficult skills to be acquired, since they face many difficulties during the reading process. These difficulties may be manifested in their disability to distinguish between the main idea and the supporting details, their confusion about the meaning of the words, or their lack of concentration leading them to forget what they read as they continue reading. Whatever the forms of the current challenges, active reading strategies are required to help students build up their own knowledge, understand the reading material easily, and take the most of the text in front of

them while enjoying the process.

Consequently, this study aimed to explore the actual active learning strategies used by Khenchela University Master II students at the English department. Specifically, the main purpose of the present study was to describe the active reading strategies that English Master II students use whenever they encounter reading. This exploration would provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the current reading practices among these students in order to identify ways of promoting active reading instruction in future teaching programs.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Hoeh et al. (2015) have claimed that the importance of active reading skills does not only lie in the act of learning from a written text, but it lies in more lifelong skills like the ability to successfully engage in daily activities, adapt in different situations, and even easily get a job. This research is significant because it hopes to contribute to the local body of knowledge whose goal is to bring learners to a more engaged experience of reading, making them involved readers, and why not even active thinkers in all life aspects.

Thence, this paper may be considered to be beneficial for local future researchers and program designers to know about Khenchela University students' reading strategies for an adapted curriculum design. Hopefully, the study would also represent a contribution towards developing learners' thinking capabilities, in sustaining their level of concentration, and in constructing their learning autonomy.

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The focus of this research was on exploring the active reading strategies used by Master II students. Thus, the underlying questions and hypotheses for this research study are as follows.

- Research question 1: are Master II students at the Department of English aware of the distinction between the active and the traditional reading strategies?

- Hypothesis: not all students would be aware of the active vs. traditional reading strategies distinction.

- Research question 2: what are the reading strategies they regularly apply to enhance their learning?

- Hypothesis: part of the students would tend to use common reading strategies, such as skimming and highlighting.

- Research question 3: what are students' attitudes towards the efficiency of these strategies?

- Hypothesis: students who do use active reading strategies would know the learning differences, those who don't would wish to try them out.

- Research question 4: how do students think their strategies could improve?

- Hypothesis: Master II students who are aware of active learning are most likely to think that employing active reading more often can improve their strategies.

1.5. Method

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, the present study opted

for a descriptive method. Descriptive research is used when the researcher aims to get insight into the characteristics of the population or the phenomenon under study without manipulating the phenomenon or the setting. To explore the different active reading strategies used by Master II students, the most suitable data collecting tool was a questionnaire because it directly provides students' responses to the research questions that this study seeks to answer, without manipulating the context as is done in experimental designs and also because of its feasibility. The questionnaire was delivered to Master II students, through an online anonymous survey, so students can feel free and comfortable while honestly answering the questions. As a result, the responses would be more reliable and more detailed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Active Learning

People learn in different ways, for that reason different learning theories are used to enhance students' learning. Behaviorism is one of most widely known theories. It states that students can distinguish between wrong and right throughout feedback and reinforcement (e.g. Skinner, 1985). However, this theory was criticized because it is centered on the transmission of knowledge from instructors to students.

Through time, there was a shift away from the use of the behaviorist model to the use of another theory that enables learners to construct their own knowledge; that is to say, learners switched from being passive recipients of knowledge to active constructors of it. This theory came to be called Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1964). Hence, Constructivism is considered as an active theory, which emphasizes student agency to explore, reflect, and evaluate their knowledge (Dover, 2018). This theory is considered as the basis of the active learning theory, which is described as a "student-centered instructional method" in which students learn by doing. As Butler (1915) said, "Don't learn to do, but learn in doing" (p. 121). Therefore, the approach of active learning was favored over the traditional passive methods of instruction since it involves activities such as group work and discussions. Thence, several international organizations and associations supported the use of active learning in education because, for Lima et al. (2017), it reinforces the learning process.

2.2. Debates on Defining Active Learning

Hartikainen et al. (2019) have stated that active learning is a broad concept that has many diverse definitions. In addition, Drew and Mackie (2011) assume that the meaning of active learning is opaque and lacks unanimity when it comes to defining it. Nevertheless, stimulating the students' minds is an agreed upon keyword, which exists in every active learning definition. In this light, Ryan and Martens (1989) argue that active learning happens when the learners do more than just receiving knowledge. Chickering and Gamson (1987) supposed that active learning is having students actively engaged in the learning process, through thinking critically, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Listening only is not enough, the learner must read, write, and engage in debates and discussions.

3.2. Studies on Active Learning

Many scholars defended the idea that learning seems to be most efficient when learners engage in applying and doing. As Johnson et al. (1989) put it "Active inquiry, not passive absorption, is what engages students. It should pervade the curriculum" (p. 68, as cited in Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 18). Furthermore, Freeman et al. (2014) have done a research on active learning, where the results have shown that students' learning had become successful and more efficient. Fayombo (2012) investigated in her study, the relationship between active learning strategies and the learners' educational outcomes where the results presented the positive influence of active learning on enhancing the outcomes of university

students. Hence, she demonstrated the significance of active learning, as it makes learning more robust and develops the skills of the students. Active learning suits all the different styles of learning, fosters the students' motivation, increases their educational outcomes, and changes their attitudes to become more interested in learning (Astin, 1985). It also makes students construct their own knowledge, and obtain new scientific skills (Handelsman et al, 2007). Students learn more of what they “do” than of what they “absorb” in the traditional lecturing.

Active learning involves different activities like questioning, problem solving, and group work, which make the students more engaged and interested in learning (Felder & Brent, 2016). Active learning is a theory that embraces active strategies for students to facilitate their learning through a more engaged process. Consequently, in order to learn in an active way, the four skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking should be stimulated. As this study focuses on active reading in particular, the following pages discuss the studies that investigated this skill.

2.4. Active Reading

In a paper that was published by Almutairi (2018), a set of definitions concerning active reading was presented. In one of the definitions, it stands for “the process of simultaneously, extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (The Rand Reading Study Group & Snow, 2002, p. 11). It also

denotes understanding the meaning behind the written language, gaining knowledge, analyzing the author's opinion, then constructing our own understanding of it (Ruiz, 2015).

For him, active reading is to efficiently interact with a reading material, via applying strategies that enable learners to actively engage with it.

Throughout active reading, learners are able to obtain the essence of a reading product, which is an important skill that allows them to attain success in their academic life (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rand Reading Study Group et al, 2002). In addition, Sun (2020) demonstrated that active reading is an efficient strategy, which simplifies learning and makes it more enjoyable. While Lizza (2007) assumes that active reading is more advantageous when you can create a connection between your mind and the author's. This connection can be agreement or friction.

2.4.1. Active Reading Strategies

Hardebeck (2006) defines active reading strategies as mental techniques in which readers apply to prolong and facilitate their understanding. Active reading strategies show the way readers deal with texts. In other words, the way they understand a reading material, and how they manage to do when they do not understand it (Richards et al, 2002). In order to decode and construct meaning, students must apply active reading strategies (Tovani, 2000).

Pearson et al. (1992, as cited in Tovani, 2000) traced many strategies that are used by proficient and effective readers, regardless to their ages. These strategies include: using

background knowledge to understand new input, questioning and reasoning, testing their understanding, locating important information, synthesizing, and creating new ideas.

Following is a description of a set of the main active reading strategies.

2.4.1.1. Annotating. As many articles supported that, the use of active reading strategies help the students to extract meaning from the written product they are dealing with, Adler (1940) postulated that this active process necessitates annotating. He indicates that every person can read between the lines, but only active readers have the ability to write between the lines. That is to say, active reading comprises writing during reading, which is done through annotating and taking notes (Schilit et al, 1999). Moreover, for Adler (1940), an annotated page is considered as a chronicle for the reader, since annotation stimulates the reader's mind to reread, to take notes, and to highlight the important parts of the text. Furthermore, Fowler and Barker (1974) pointed out that highlighting the important elements of a written product, while reading, improved students' understanding, and helped them recall information faster.

2.4.1.2. Questioning. In a study that has been done to investigate the use of active reading questions, Fleck et al. (2017) examined active reading questions (ARQs), a reading strategy that was seen as an effective tool for readers. This strategy engages the students entirely with the material they are dealing with, through asking questions that need to be asked to think about the text's content in many different ways. Likewise, Richmond and

Hagan (2011) defined ARQs as a type of question that aims to make the students more focused during reading, and help them clarify their perception, as they progress through the reading process.

Anderson and Biddle (1975) claimed that, there is a big improvement in the learning process when a reading material is followed by a series of questions that require a full understanding of the text. Furthermore, Sun (2020) supposed that learners will be able to find their answers only if they read with questions in mind because the readers' concentration will be at a high level when they know what exactly they are looking for. This active way of reading is more beneficial for learners as it grabs their attention for a very long time. Hence Sun (2020) also shows how many universities' websites are interested in applying reading strategies like questioning and reviewing.

2.4.1.3. Visualizing. Nelson (2005, as cited in Delvi, 2013) defined visualizing as “forming a mental image in one's mind” (p. 29). Reading while using visualization means to invent characters and imagine events happening in the mind. In his article, Helgeson (2010) assumes that visualizing is a during-reading strategy, which develops mental images and stimulates the mind to quickly sketch the words of the text. He added that, if readers integrate visualizing and summarizing, their comprehension will be improved (Bell, 1991, 2000). For Delvi (2013), visualizing, as its name suggests, is considered as an important reading strategy where the learners use their imagination to relate to the content of the text. Thus, it enhances

their retention and reading skills because when students create pictures, settings, actions, and plots in their minds from the words of the text, it will be much easier for them to understand and remember what they read. Visualizing can also foster the students' creativity, make them more focused on details, and engage them in every reading material.

Despite the fact that scholars assert that visualization is a strategy that good readers use to understand a text, it can be challenging for learners who lack motivation and interest in reading in the first place.

2.4.1.4. Previewing. Huang (2009) defined previewing as an activity that comes before reading, in which students get familiar with the background knowledge they need, in order to understand the reading material. Previewing allows the reader to have a framework about a particular written product. Consequently, understanding the meaning will be easier. Therefore, several studies have been done concerning previewing as an active reading strategy.

According to Graves et al. (1983) previews are prefatory passages provided to students before they start reading any written product. They are considered as useful tools that help students to relate the new information to their background knowledge, and also shorten the amount of reading that students were supposed to deal with because they offer a particular information, that is directly attached to the given text. Furthermore, Graves and Palmer (1981) conducted a previewing study. They divided their sample into two groups based on their

reading abilities. Both groups were asked to read two short stories, one with previews and the other without. The analysis of this study took place after having the learners to answer a set of multiple-choice questions, and the results revealed that the students who read the short story with previews understood better than those without.

Though previewing is seen as a valuable reading strategy, as scholars assume, it may not work all the time. Previews are often unavailable for university students for they are expected to have a background knowledge concerning their field of study. Therefore, some students would not be able to successfully understand historical and literary texts, and this could be intimidating, decreasing their motivation as a result.

2.4.1.5. Summarizing. According to Jones (2012) when we summarize, we focus on the main ideas of the text and their supporting details. He also states that summarizing is a lifelong learning strategy. Thus, it should be introduced to students as a learning strategy in their primary years of school, in order to teach them how to grasp the main ideas of the text, and to keep their focus on specific points whenever they encounter reading. “Summarizing is probably the most significant and encompassing of all reading strategies to the learner for effective studying and comprehension”(Cordero-Ponce, 2000, p. 330). Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) demonstrated in their model how summarizing improved the learning process in many ways, since it helped to deepen the learners’ understanding, and to enable them create a critical basis of perceiving all types of knowledge. Furthermore, in the English reading

domain, summarizing is considered as the most valuable strategy for learners, as it helps them in matters of comprehension, retrieving information, and structuring ideas (Khoshsima & Rezaeian Tiyar, 2014).

However, the effectiveness of summarizing as a reading strategy can be quite challenging to teach, as there are learners who face difficulties in distinguishing between the main ideas and the supporting ones especially when encountering long reading materials, which are often seen as boring for learners. Techniques of motivation and simplification are thus called for.

Conclusion

To sum up, the aforementioned studies all shared common characteristics. First and foremost they all emphasized the use of active learning rather than the passive ways of instruction to enhance the learning process. Secondly, scholars have shown a considerable interest in active reading, saying that it is a mental interaction between the reader and the writer, which helps the learners improve both their academic and life endeavors. Last and not least, researchers assumed that active reading strategies such as annotating, summarizing, questioning, previewing, and visualizing are tools that help the students in the process of active reading because they transform this seemingly trivial activity to a rich, exploratory higher-order thinking journey.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In order to explore the active reading strategies used by Master II students at the English department at University Abbas Laghrour, and to check the validity of the above-mentioned hypotheses, this paper opted for a convenience sample of 43 students from the target population which consisted of 160 students (26.8%). The convenience sampling was applied because of the impossibility of random sampling in such a regular academic setting. Tables 1 and 2 below display the sample's demographics.

Table 01: Students' Gender

Participants	Number	Percentage
Males	11	25.6%
Females	32	74.4%

Table 02: Students' Age

Age range	Percentage
21-24	60%
25-28	27.5%
29+	10%

3.2. Instrument and Procedure

This study designed and distributed a questionnaire that consisted of four sections “see Appendix A.” The questionnaire contained a mixture of close ended questions, open

ended questions, multiple-choice questions and linear scale questions, in order to explore the participants' attitudes and frequency of applying active reading strategies. The purpose of the first section was to know about the learners' personal characteristics, involving questions about their age and sex. The purpose of the second section was to get familiar with students' general background concerning active learning through questions about their English level, familiarity with active learning, and the active learning strategies they use. The third section aimed at gathering information about the attitudes of the participants towards reading in general, and active reading in particular. Specifically, they were asked to respond to questions designed to get insight into their awareness of the difference between active reading and the traditional one. The last section included more specific questions about active reading strategies in order to know whether the students employ them while reading or not.

3.3. Analysis

The data was collected through an online questionnaire that was distributed to Master II students. In this paper, a quantitative analysis was applied for the sake of exploring and describing the phenomenon under study. The questions required different types of responses. The learners answered "Yes" or "No" questions sometimes with a brief justification. They also answered multiple-choice questions where various options were provided for them to choose the ideas that best represented their attitudes and methods. Moreover, the participants were given some open-ended questions to allow for more independent expression of their

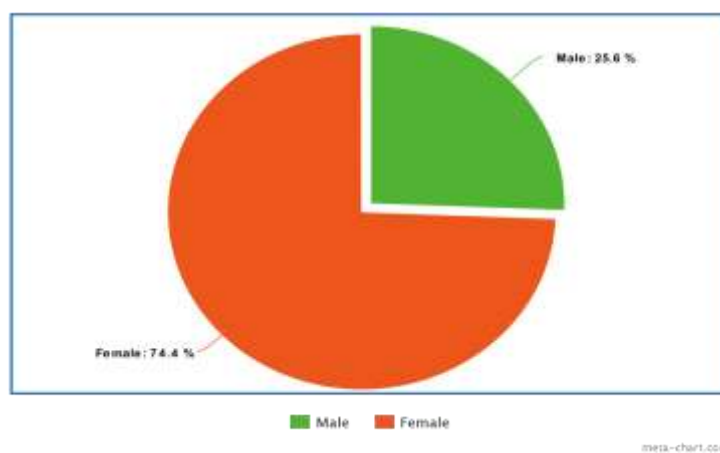
thoughts and more extensive data about their perceptions and practices. The quantitative analysis enabled data to reveal tendencies (if any) in the students' practices and perceptions. Thus, the responses that were collected from the questionnaire were categorized, organized, and presented in the form of figures and tables to answer the research questions of the study in a more illustrative way.

4. Results

Section One: Analysis of the Sample's Background

Question 01: Gender

Figure 1: Gender



According to the pie chart, we have recorded 74.4 % females, and 25.6 % males. This may be either a representative reflection of the gender distribution in the local society itself.

Question 02: Age

Table 02: Students' Age

Age range	Percentage
21-24	60%
25-28	27.5%
29+	10%

The table above has shown the age of students. The selected sample is divided into (3) age groups. Students who are aged between (21-24) represented 60%, the majority of the total population. While those who are between (25-28) represented 27.5%. Moreover, others (29+) represented 10%, they could be students who may have repeated some years, or have just decided to finish their Masters' degree.

We found that our population is divided into Males and Females their age ranging between 21 and 29+. The following section is concerned with an introduction about the students' English levels, their familiarity with active learning and the strategies they use.

Section Two: Introduction

Question 01: How is your level in English?

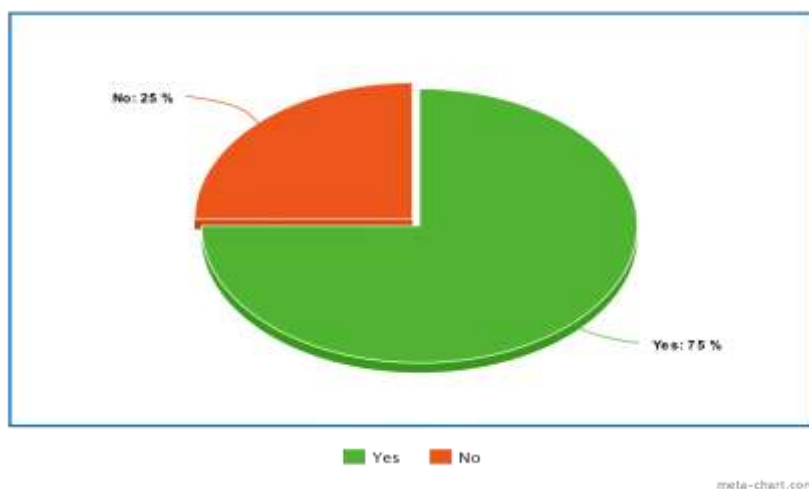
Table 03: Students' English Level

Options	Percentage
Excellent	30%
Very good	22.5%
Good	40%
Average	7.5%

This question aimed to identify the students' opinions toward their own English level. The descriptive statistics showed that 30% of the students stated that their English level is excellent. The percentage of 22.5% claimed that their level is very good. While the majority (40%) maintained that their level was good, a small percentage of students (7.5%) have described their English level as average. From these statistics, we noticed that students' level varies, and this may be due to the learning strategies they use.

Question 02: Are you familiar with active learning?

Figure 2: Students' Familiarity with Active Learning

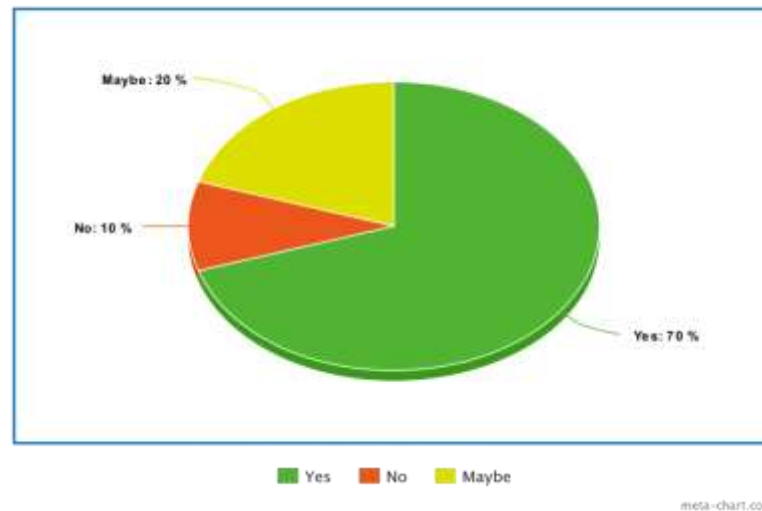


This question was indicated to know the extent to which Master students are familiar with active learning. The results have shown that 75% of the target population said they were familiar with active learning, while the other 25% said they were not. This could be due to their use of the traditional passive learning strategies.

2.1. I am not familiar with active learning

2.1.1. If you knew that active learning makes learning more efficient and enjoyable, would you have preferred to know about it earlier?

Figure 3: Students' Attitudes towards Active Learning



As the above pie chart indicated, the majority of students (70%) preferred if they knew about active learning earlier. However, only 10% preferred not to know about it. The other 20% were not sure if they would like to know about it earlier or not.

2.1.2. If you knew that it is not too late, what would you do?

This question was concerned with the attitudes of students to see what they would do differently if they knew that they still had time to learn about active learning. Several responses were positive towards it by stating that they would try to know more about active learning, to do a search about it in the Net, to be familiar with it through learning, and start using it. On the other hand, we found a negative response like saying, “skip it”. Throughout

the answers, we noticed that the majority (70%) preferred to know more about active learning.

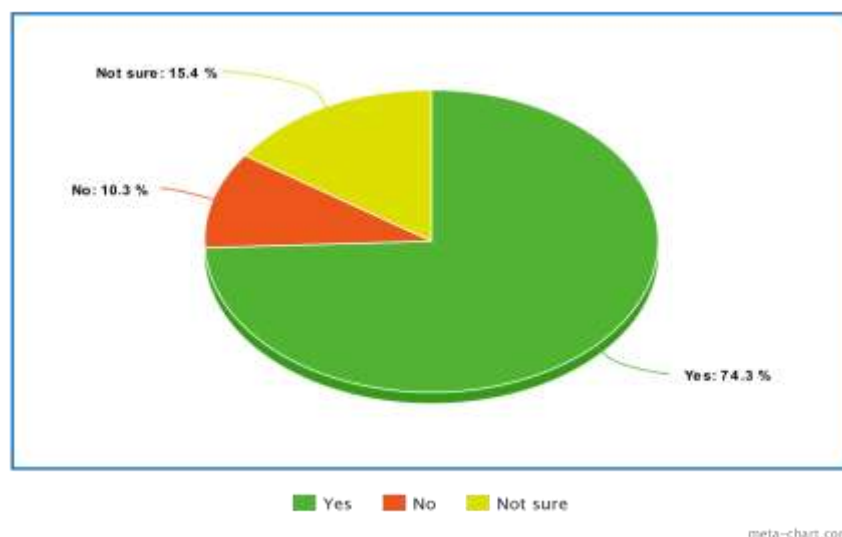
2.2. I am familiar with active learning

2.2.1. Could you mention some of the active learning strategies that you know?

The main purpose of this question was to examine the students' familiarity with active learning, and to see the most common active learning strategies among students. The students mentioned several strategies. Examples are think pair and share, group discussions, role play, summarizing and highlighting, skimming and scanning, brainstorming, questioning, analyzing and mind mapping.

Question 03: Do you use any active learning strategies?

Figure 4: The Use of Active Learning Strategies



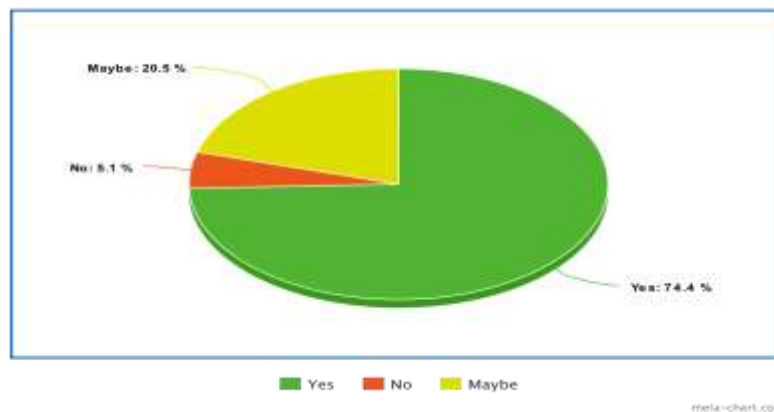
When students were asked if they used active learning strategies, the statistics have shown that the majority (74.3%) used active learning strategies, while 10.3% did not use them. The other 15.4% were not sure if they used them or not.

3.1. Could you please mention some of them?

When students were asked about the active learning strategies they used, the presented answers were: brainstorming, skimming and scanning, oral presentations, think pair and share, role play, mind mapping, synthesizing, listening and reading.

3.2. Do you enjoy it?

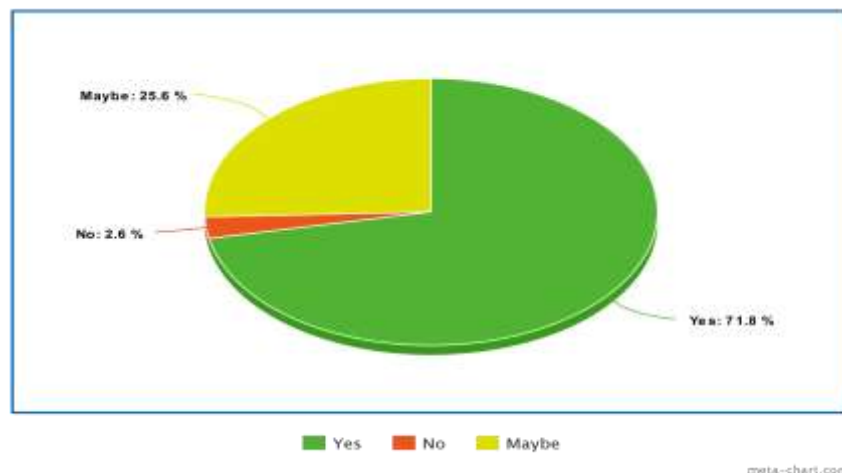
Figure 5: Do Students Enjoy Active Learning?



According to the pie graph below, we noticed that 74.4% of the students enjoy active learning, while the least percentage find it boring and do not enjoy it. For the rest 20.5% it represented students who are not sure if they enjoy active learning or not. We can say that the majority of students find active learning more enjoyable than passive learning.

Question 04: Do you think active learning is more effective than passive learning?

Figure 6: Students' Attitudes towards the Effectiveness of Active Learning



The graph above showed that 71.8% of respondents found that active learning is more effective than passive learning. However, the other 25.6% were not sure about its effectiveness, while the rest 2.5% found it ineffective comparing to passive learning.

4.1. If yes, justify your answer, please.

Most respondents justified their answers with the fact that active learning permits them to participate, analyze, create and evaluate their own knowledge. Others stated that this learning theory made students involved in their learning process, motivated them and made their learning enjoyable. Others thought that it facilitated learning through using modern and developed tools, and also fostered the learner's autonomy.

4.2. If no, justify your answer, please.

Some participants found that active learning was ineffective comparing to passive

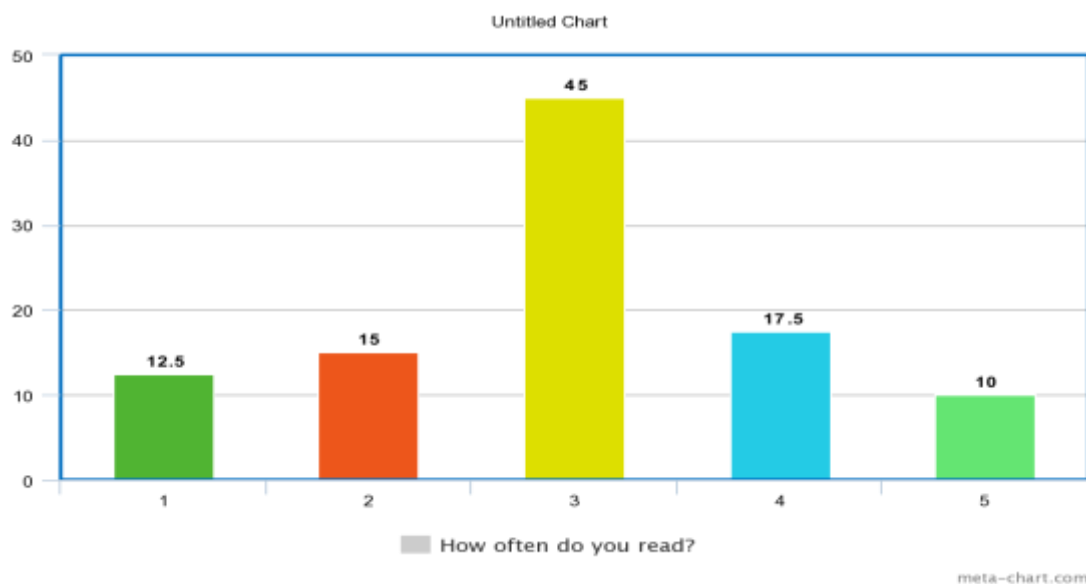
learning, and they justified their answers with the fact that active learning requires full concentration, while the majority of the them suffered from the lack of concentration.

In this section, we noted that students' perception of their own English level varies. In addition, many students said they were familiar with active learning, enjoyed it, and found it effective. Thus, they mentioned many interesting strategies such as problem solving and group work. In the next section, there is a further explanation concerning students' attitudes towards active reading and its effectiveness.

Section Three: Active Reading

Question 01: How often do you read?

Figure 7: Students' Frequency of Reading

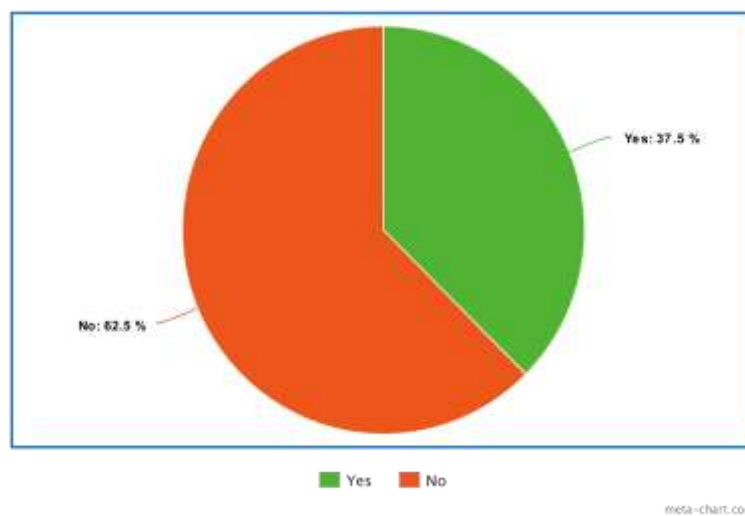


The bar graph above presents the participants' frequency of reading. The majority of the students (45%) claimed that they sometimes read. A percentage of 17.5% declared

that they often read. Others, 15% chose rarely as their answer. While 10% of the students claimed that they always read, and 12.5% of them stated quite the opposite by choosing never as their answer.

Question 02: Do you face any difficulties in reading?

Figure 8: Reading Difficulties



As shown in the pie chart graph, 25 students (62.5%) said that they do not face any difficulties while reading. On the other hand, 15 students (37.5%) have claimed that they face difficulties in reading, and according to their answers, the reason is the difficulty to understand literary, historical, and scientific texts, lack of concentration, facing long texts, new vocabulary, and the advanced style of language.

Question 03: Are you familiar with active reading?

Table 04: Students' Familiarity with Active Reading

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	23	57.5%
No	9	22.5%
Maybe	8	20%

From the above table, it is shown that 23 students (57.5%) confirmed that they are familiar with active reading. Whereas, only 9 participants (22.5%) stated the opposite. The rest of them (20%) have chosen "Maybe" as their answer. Therefore, active learning seemed to be unfamiliar to 42%, which is not a negligible percentage.

3.1. If yes, have you ever tried to use it while reading?

Table 05: The Use of Active Reading

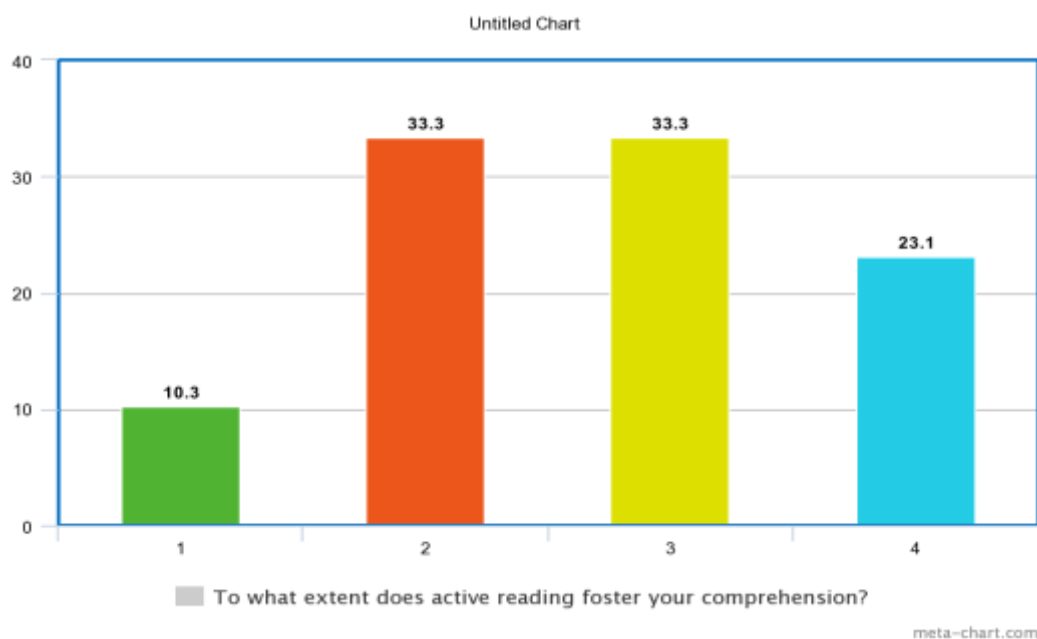
Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	50%
No	7	19.4%
Maybe	11	30.6%

Half of the students (50%) confirmed that they use active reading. While, 11 participants (30.6%) are not sure whether they apply active reading or not, only 7 of them

(19.4%) said that they do not use it at all. These numbers reflect a clear-cut division between two equal subdivisions of the sample: one who uses active reading strategies and one who does not.

Question 04: To what extent does active reading foster your comprehension?

Figure 9: Students' Attitudes toward Active Reading Efficiency



We asked this question to know whether or not active reading fosters students' Comprehension, one of the most important objectives and also indicators of reading efficiency. Through analyzing the findings, we found that 23.1% of the participants went for "Totally disagree," while only 10.3% of them chose "Totally agree." Meanwhile, the exact same value (33.3%) represented those who answered "Agree" and "Disagree." This reflected a seemingly complex picture.

Question 05: In your opinion, active reading involves

Table 06: Active Reading Strategies

Options	Number	Percentage
Reading and re-reading the Material	5	12.5%
Engaging with the content and asking questions	18	45%
The desire to finish reading	2	5%
Visualizing content and creating a movie in your mind	6	15%
Memorizing the text	2	5%
To never interrupt reading from start to end	2	5%
Questioning	1	2.5%
Prediction	0	0%
Evaluation	4	10%

Through this table, we have seen that most of students (45%) related active reading to engaging with the content and asking questions. A percentage of 15% stated that active reading involves visualizing content and creating a movie in mind. Moreover, 12.5% assumed that reading and re-reading the material is a part of active reading. While options like memorizing, the desire to finish reading and not interrupting the process were chosen by 5% of the population for each, Evaluation was chosen by 10% of them and only one respondent

chose questioning as an answer.

Question 06: Do you think active reading is useful for Master students?

Table 07: The Usefulness of Active Reading for Master Students

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	70%
No	4	10%
Maybe	8	20%

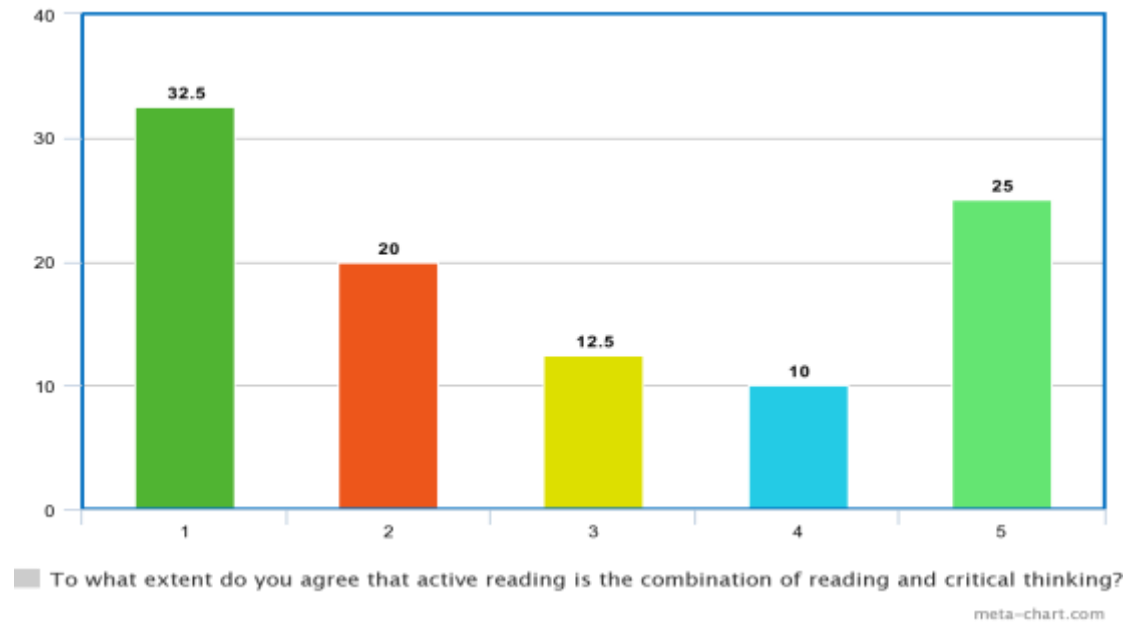
This question aimed at knowing whether the students think active reading is beneficial or not. The results have shown that 70% of the participants think that active reading is useful for them. However, 10% claimed the opposite by stating “No”. A small percentage of 20% seemed to be uncertain about the usefulness of active reading, thus, they answered “Maybe.”

Justification. According to those who were in favor of active reading, active reading is useful for Master students because it allows them to enjoy reading, increases their motivation, helps them to understand literary texts and new material, saves lots of time, and fosters their critical thinking since they are academic researchers. On the other hand, those who did not agree with the usefulness of active reading, were straightforward in their answers and said that Master students are already cultivated and are considered as future

teachers, so they are required to understand everything they read.

Question 07: To what extent do you agree that active reading is the combination of reading and critical thinking?

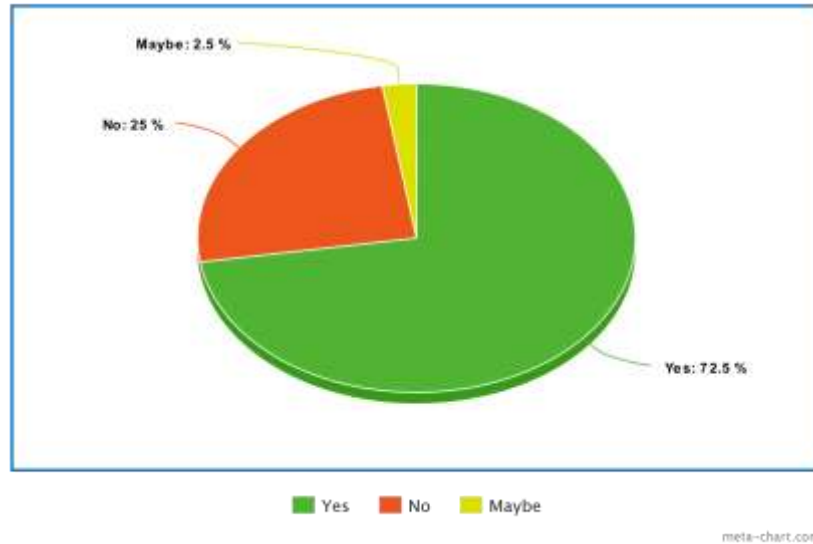
Figure 10: Active Reading and Critical Thinking



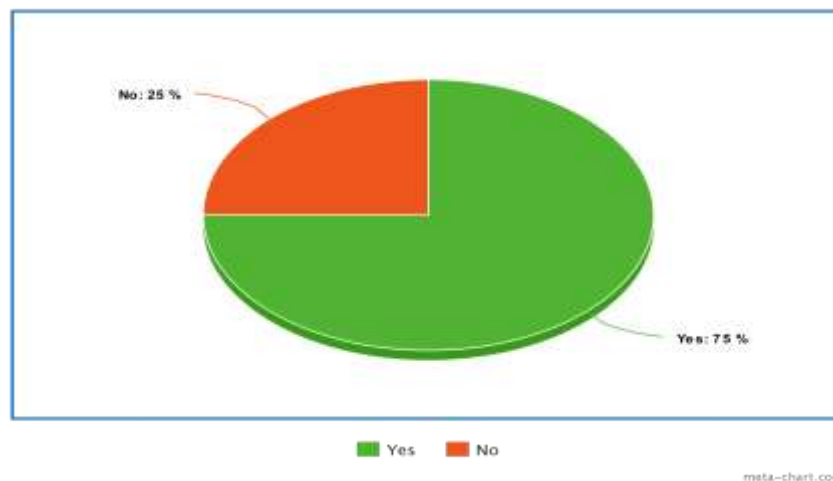
The results of this question indicated that 32.5% of the students totally agreed with this definition of active reading. On the other hand, 25% of them claimed the opposite by choosing “Totally disagree.” A percentage of 20% agreed with this claim while, only 10% disagreed. The rest 12.5% were neutral.

This section showed the students’ familiarity with active reading and their attitudes toward its effectiveness in the learning process. The following section presents more specific responses about active reading strategies.

Section Four: Active Reading Strategies

Question 01: Are you familiar with annotation?**Figure 11: Students' Familiarity with Annotation**

When students were asked about their familiarity with the annotation, 72.5%, which represented the majority, said “Yes”. However, 25% said “No,” and the rest 2.5% were not sure about its meaning.

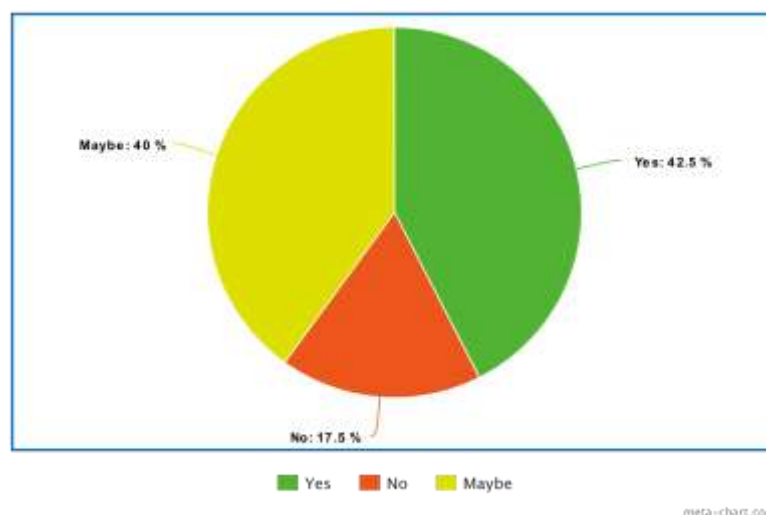
1.1. If yes, do you use it when you read?**Figure 12: The Use of Annotation**

This question was concerned with the students who were familiar with annotation, in which they were asked if they used it when they read or not. The majority of the respondents (75%) said that they used annotation. While, 25% said that they did not, which means that the majority of students use this active reading strategy.

Question 02: Do you find that annotation is effective as an active reading strategy?

Concerning the students' opinions toward the effectiveness of annotation as an active reading strategy, 42.5% of the population affirmed that annotation is an effective strategy. Whereas 17.5% said that annotation is ineffective. The rest 40% were not sure about its effectiveness, maybe because they did not use it before.

Figure 13: The Effectiveness of Annotation



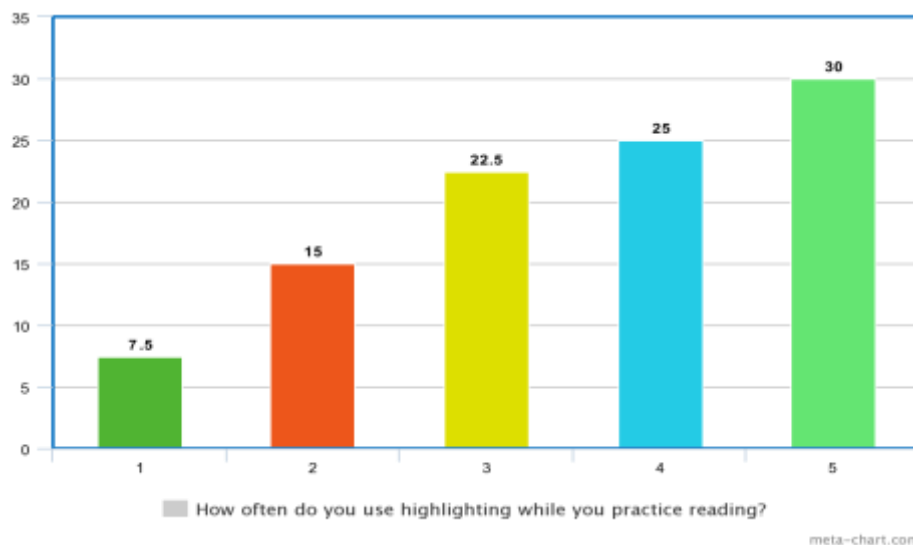
2.1. If yes, what is its effectiveness for you?

The vast majority justified their answers with the idea that annotation helps students remember and retain information, understand the written material easier, extract the main

ideas easily, and boost their critical thinking. This means that students have a positive feedback on using annotation as a reading strategy.

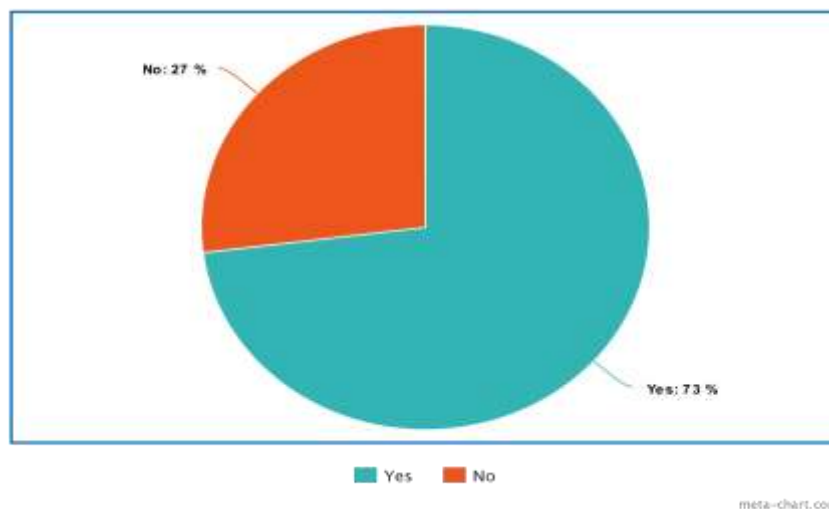
Question 03: How often do you use highlighting while you practice reading?

Figure 14: The Frequency of Using Highlighting



The bar graph above represented the students' frequency of using highlighting while reading. A considerable percentage of informants (30%) claimed that they always use highlighting. While, 25% affirmed that they use it very frequently. Others who represented 22.5% said that they use it occasionally. However, 15% declared that they rarely use highlighting while they read. The rest 7.5% stated that they have never used it.

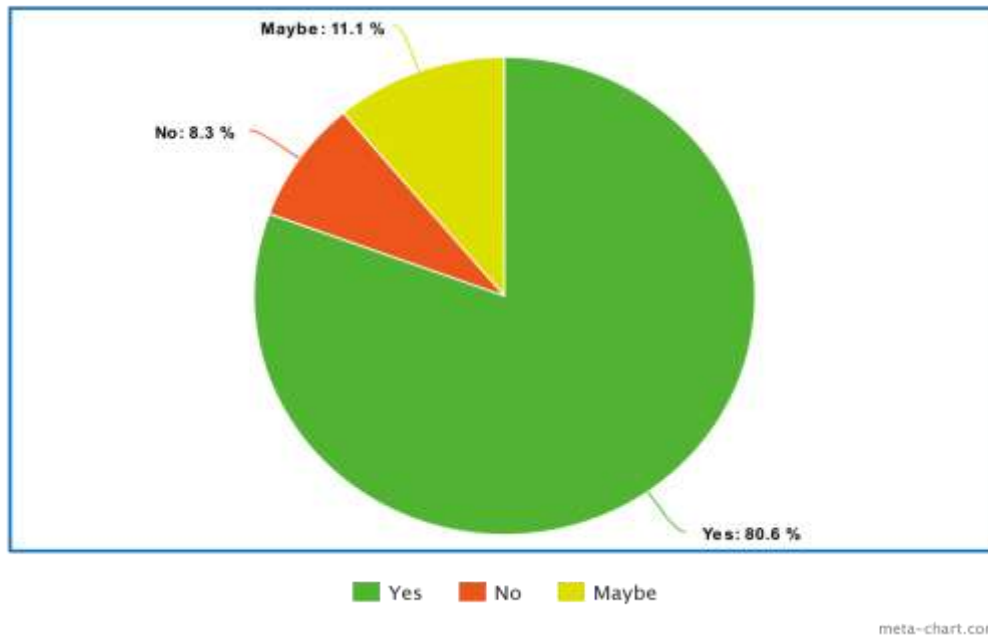
Justification. Respondents justified this frequency with the fact that they use highlighting just for quotes. Others use it for keywords and titles. While, some of them use highlighting for the main ideas in order to remember them easily, few respondents claimed that they never use it.

Question 04: Do you preview the text before reading it?**Figure 15: The Use of Previewing**

The graph above indicated that the majority of learners (73%) do preview the text before reading it. However, the other category (27%) were not familiar with this active reading strategy.

Justification. Students justified their answers with the idea that previewing is useful in order to get an overview about the content of a written material, to check whether the text includes the type of information they needed and to see if the content of the text is interesting for them or not. Others claimed that they have no reason to preview the text, and that previewing will make reading boring for them.

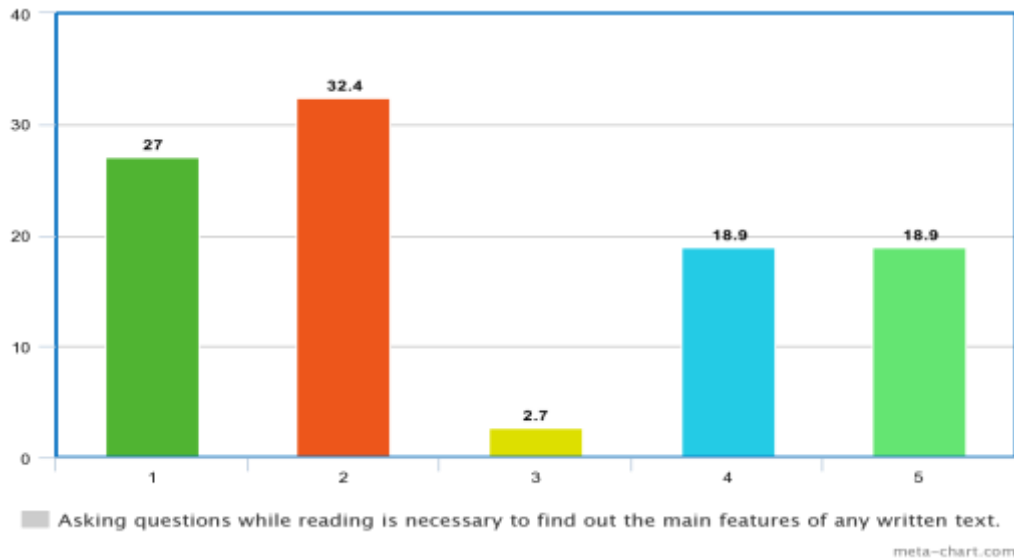
Question 05: Do you ask yourself some questions before, during and after the reading process?

Figure 16: Questioning

This question aimed at knowing whether the students use “questioning” or not whenever they encounter reading. The total value of students, who use questioning before, during and after the reading process is 80.6%. Whereas, only 8.3% of the population answered “No”. The ones who are skeptical about it and chose “Maybe” as their answer represented 11.1% of the sample.

Question 06: Asking questions while reading is necessary to find out the main features of any written text.

Figure 17: Students' Attitudes toward Questioning



We asked this question to find out whether the students think that asking questions is an important key for grasping the main elements of a written material or not. Unsurprisingly, from the above bar chart, we noticed that the majority of participants (32.4%) agreed with this claim. Furthermore, 27% chose “Totally agree” as their answer, while only 2.7% were neutral. The value of 18.9% represented the students who answered “Disagree” and the same value for those who went for “Totally disagree”.

Question 07: Visualizing the words' meaning in my mind deepens my understanding of the text.

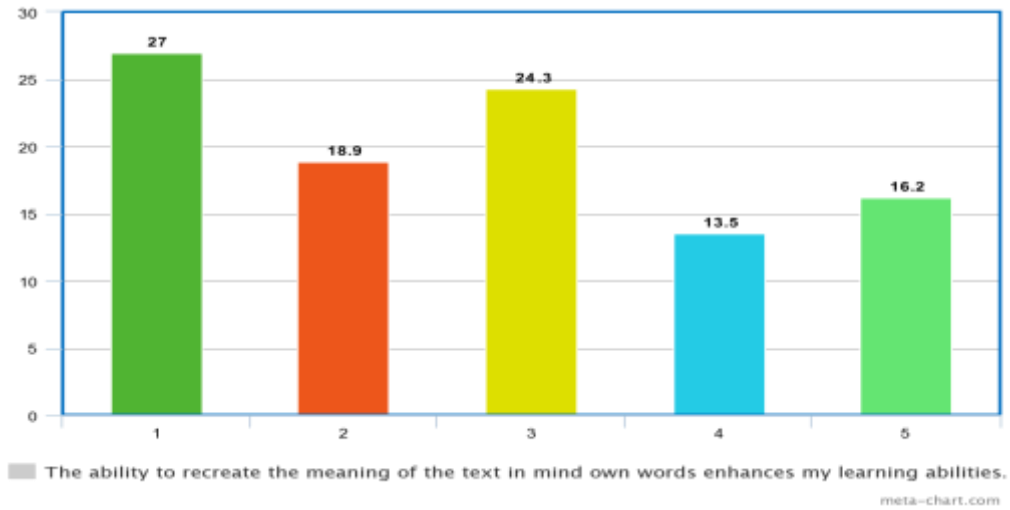
Table 08: Visualization

Options	Number	Percentage
Totally agree (1)	8	21.6%
Agree (2)	11	29.7%
Neutral (3)	6	16.2%
Disagree (4)	7	18.9%
Totally disagree (5)	5	13.5%

According to the table above, we have seen that 29.7% find visualization helpful in deepening their understanding of a text. The same thing for those 21.6% who went for “Totally agree.” But 18.9% of the students do not think that visualization deepen their comprehension, besides to the 13.5% who totally disagreed. The other 6 participants who represented 16.2% were neutral.

Question 08: The ability to recreate the meaning of the text in mind in own words enhances my learning abilities.

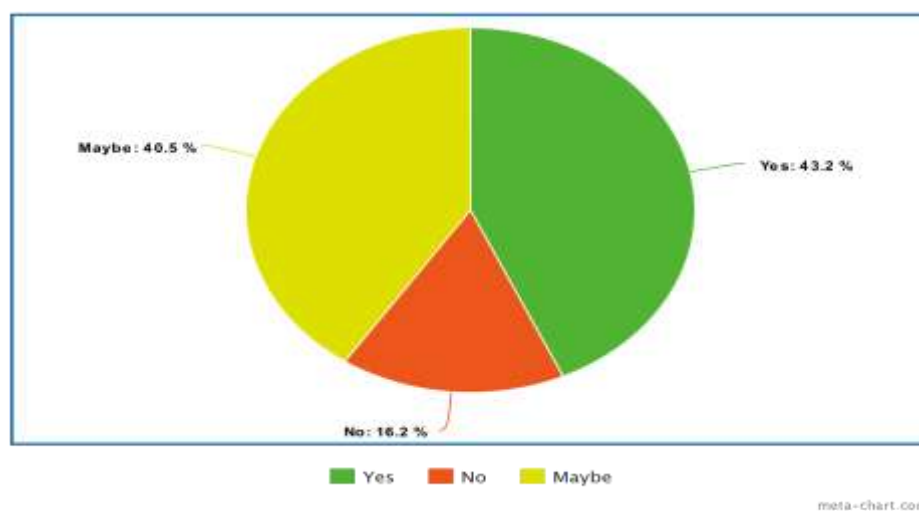
Figure 18: Students' Attitudes towards Summarizing



As was expected, 27% of the participants went for “Totally agree” concerning this question. A percentage of 18.9% agreed with this claim. Many of them (24.3%) were neutral while 16.2% chose “Totally disagree” as their answer, and only 13.5% disagreed.

Question 09: Do you consider yourself as an active reader?

Figure 19: Active Readers



As hypothesized, 43.2% of the students consider themselves as active readers. On the other hand, 16.2% claimed the opposite by saying “No”. The ones who were not sure if they are active readers or not represented 40.5% of the population.

Question 10: To what extent do you believe active reading strategies are the solution for reading difficulties of complicated texts?

Figure 20: The Effectiveness of Active Reading Strategies



The purpose of this question was to know how students think their strategies could improve. Thus, a percentage of 32.4% agreed with the claim that active reading strategies are the solution for reading difficulties. The value of 21.6% was for those who chose “Totally agree” as their answer, and the same value for the students who were neutral. A percentage of 13.5% represented the ones who disagreed, and 10.8% was for those who totally disagreed with having active reading strategies as a solution for reading difficulties.

10.1. Say some words about your own experience concerning the last question, please.

Through this question, the students shared their thoughts and experiences concerning active reading strategies. The majority of responses were about the benefits of active reading and how it helped them to enrich their vocabulary, think critically, improve their pronunciation through reading out loud, facilitate their learning, overcome reading difficulties, and gain new perspectives while reading a text. Other respondents shared their experiences with applying active reading strategies, saying that without previewing, they were lost and reading became harder for them. But, with previewing, it was easier for them to grasp ideas in an organized way. On the other hand, some answers were random and irrelevant to the question, as learners said that learning strategies will work only if the reading material is motivating. Others were talking about grasping the hidden meaning through brainstorming.

Question 11: If you had to redo your studies over again, what learning strategies would you have applied differently?

As we collected the students' answers to this question, we noticed that those who are aware of active learning are most likely to think that employing active reading more often can improve their strategies. Several students claimed that they would engage more often in group work and discussions, and focus more on applying active reading strategies when encountering any type of reading materials. Some added that they were just reading for

passing exams, so if they had to redo their studies, they would apply various reading strategies to enlarge their knowledge. Other respondents mentioned that they would like to try strategies like annotation, summarizing, and peer assessments.

In this section, we noticed that students used a variety of active reading strategies. They also showed a positive attitude toward employing these strategies for they made reading easier, more enjoyable, and efficient.

5. Analysis and Discussion

This section is concerned with discussing and interpreting the results of the data collected from the questionnaire in order to provide answers to the research questions of this study and to check the validity of its hypotheses.

In order to get insight to the students' awareness of the distinction between active and passive reading, we analyzed the items related to their familiarity with active learning. The findings demonstrated that the learners' perception of their level has a major relationship with their familiarity with active learning. That is to say, except for 4 participants, all the respondents (12) who said that their English level is good were familiar with active learning. Moreover, 9 of these students claimed that active learning is more effective than passive learning because it fosters their comprehension, only 7 of them said they were not sure whether or not it is more effective than passive learning despite their good English level. Those who do not see active learning as an effective method justified their answer with the

fact that active reading requires them to be focused when they suffered from the lack of concentration.

Despite the fact that 57.5% of the students confirmed their familiarity with active reading and 50% claimed that they apply active reading strategies when they read, only 43.2% considered themselves as active readers while 40.5% were not sure whether they are active readers or not. Therefore, we can see a general uncertainty of the students' perception of what active reading is. In this light, we noticed that only 1 participant chose questioning as an active reading strategy, while 5 students voted for reading and re-reading the material although 23 individuals claimed that they are familiar with active reading strategies and 18 of them said they use them whenever they read. This, again, seems to represent a general unawareness of what active reading involves.

According to the students' answers, 57.5% said they are familiar with active reading strategies and claimed that they apply them regularly to enhance their learning. These strategies include: role play, brainstorming, group discussions and debates, group work, problem solving, visualization, summarizing, highlighting, skimming and scanning, and questioning. In addition, 72.5% said they are familiar with annotation, and the majority stated that they use it when they read. Moreover, 30% represented those who always use highlighting, 73% for the students who practice previewing, 80% of them ask questions before, during and after the reading process, and 17 participants showed a positive attitude

toward summarizing. We can say that, only students who are aware of active reading do apply active reading strategies. Through the analysis of these results, we noticed that there is a relationship between students' perception of their own English proficiency and the kind of reading strategies they use. In other words, students who claimed that their English level is excellent, very good, and good, mentioned interesting active reading strategies such as highlighting, summarizing, problem solving, and group work.

In the questionnaire, we included several questions that aimed at knowing the students' attitudes towards the efficiency of active learning strategies in general, and active reading strategies in particular. The analysis of the data have shown that the majority of students enjoy active learning, and find it more effective than passive learning, especially for Master students. For those who did not experience it preferred if they knew about it earlier. Several students described their experience with active learning as beneficial since it helped them enrich their vocabulary, think critically, and facilitate their learning. Therefore, students agreed on the effectiveness of annotation and illustrated its effectiveness in helping the students to remember and retain information, to understand the written materials easier, and to boost their critical thinking. Because of that, students claimed that if they had to redo their studies again they would like to know more about active learning strategies and to use them in their learning process.

Moreover, the result of analyzing the data have shown that students who are aware of

active learning are most likely to think that employing active reading more often can improve their strategies. As the majority of students affirmed that active reading strategies are the solution for the reading difficulties. In this light, students claimed that visualizing the words meaning in their minds deepened their understanding of the text, and asking questions helped them extract the main features of any written product. Furthermore, several students showed a big interest in applying active reading strategies, especially annotation and summarizing to retain information for a long time, and to engage in discussions and group work more often if they had to redo their studies.

5. General Conclusion

Active and passive learning strategies have always been a controversial issue at the university level. Since reading had often been mis-conceived as a passive skill, and is considered as one of the most difficult skills for learners to acquire, the present paper performed an exploration of the active reading strategies applied by Khenchela University Master II students at the English department. In order to answer our research questions and to check the validity of our hypotheses, we opted for a descriptive method using an online questionnaire collected from a convenient sampling. The analysis of the findings, therefore, indicated that not all students are aware of the meaning of active learning and the distinction between active and traditional reading strategies. In addition, throughout the answers, we noted that the reading strategies used by most students are highlighting, skimming and scanning, and questioning. For students who employed active reading strategies, there was much improvement in their understanding, especially when they used strategies like visualization and previewing. However, for others who did not use any active reading strategies, revealed that they would like to make a research about active learning first, then try some strategies out. Furthermore, we found out that students who really knew what active learning is were the ones who claimed that applying active reading more frequently would

lead them to enhance their strategies for better learning.

Finally, based on these findings, practitioners and future studies could address the topic from the teachers' perspective to know more about their attitudes towards applying active reading strategies while instructing, and the effects of these strategies on the students' academic achievements. They could also tackle the other three skills that seem to be underrated by the majority of university students despite their huge role in understanding and grasping knowledge from different areas.

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Appendix A

Section One: Sample's Background

1-Gender

a) Male

b) Female

2- Age

.....

Section Two: Introduction

1- How is your level in English?

a) Excellent

b) Very good

c) Good

d) Average

e) Bad

2- Are you familiar with active learning?

a) Yes

b) No

2.1. I am not familiar with active learning

➤ *If you knew that active learning makes learning more efficient and enjoyable, would you have preferred to know about it earlier?*

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

- *If you know that it is not too late, what would you do?*

.....

2.2. I am familiar with active learning

- *Could you mention some of the active learning strategies that you know?*

.....

3- Do you use any active learning strategies?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not Sure

- **Could you please mention some of them?**

.....

- **Do you enjoy them?**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

4- Do you think that active learning is more effective than passive learning?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

- **If yes, justify your answer, please.**

.....

➤ **If no, justify your answer, please.**

.....

Section Three: Active Reading

1- How often do you read?

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| a) Always | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Often | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Sometimes | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Rarely | <input type="text"/> |
| e) Never | <input type="text"/> |

2- Do you face any difficulties in reading any type of text?

- | | |
|--------|----------------------|
| a) Yes | <input type="text"/> |
| b) No | <input type="text"/> |

➤ **If yes, mention some of them, please.**

.....

3- Are you familiar with active reading?

- | | |
|----------|----------------------|
| a) Yes | <input type="text"/> |
| b) No | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Maybe | <input type="text"/> |

➤ **If yes, have you ever tried to use it while reading**

.....

4- To what extent does active reading foster your comprehension?

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Totally agree | <input type="text"/> |
| 2) Agree | <input type="text"/> |
| 3) Disagree | <input type="text"/> |
| 4) Totally disagree | <input type="text"/> |

5- In your opinion, active reading involves

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a) Reading and re-reading the material? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Engaging with the content and asking questions? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) The desire to finish reading? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Visualizing content and creating a movie in your mind? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Memorizing the text? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) To never interrupt reading from start to end? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Questioning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Prediction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Evaluation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6- Do you think active reading is useful for master students?

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| a) Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> |

➤ **Justify your answer, please.**

.....

7- To what extent do you agree that active reading is the combination of reading and critical thinking?

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Totally agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Neutral | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Totally disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section Four: Active Reading Strategies

1- Are you familiar with annotation?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

➤ **If yes, do you use it when you read?**

- Yes
- No

2- Do you find that annotation is effective as an active reading strategy?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

➤ **If yes, what is its effectiveness for you?**

.....

3- How often do you use highlighting while you practice reading?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

➤ **Justify this frequency, please.**

.....

4- Do you preview the text before reading it?

a) Yes

b) No

➤ **Justify your answer, please.**

.....

5- Do you ask yourself some questions before, during and after the reading process?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

6- Asking questions while reading is necessary to find out the main features of any written text.

a) Totally agree

b) Agree

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Totally disagree

7- Visualizing the words' meaning in my mind deepens my understanding of the text.

a) Totally agree

b) Agree

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Totally disagree

8- The ability to recreate the meaning of the text in mind own words enhances my learning abilities.

- a) Totally agree
- b) Agree
- c) Neutral
- d) Disagree
- e) Totally disagree

9- Do you consider yourself as an active reader?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

10- To what extent do you believe active reading strategies are the solution for reading difficulties of complicated texts?

- a) Totally agree
- b) Agree
- c) Neutral
- d) Disagree
- e) Totally disagree

11- Say some words about your own experience concerning the last question, please.

.....

12- If you had to redo your studies over again, what learning strategies would you have applied differently?

.....

