

The Effectiveness of the 4MS English Textbook in Developing Students' Reading Comprehension Skills: Algerian Teachers' Perspectives

**Malika Gheraissa¹, Haziqah Zulaikha Aris² and
Ismail B. Sheikh Ahmad³**

*^{1,2,3} Department of Language and Literacy
Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia
Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia*

**Corresponding Author: titina.cherif30@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This study explores English teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' reading comprehension skills. A qualitative research approach was employed, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 English teachers who had experience using the textbook in classroom instruction. The findings indicate that the textbook is generally aligned with curriculum objectives related to reading comprehension and includes a variety of written texts and activities that support the development of basic reading skills. Teachers highlighted the value of comprehension questions, structured reading stages, and organized activities in promoting learners' understanding. However, participants reported several limitations. The linguistic complexity of some reading texts was found to hinder comprehension and increase students' dependence on teacher support. In addition, the textbook places greater emphasis on lower-level reading skills, such as identifying main ideas and locating information, while providing limited opportunities for higher-order thinking and critical reading. Teachers also emphasized the importance of relevant content, visual and multimedia support, and the adaptation of textbook materials to learners' proficiency levels. The study concludes that the effectiveness of the 4MS textbook depends not only on its content but also on teacher mediation and supplementary instructional support. Further improvements are needed to better support reading comprehension in EFL contexts.

Keywords: *4MS English textbook, reading comprehension, English Language Teaching, ESL teachers' perspectives, textbook evaluation*

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, English has gained increasing importance across the world and continues to attract considerable attention. Nafees and Farid (2025) assert that English has become the primary global lingua franca, acting as a standardized means of communication between a variety of nations and cultures. Like many other countries, Algeria recognizes the growing status of English as an international language. Consequently, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become an integral component of the Algerian educational system and is taught at the primary, middle, and secondary school levels. The teaching of a foreign language requires the development and reinforcement of the four fundamental language skills—listening, reading, speaking, and writing—according to learners' proficiency levels and needs. Among these skills, reading is often considered the most important in second and foreign-language learning contexts. The importance of strong reading skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts cannot be overstated, as reading skills are indispensable to the broader development of other language abilities, including listening, speaking, and writing (Men & Heng, 2026). Given this central role of reading in language development, and despite the rise of diverse multimedia platforms, textbooks endure as the foundational pedagogical resource in formal education, serving as the primary source of instructional materials, tasks, and information in the classroom (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021).

In the Algerian educational context, the production and redesign of school textbooks are systematically tied to broader institutional reforms designed to modernize the national curriculum and integrate active, competency-based pedagogical frameworks (Belaid et al., 2026). Previous studies indicate that Algeria experienced a major educational reform in 2003, which brought substantial changes to both the curriculum and the educational structure (Selama, 2018; Meriah & Meriah, 2025). This reform involved revising the curricula and textbooks used in primary and middle schools, as well as restructuring the overall organization of the education system (Sarnou, 2024). Later, in 2016, the Algerian Ministry of National Education launched a new educational initiative known as the Second Generation Program (SGP), which led to the development of a new series of textbooks (Selama, 2018). These English language textbooks were designed to address the four core language skills required for learning and teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL): listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The 4MS (fourth year middle school) textbook, *"My Book of English"* (MBOE) is one of the most recent English language textbooks introduced for middle school learners in Algeria. The evolution of this educational transition is directly tied to the national integration of the competency-based approach, a paradigm shift intended to transition classrooms from passive knowledge transmission to learner-centered frameworks supported by updated pedagogical textbooks (Baghoussi, 2021). As Hamidi and Benaissi (2018) stress, textbooks play an important role in facilitating language learning. More specifically, English textbooks serve as essential instructional tools, not only for delivering knowledge and language skills but also for guiding classroom activities and supporting the achievement of educational objectives.

Reading comprehension is widely conceptualized as an active cognitive process requiring deep textual engagement, systematic extraction of information, and a sophisticated, multi-layered construction of meaning (Hennessy, 2021). According to Khalilova (2023), reading was traditionally viewed as a decoding process through which readers interpret the writer's intended message. However, readers do not always understand a message exactly as the writer intended, since differences in background knowledge and perspectives may result in different interpretations of the same text.

Consequently, modern theoretical frameworks conceptualize reading comprehension not as a passive absorption of information, but as a constructive and highly interactive cognitive process that materializes through a synchronized interplay between reader-centered variables, such as background schemata, and text-centered structural attributes (Cervetti & Wright, 2020; Smith et al., 2021).

Frans et al. (2023) asserted that broad reading skills are essential for educational success. The capacity for comprehensive reading enables students to grasp the material thoroughly, thereby fostering the development of their knowledge. According to the review, Algeria lacks research focusing on EFL middle school students' challenges with reading comprehension. Concerning the elements that affect reading comprehension abilities among fourth-year middle school students in Algerian education, research has focused on grammar, vocabulary, and reading pedagogical strategies, among others (Djenane & Cheddad, 2021; Bensalah & Gueroudj, 2020).). Nonetheless, there have been no studies examining the effectiveness of English textbooks in enhancing English reading comprehension abilities, particularly among middle-school Algerian ESL learners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating English teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' reading comprehension skills in English. As the main users of the textbook in classroom instruction, teachers are in a strong position to assess its strengths, weaknesses, and overall contribution to reading development. By examining their views and practical experiences, the study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how the textbook supports the teaching and learning of reading comprehension within the Algerian middle school context. Through exploring teachers' perspectives, the study offers valuable insights into the textbook's effectiveness and identifies areas that may require improvement to better support students' reading comprehension achievement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Value of EFL Textbooks for Reading Comprehension Skills

Empirical evaluations of modern instructional materials indicate that effective EFL textbooks must incorporate engaging and contextually relevant texts that structurally support reading development and vocabulary acquisition. Contemporary content analysis emphasizes that reading tasks should move beyond passive comprehension, highlighting the value of activities that stimulate critical reflection, student autonomy, and higher-order cognitive skills, even though structural consensus remains divided regarding the most appropriate lengths for reading texts (Maryamah et al., 2024). Furthermore, empirical evaluations focusing on learner-centered textbook analysis demonstrate that Iranian students generally maintain a positive attitude toward their designated language textbooks. Data indicate that the instructional content aligns effectively with learners' specific target requirements, suggesting that these materials are successful in fulfilling the practical educational expectations of the students (Atigh & Khabbazi, 2021).

EFL Textbook Features and Reading Comprehension Skills Development

As synthesized by Khojasteh and Mukundan (2025), contemporary ELT frameworks broadly

conceptualize language textbooks as systematically organized collections of instructional materials explicitly engineered to scaffold and sustain English language pedagogy within institutional settings. These foundational materials function as the primary pedagogical framework, aligning linguistic exposure with formal curricular objectives to optimize target language acquisition in the classroom. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) argue that the effective utilization of textbooks depends largely on the teacher's capacity to actively engage students with the content. When mediated correctly by the instructor, these comprehensive resources serve as a critical vehicle for simultaneous skills, presenting structured learning content that facilitates communicative practice across both primary language systems vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and the core macro skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Ultimately, by aligning these pedagogical layers, textbooks supply learners with valuable, systematic opportunities to actively employ English in real-world classroom interactions.

English textbooks play a central role in supporting both teachers and students throughout the learning process. For teachers, they serve as practical guides for lesson delivery and provide useful resources through explanations, exercises, and learning activities. For students, textbooks can influence attitudes toward learning and contribute to academic achievement. Similarly, contemporary research confirms that a positive affective relationship between learners and their learning environment directly drives behavioral engagement. Students who experience high levels of foreign language enjoyment are significantly more motivated to participate actively in collaborative classroom activities and tasks (Mohammad Hosseini et al., 2022). Consequently, textbooks are fundamental tools for curriculum implementation, as they are designed in accordance with curricular objectives while offering structured guidance for teachers and meaningful learning opportunities for students.

Furthermore, Nation and Waring (2020) maintain that textbooks are important resources for self-directed learning because they provide effective instructional content along with a variety of ideas and activities. They also function as reference materials, support the achievement of learning objectives specified in the syllabus, and help less experienced teachers build confidence and develop teaching skills. In the area of reading, textbooks are particularly valuable because they provide structured texts and exercises that help learners strengthen their comprehension and critical thinking abilities.

In addition, Dockx et al. (2020) suggest that the concept of the implemented curriculum offers a useful framework for understanding how textbooks influence teachers' instructional practices and students' learning experiences. As a result, textbooks are considered essential to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process because they help establish important instructional standards. Likewise, contemporary curriculum research emphasizes that textbooks serve as a vital mechanism for pedagogical uniformity across institutional contexts. By ensuring that learners across different settings and proficiency levels are systematically exposed to equitable, comparable content, standardized textbooks establish a highly consistent operational baseline (Yu et al., 2022). This systematic alignment across classrooms reduces instructional variance, thereby making subsequent academic assessment and program evaluation significantly more structured, reliable, and standardized.

Current empirical assessments reinforce the premise that instructional materials constitute the structural bedrock of contemporary language programs. Textbooks operate as a foundational element within English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula, functioning as highly reliable, organized, and

self-regulated resources that yield substantial pedagogical benefits by streamlining instructional delivery for educators and scaffolding language acquisition for students (Gholampour & Mehrabi, 2023). Similarly, recent empirical work emphasizes that effective assessment within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms operates as a complex system, heavily contingent upon the structural alignment of the macro-curriculum, the micro-syllabus, and the progressive monitoring of learner development (Lestari & Yusuf, 2025). Strong evaluation in these contexts demands higher-order teacher assessment literacy; educators must possess the specialized professional competence to systematically collect, document, interpret, and analyze student performance metrics across multiple instructional domains while deploying a diverse range of contextualized assessment methods and evaluative procedures (Lestari & Yusuf, 2025).

Moreover, contemporary literacy frameworks describe reading as a highly dynamic, interactive cognitive process in which text-based information intersects with a reader's background schemas. Rather than acting as a passive decoding exercise, reading requires learners to actively integrate textual cues with their prior knowledge to synthesize and construct meaning, making deep comprehension the primary functional objective of the activity (Laroza & Amada, 2024). In the language classroom, this schema activation and comprehension development are systematically supported through regular engagement with a diverse array of textual media, ranging from authentic news items and topical articles to structured English textbooks (Laroza & Amada, 2024). In the practical orchestration of language courses, contemporary research underscores the role of textbooks as pivotal administrative and pedagogical utilities for educators. Methodological evaluations of instructor practices reveal that structured coursebooks effectively scaffold the daily instructional workflow by guiding teachers in the selection of level-appropriate learning materials, providing standardized frameworks for planning interactive classroom activities, and offering a reliable foundation for designing constructive language assessments (Orfan et al., 2021). Consequently, textbooks also benefit students by enhancing their understanding of the content being learned (Laila & Fitriyah, 2022).

Effectiveness of the 4MS English Textbook

Algeria adopts a centralized curriculum in which the Ministry of Education establishes the learning objectives and content to be implemented in schools throughout the country. To support this system, textbooks are designed in accordance with the national curriculum, ensuring that learners receive a consistent educational experience regardless of where they study. Regarding textbook content, materials development frameworks dictate that instructional textbooks must maintain an intentional equilibrium between structural language knowledge and its pragmatic, real-world application in everyday life. Rather than isolating linguistic forms, contemporary pedagogical design requires that materials actively promote the systematic integration of all four language macro-skills while embedding contextualized, communicative tasks. These integrated activities are vital for shifting the classroom dynamic away from passive rote memorization and toward meaningful, interactional language use that mirrors authentic social contexts (Rahmat & Coxhead, 2021).

Within EFL environments, textbooks function as indispensable instructional tools that offer well-organized content, comprehensive materials, and a diverse array of structured learning activities. This structured reliance is highly pronounced in regional schooling settings, where course books play a central role in supporting day-to-day instruction and shaping the pedagogical environment. Methodologically, these materials provide vital structural guidance by outlining explicit lesson

content and text models, while simultaneously establishing a coherent framework for course development through systematic teaching approaches. Furthermore, systematic textbook analysis and utilization optimize the acquisition process by exposing learners to explicit language input and scaffolded opportunities for productive language output (Mamac & Bangga, 2022).

Teacher Perceptions of Textbook Effectiveness in EFL Contexts

Research within contemporary educational frameworks continues to demonstrate that language educators' internal belief systems play a critical role in the broader domain of English Language Teaching (ELT). Recent empirical investigations confirm that teachers' underlying perceptions act as a decisive intermediary layer, fundamentally shaping how modern instructional mandates and curricular materials are interpreted, adapted, and operationalized within everyday classroom environments (Lim et al., 2022). Teachers are encouraged to critically examine their instructional beliefs, as these beliefs significantly influence their professional practices. Contemporary educational research emphasizes that educators' internal pedagogical beliefs are inherently tethered to their overt actions, both in their broad professional planning and in their direct interactive execution inside the classroom. Empirical frameworks indicate that these cognitive belief systems serve as essential mediating pathways, directly filtering information and framing how teachers operationalize instructional decisions, execute daily classroom practices, and respond to curricular policies (Sabarwal et al., 2022). In a similar manner, contemporary research continues to highlight the robust and direct connection linking educators' internal cognitive beliefs with their practical classroom practices. Empirical data underscores that these foundational pedagogical perspectives do not exist in isolation but instead act as the primary operational blueprint that determines how teachers structure their lessons, interact with students, and execute everyday instructional strategies (Pan & Chen, 2023). Furthermore, Neubauer-Hametner et al. (2025) found that teachers' perceptions directly affect their judgments and instructional behaviors. Taken together, these studies demonstrate the importance of understanding teachers' perceptions as a means of improving teaching effectiveness and enhancing educational practice.

Empirical research in educational methodology establishes that teachers' perceptions and internal belief systems play a vital role in shaping the operational landscape of language instruction. Far from being passive background attitudes, these cognitive orientations offer profound insights into actual teaching practices and serve as the primary drivers that directly influence macroscopic educational decisions, micro-level classroom actions, and adaptive instructional strategies (Neubauer-Hametner et al., 2025; Wang & Kim, 2023). Furthermore, an educator's evaluation and adaptation of English-language textbooks are dynamically shaped by an interconnected network of internal and external variables. These perceptions are mediated by personal teaching experience, classroom resource needs, student proficiency, and institutional contexts, alongside ongoing professional development and available reference materials (Noppiboon & Sukying, 2024; Zhou & Li, 2025). Therefore, understanding these perspectives is essential for enhancing instructional practices and improving educational outcomes.

Recent empirical research establishes that systematic textbook evaluation is central to professional development and heavily shapes teachers' cognition regarding material effectiveness. By critically analyzing the contextual strengths and weaknesses of curriculum materials, educators gain reflective insights that enable them to adapt the text contents to meet the explicit instructional needs of their learners. While the macro-skills of reading and listening within these coursebooks are frequently commended as highly relevant, instructors regularly note a critical need for stronger

pedagogical support in localized components such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation instruction, and spontaneous, learner-centered output tasks (Almunawaroh & Steklács, 2025; Mao & Qi, 2026).

Likewise, a study conducted by regional EFL textbooks demonstrates that modern instructional materials are built upon sound pedagogical methodologies, offering clear instructions and comprehensive practice opportunities for both instructors and learners. These textbooks offer a practical framework for addressing crucial sociolinguistic dimensions, such as stereotyping and national identity, through themes grounded in everyday life and diverse cultural dynamics. Furthermore, the material functions effectively as an instructional syllabus that supports teachers in lesson planning, aligns core language points with mandated curriculum objectives, and provides comprehensive coverage across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Riadini & Cahyono, 2021; Triastuti et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence from the Thai EFL context corroborates that language instructors maintain highly positive perceptions of structured English textbooks, viewing them as indispensable pedagogical guides and educational tools. Teachers strongly value these curriculum materials for their comprehensive supplementary resources, explicit instructional objectives, age-appropriate content, and clarity of instructions, all of which align effectively with local educational constraints. Furthermore, textbooks that feature an attractive layout design and well-structured, progressive skill progressions are highly commended for their capacity to enhance lesson delivery, support varied learning styles, and improve overall language education outcomes (Noppiboon & Sukying, 2024).

Complementary investigations into practitioner perspectives confirm that modern EFL textbooks function as highly appropriate instructional instruments when they are aesthetically engaging, culturally acceptable, reflective of target learner interests, and rich in authentic language materials. Beyond student engagement, language educators value these core curriculum materials because they streamline lesson preparation, anchor classroom activities directly to institutional syllabi, and align systematically with macro-level assessment and examination requirements. Ultimately, these dynamics illustrate the multi-faceted utility of contemporary textbooks in harmonizing strict institutional educational standards with localized, practical classroom realities (Anggraini et al., 2025).

Overall, teachers tended to perceive textbooks positively, considering them effective and relevant for both learners and instructors. However, a study conducted in Palestine presented a more complex picture. Although the questionnaire results reflected positive attitudes toward the textbooks, the interview findings revealed several concerns, including irrelevant topics, limited alignment with students' interests, needs, and background knowledge, and the inclusion of content unrelated to language learning. Teachers also reported problems with speaking, writing, and grammar activities, as well as inconsistencies between textbook content and examination requirements. Furthermore, they criticized the lack of consideration given to students' linguistic proficiency levels and learning conditions. These findings suggest the need for further improvements to better support language learning outcomes (Hammad, 2022).

Evaluative frameworks for global EFL coursebooks highlight a critical tension between intentional design scaffolding and localized pedagogical utility. While specific textbooks demonstrate notable instructional affordances, such as engaging thematic topics, focused attention to language forms, and a graduated difficulty progression from simple to complex tasks, they frequently require systematic

modification to overcome imbalances in macro-skill coverage and task clarity. Consequently, empirical textbook evaluation and critical text selection serve as essential practical interventions. In this process, educators must systematically weigh multi-dimensional variables, analyzing how the structural task content, systematic sequencing, linguistic technicality, and the integration of communicative form and meaning align directly with both curriculum requirements and the differentiated abilities of learners (Mamac & Bangga, 2022).

Nevertheless, teachers do not always follow the textbook exactly as presented. They often adapt the sequence of materials and activities according to lesson objectives, instructional plans, and students' needs. The teachers in the study also considered some instructions overly simplistic and modified them to better achieve lesson goals. In addition, they took into account factors such as text length, teaching methods, and the availability of supplementary resources, including audio CDs and teachers' guides. Although the textbooks were officially recommended and considered useful for examination preparation, teachers frequently supplemented them with additional worksheets.

Investigating practitioner perspectives reveals that instructors judge EFL textbooks across three core operational dimensions: suitability to student needs, structural alignment with institutional syllabi and examination frameworks, and overall pragmatic ease of use. Instructors broadly validate contemporary materials when they are visually engaging, highly interactive, culturally acceptable, and reflective of the targeted learners' communicative interests. Furthermore, successful instructional implementation relies on maintaining a balanced representation across all four core language macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, ensuring that structural activities remain systematically calibrated to the students' evolving linguistic proficiency levels (Sihombing & Nguyen, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory case study design to investigate the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing reading comprehension skills among fourth-year middle school students in Algeria. The study was conducted within the Algerian middle school educational context, where English is taught as a compulsory foreign language and the 4MS textbook serves as the official instructional material prescribed by the Ministry of National Education. As the final level of middle school education, the fourth year represents a crucial stage in preparing learners for national examinations and further academic study. The focus of the study was the 4MS English textbook currently used in Algerian middle schools, with particular attention to its contribution to the development of reading comprehension skills. An exploratory case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of a contemporary educational phenomenon within its learning context. The study sought to evaluate the extent to which the textbook supports the development of reading comprehension in students, informs instructional practices, and responds to learners' needs. Given the limited research addressing the effectiveness of Algerian EFL textbooks in fostering reading comprehension, this approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the textbook's strengths and limitations. To achieve this objective, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, enabling a holistic evaluation of the textbook from the main participants' perspectives.

Study Participants

The participants in this study comprised 10 middle school teachers (6 male, 4 female) teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Algeria, most of whom were over 30 years old and held a degree in English. All had more than five years of teaching experience, including prior experience teaching fourth-year middle school students with the MBOE textbook ("My Book of English"). Since recruiting sufficient participants from a single school was impractical, teachers were drawn from several middle schools across the country. Despite being from different schools, all followed the same curriculum and instructional materials. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their qualifications and professional competence in English teaching. Selection criteria also required a strong command of English, attendance at relevant orientation seminars led by educational inspectors and fellow teachers, and familiarity with the guidelines and instructional approaches for teaching reading skills through the MBOE textbook.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol, consisting of 15 open-ended interview questions, was developed to guide the data collection process. The questions were designed to find answers to the first research question, which is to explore the perspectives of English teachers on the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' reading comprehension skills. Interview questions were consistent with the study objective. Probing questions were also used where necessary to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses, clarify meanings, and provide concrete examples from their teaching experiences, in addition to the main interview questions. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow researchers to obtain rich and detailed qualitative data while ensuring that all participants are asked comparable core questions (Kallio et al., 2016; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Table 1 indicates the questions asked in the interviews by theme or category:

Table 1*Interview Questions*

Category/Theme	Questions
Warm-Up Questions	1) Could you tell me a little about yourself—your name and your role at your school? 2) How long have you been teaching English? 3) Have you always taught at the middle school level, or have you taught other levels as well? 4) How long have you been using the 4MS textbook with your students? 5) What do you enjoy most about teaching English to middle school students?
Conceptualizing Reading Comprehension	1) How do you define reading comprehension skills in English language teaching? 2) How would you evaluate your students' current level of reading comprehension?
Textbook Content and Suitability	1) Do you think the reading texts in the 4MS textbook are suitable for developing students' reading comprehension skills? 2) How appropriate is the language level of the reading materials for your students' proficiency? 3) Which types of reading texts (e.g., stories, articles, dialogues) in the 4MS textbook are most effective for building reading comprehension, and why?
Textbook Activities and Skill Development	1) How effective are the activities and exercises in the 4MS textbook for improving students' understanding of reading texts? 2) Which specific reading skills (e.g., finding details, identifying the main idea) does the textbook develop, and how effectively?
Curriculum Alignment	1) Does the 4MS textbook align with the curriculum's objectives for improving reading skills?
Challenges and Learner Needs	1) What are the key factors contributing to students' difficulties in reading comprehension lessons? 2) Does the 4MS textbook address your students' specific reading comprehension needs?
Teacher Adaptation and Support	1) To what extent do you need to adapt or supplement the textbook to make it more effective for teaching reading comprehension? 2) Should additional materials or resources accompany the 4MS textbook to improve outcomes? If so, what kind?
Overall Impact and Effectiveness	1) To what extent does the textbook influence students' reading comprehension skills overall? 2) Based on your observations, how has the 4MS textbook impacted students' reading comprehension skills over time? 3) Generally, do you think the 4MS textbook is effective in developing students' reading comprehension skills?

The interview questions were reviewed by two experts—one in English language teaching and one in qualitative research, both from the Kulliyah of Education, IIUM — to establish the content validity of the interview protocol. The experts evaluated the questions in terms of clarity, relevance, consistency

with the research objectives, and fitness for addressing the focus of the study. Several questions were reworded based on feedback to improve clarity, eliminate ambiguity, and ensure a logical sequence. This expert review process increased the content validity and overall quality of the interview protocol prior to the start of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

DATA COLLECTION

The participants were identified through the researcher's own social network, as the researcher herself is an English teacher at a middle school in Algeria. Prior to the interviews, all participants provided informed consent. Each teacher was individually interviewed on the Zoom platform, in a quiet, appropriate place outside normal school hours. The interviews lasted between 40 and 45 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate capture of their responses and to facilitate verbatim transcription and subsequent thematic analysis. The interviews were conducted in a structured manner to ensure consistency across participants while allowing sufficient flexibility to pursue emerging ideas in greater depth, thereby providing a fuller and more credible picture of the data collected (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Tracy, 2010). The sessions allowed participants to express their views on the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' English reading comprehension skills with greater depth than would typically be possible in fully structured interviews or questionnaires.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the interview data, thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify, examine, and report recurring patterns or themes within participants' responses. In the present study, the analysis followed the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which include familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the final report. The interview recordings were initially transcribed using *Otter Voice Meeting Notes*. Each transcript was then reviewed individually to identify key ideas and significant issues raised by the participants. Similar concepts were grouped together and refined into preliminary patterns. Subsequently, *Atlas.ti* was used to organize the codes and generate broader themes from the interview transcripts, while the subthemes were developed manually through careful examination and synthesis of the coded data.

ETHICS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Research Ethics

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Prior to their participation, all participants were provided with clear information about the purpose, scope, and voluntary nature of the study. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant, and they were assured that their identities would remain confidential. In addition, participants were informed that all collected data would be used solely for academic and research purposes. During the interview sessions, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any negative consequences. They were also informed that the researcher might contact them for further clarification when necessary to ensure the accuracy and validity of the collected data.

Establishing Trustworthiness

To establish the comprehensive trustworthiness and methodological integrity of the study, the research design systematically adhered to Tracy's classic big-tent framework for qualitative rigor. The application of these cross-disciplinary evaluative markers ensures that the investigation meets stringent benchmarks for credibility, sincerity, resonance, and ethical transparency throughout the data collection and analytical phases (Albert & Csizér, 2022). The transferability was improved by providing a detailed description of the research context, the characteristics of the participants, and the data collection procedures, which allowed readers to identify the relevance of the findings for similar educational settings. Semi-structured interviews offered participants the opportunity to express their perceptions and experiences in depth, thereby enhancing credibility. Systematic analysis of the interview data helped to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the perspective of participants. The study also maintained transparency during the research process by providing clear descriptions of the research design, the selection of participants, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. Together, these measures improved the trustworthiness, credibility, and overall rigor of the study, providing a solid platform for the study of teachers' perceptions of the 4MS English textbook's effectiveness in developing students' English reading comprehension skills.

FINDINGS

General Alignment

Several teachers indicated that the 4MS English textbook is generally aligned with the curriculum objectives related to reading comprehension. One teacher stated, *"On paper, yes, the textbook aligns with the curriculum objectives"* (R7). Nevertheless, she stressed that its effectiveness in helping students achieve these objectives depends largely on teacher adaptation and instructional support. She added, *"But practically, I feel it doesn't always support students in reaching those objectives unless we adapt it"* (R7). Although the textbook appears to correspond to the prescribed curriculum, participants raised concerns about its capacity to adequately develop the targeted reading skills. As one teacher explained, *"The 4MS textbook doesn't really emphasize the skills outlined in the official curriculum. It doesn't provide enough time or gradual progression, so, umm, students don't fully achieve the objectives"* (R8).

Linguistic Complexity

The linguistic complexity of the texts was frequently identified as a source of comprehension difficulties and increased ESL learners' dependence on teacher support. As one teacher explained, *"Honestly, the reading materials contain language that is not sufficiently comprehensible for most students"* (R8). Similarly, another participant observed that *"In most cases, the language level is too advanced. Difficult vocabulary, you know, disrupts students' understanding."* (R7). Beyond linguistic complexity, participants also expressed concerns regarding the overall difficulty and relevance of the reading texts. One teacher stated, *"In my view, most of the texts present a level of difficulty that, you know, exceeds the students' abilities. They find the vocabulary and text complexity too high. Umm, there's really a need for more relevance to students' lives"* (R6). Likewise, another participant noted that *"Not always. Some texts are long or linguistically difficult, which, umm, makes it hard for students to stay engaged or grasp the meaning"* (R7).

Lower-Level Reading Skills

Numerous teachers observed that the textbook mainly promotes lower-level reading skills, such as identifying main ideas, locating specific information, and understanding vocabulary in context. As

one teacher stated, *“The textbook is somehow useful in providing basic reading comprehension tasks”* (R3). However, they raised concerns about its limited focus on higher-order reading skills. As one participant explained, *“yet it doesn’t really provide enough activities related to higher skills, such as inference or, umm, critical reading”* (R3). The same teacher further noted that *“the textbook rarely focuses on higher skills such as inference, analyzing, or critical thinking”* (R3). Similarly, another participant reported that the textbook helps learners develop skills such as *“identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary in context, and identifying the author’s purpose,”* but added that *“it’s not always as effective as it should be”* (R8). These responses indicate that although the textbook contributes to the development of foundational reading skills, it offers limited opportunities for learners to engage in higher-order thinking processes, including inference, analysis, and critical reading.

Overall, the findings indicate that while the 4MS English textbook is generally aligned with curriculum objectives, its effectiveness in developing reading comprehension skills is limited by the linguistic complexity of many texts, the restricted progression of reading skills, and the insufficient focus on higher-order comprehension processes. As a result, the successful achievement of the intended learning outcomes appears to rely heavily on teacher adaptation, supplementary materials, and additional instructional support.

Quality of the Written Texts

Some teachers expressed positive views regarding the quality of the textbook’s written texts, particularly in terms of their ability to engage learners and support reading comprehension. Narrative texts, such as biographies and profiles, were perceived as especially effective because they relate to real-life experiences and familiar personalities. As one participant explained, *“Biographies and profiles are the most effective... they often include famous figures, and this increases students’ interest. It also encourages them to connect events to real life”* (R4, R6). Likewise, other teachers reported that *“short stories and dialogues... are much more effective”* because they are *“closer to students’ reality and easier for them to comprehend”* (R7, R5, R3). Participants also emphasized the importance of informational texts and genre diversity. One teacher stated that *“articles and dialogues are the most effective”* because articles encourage discussion and the expression of ideas, while dialogues are easier to understand due to their clear and concise structure (R8). Moreover, another participant highlighted that exposure to different text types helps students *“improve basic skills as skimming for details”* (R9). These answers propose that the effectiveness of the textbook’s written texts stems from their relevance, accessibility, and variety, all of which contribute positively to students’ engagement and reading development.

A number of teachers raised concerns about the difficulty level of the textbook’s reading texts. As one participant noted, *“Most of the texts present a level of difficulty”* (R6). He reported that the complexity of the vocabulary and content often exceeds students’ abilities, making comprehension more challenging: *“It exceeds the students’ abilities”* and that students find *“vocabulary and text complexity too high”* (R6). Similarly, another teacher stated that *“many texts are complex even for the good learners”* (R5). Participants also highlighted the impact of text length and linguistic difficulty on students’ engagement. One teacher observed that *“some texts are long or linguistically difficult,”* making it difficult for learners *“to stay engaged or grasp the meaning”* (R7). These views suggest that the difficulty level of certain reading texts may hinder students’ comprehension and

reduce their engagement, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of the textbook in supporting reading development.

Other teachers highlighted the importance of relevance and visual support in increasing students' engagement with reading texts. Materials that are visually appealing and supported by images were perceived as more effective in stimulating interest and facilitating comprehension. One participant explained: *"If the topic is really attractive... then the result is better. Even just from the title or the pictures, the learners... feel more satisfied and engaged"* (R1). This response indicates that relevant topics and visual support play a significant role in motivating learners and enhancing reading comprehension.

In short, the findings suggest that the textbook's written texts have both strengths and limitations. Teachers appreciated the variety, relevance, and accessibility of certain text types, as these features help promote learner engagement and support reading development. However, concerns were also expressed regarding the linguistic complexity, length, and overall difficulty of some texts. In addition, the findings highlight the importance of visually appealing and contextually relevant materials in fostering learners' motivation and facilitating reading comprehension.

Instructional and Pedagogical Adaptation

Some teachers emphasized the need to adapt and supplement the textbook to better align it with students' proficiency levels. They reported that the gap between the textbook content and learners' abilities often necessitates modifications such as simplifying texts, shortening reading passages, and adjusting activities. As one participant explained, *"I often shorten or replace texts, modify activities, and, umm, use flashcards to clarify vocabulary. Without those adaptations, the book alone isn't enough"* (R8). Similarly, another teacher stated that *"teachers often have to adapt or supplement the textbook"* and stressed that *"[adapting materials is] really necessary"* (R4). In addition, one participant noted, *"I usually modify or supplement them with my own exercises that, you know, fit my students' needs better"* (R7). These responses imply that the textbook does not always adequately meet learners' needs and that teacher adaptation plays a crucial role in enhancing its effectiveness. By modifying content and providing additional support, teachers help bridge the gap between the textbook's demands and students' actual abilities, thereby facilitating comprehension and engagement.

Several participants reported supplementing the textbook with additional reading materials and activities to better address students' reading comprehension needs. As one participant noted, *"Whenever the texts are too long or, like, without illustrations, the teacher has to adapt them,"* explaining that shorter texts, dialogues, and more accessible reading materials are often introduced when the textbook content is considered too difficult or unsuitable. He said, *"Sometimes we add new short texts or dialogues"* (R1). Similarly, another teacher stated that the textbook *"does not fully meet the specific reading comprehension needs"* and therefore requires *"skill-focused activities to better support the students' development"* (R9). These answers asserted that teachers frequently rely on supplementary materials and additional activities to compensate for the limitations of the textbook and better support learners' reading development.

Some respondents emphasized the importance of visual and multimedia support in facilitating reading comprehension. They reported using visual aids to help students understand complex texts, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and increase engagement during reading activities. As one participant explained, *"Teachers... often modify texts and add vocabulary exercises or visual aids. For instance,*

maps, timelines, and videos help students understand [the text] better" (R6). Similarly, another teacher noted that *"the teacher's role is to... simplify the new vocabulary and use visual aids or multimedia to get learners involved in reading"* (R2). Likewise, (R7) stated, *"I simplify texts, add visuals, or even give summaries to help comprehension."* These ideas assert that visual and multimedia resources play a significant role in supporting learners' understanding and addressing difficulties associated with the textbook materials.

In conclusion, the findings emphasize instructional and pedagogical adaptation as a crucial factor in enhancing the effectiveness of the 4MS textbook. Teachers frequently reported modifying texts, supplementing activities, and integrating additional materials and visual resources to meet learners' needs and address the limitations of the textbook. Such adaptations not only improve students' comprehension and engagement but also help bridge the gap between the textbook content and learners' proficiency levels, thereby contributing to more effective reading instruction.

Quality of the Instructional Tasks

Several teachers highlighted the role of comprehension questions in supporting the development of students' reading skills. They noted that the textbook includes a variety of question types that help learners identify key information, understand main ideas, and expand their vocabulary knowledge. As one participant explained, *"finding details... through true-or-false questions, WH-questions, and multiple-choice questions,"* in addition to activities focusing on *"understanding the main idea"* and *"vocabulary,"* are among the principal reading skills targeted in the textbook (R4). Teachers also emphasized the importance of question variety in sustaining learners' engagement. As one teacher noted, *"the more varied the questions are, the more effective the results are... students respond better"* (R1). These perspectives confirmed that the inclusion of diverse comprehension questions contributes to the development of foundational reading skills while also enhancing learner engagement and participation in reading activities.

Some informants observed that the textbook incorporates different stages of the reading process, which helps learners develop essential comprehension skills. They highlighted the inclusion of pre-reading activities to activate prior knowledge, while-reading tasks to identify key information and main ideas, and vocabulary-focused activities to support understanding. As one participant explained, *"finding details... through true-or-false questions, WH-questions, and multiple-choice questions,"* along with activities targeting *"understanding the main idea"* and developing *"vocabulary,"* are among the principal skills addressed by the textbook (R 4). However, teachers also emphasized that the effectiveness of these reading stages depends largely on how they are implemented in the classroom. One teacher stated that the textbook *"can be effective in developing reading comprehension skills, but again, it needs teachers to adapt and supplement it,"* particularly through *"adding pre- and post-reading activities"* and by incorporating additional materials (R4). These views suggest that although the textbook provides a useful framework for developing reading skills, its effectiveness can be significantly enhanced through teacher adaptation and the integration of supplementary activities.

Other teachers perceived the textbook activities as generally effective in supporting reading comprehension, particularly because of their clear organization and emphasis on basic comprehension skills. As one participant explained, *"the task Read and Do Text A Gaza Refugee Child's Dream allows learners to apply comprehension strategies practically"* (R 6). However, the same participant

also pointed out that some tasks are excessively long and may reduce students' engagement: *"But, umm, some exercises are boring and too long"* (R 6). Similarly, another teacher stated that the textbook is *"practically effective because it covers basic comprehension skills"* and provides *"clear structure and manageable tasks,"* while emphasizing that teachers may need to introduce additional activities to further increase student engagement (R9). These perceptions advocate that although the textbook contains well-structured activities that contribute to reading development, supplementary tasks may be necessary to sustain learners' motivation, interest, and active participation throughout the reading process.

To sum up, the findings indicate that the instructional tasks included in the 4MS textbook offer a structured framework for developing foundational reading comprehension skills. The diversity of comprehension questions and the incorporation of different reading stages contribute positively to learners' understanding and engagement. Nevertheless, participants emphasized that the effectiveness of these tasks is often limited by their predominant focus on basic skills, the excessive length of some activities, and the need for additional teacher support. Therefore, supplementary activities and instructional adaptations remain essential for enhancing learner participation and promoting more effective reading development.

INTER-RATER AGREEMENT ON THE THEMES

To improve the credibility and confirmability of the thematic analysis, an inter-rater agreement procedure was performed with two independent raters. The two raters were doctoral (PhD) students in education with a specialization in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and with advanced research experience in qualitative inquiry, including conducting and analyzing in-depth interviews in their own research. Their disciplinary expertise and familiarity with the methodology made them well suited to critically evaluate the thematic coding of the present study. All raters were given the complete interview transcripts and asked to independently identify and confirm the themes present in the data without knowledge of the coding decisions made by the researcher. Themes created by each rater were compared with the themes identified by the primary researcher after independent coding.

The first inter-rater had an agreement rate of 94.7% and the second inter-rater had an agreement rate of 100%. The overall inter-rater agreement between the two raters was 97.3%, which is considerably higher than the minimum threshold of 80% suggested for qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014). Any small differences in coding by the first rater were resolved by collegial discussion and consensus, with complete agreement reached on all identified themes. The level of inter-rater agreement achieved during the analytical phase significantly enhances the overall robustness and reliability of the study's empirical findings. By systematically implementing structured validation protocols and maintaining strong alignment across evaluators, the research design minimizes subjective bias, ensuring that the qualitative and structural evaluation of the instructional materials remains highly dependable and stable (Mamac & Bangga, 2022).

DISCUSSION

The alignment of the 4MS English textbook with curriculum objectives reflects the significant role that textbooks play in curriculum implementation. Essentially, textbooks are built to match required school goals. They give teachers clear, structured guidance to follow and offer students real opportunities to

learn. Because of this, textbooks act as key daily guides that help both teachers and learners meet the specific objectives outlined in the official syllabus (Mamac & Bangga, 2022). From this perspective, the 4MS textbook appears to fulfill its intended role at a formal level, as its content is generally consistent with the prescribed curriculum. However, teachers' concerns regarding the limited development of targeted reading skills indicate that curriculum alignment alone is insufficient to ensure instructional effectiveness. The frequent need for teacher adaptation and supplementary support suggests that the textbook may not always translate curricular objectives into meaningful learning outcomes. This finding implies that effective reading instruction requires more than alignment with educational goals; it also depends on adequate scaffolding, gradual skill progression, and opportunities for learners to develop reading comprehension skills in a systematic and meaningful manner.

The linguistic complexity of reading texts appears to be a major factor influencing students' reading comprehension and engagement. Previous research has identified limited vocabulary knowledge, inaccessible language, difficulties with complex sentence structures, and insufficient background knowledge as common challenges faced by EFL learners during reading (Rahmat & Coxhead, 2021). The concerns expressed by teachers in the present study reflect these challenges, particularly with regard to difficult vocabulary and the overall complexity of the reading materials. When texts exceed learners' proficiency levels, comprehension becomes more demanding, often leading to greater dependence on teacher support and reducing opportunities for independent reading. Furthermore, the perceived lack of relevance of some texts to students' experiences may further diminish engagement, as effective comprehension relies on meaningful connections between learners' background knowledge and the content they read. These findings suggest that reading materials should be carefully aligned with learners' linguistic abilities and contextual realities to facilitate comprehension, encourage active engagement, and sustain motivation.

The emphasis on lower-level reading skills at the expense of higher-order thinking skills may restrict learners' ability to engage critically with texts. Although foundational skills such as identifying main ideas, locating details, and understanding vocabulary are essential components of reading comprehension, effective reading instruction should also encourage learners to infer, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on textual information. This view is supported by Sihombing and Nguyen (2025), who explain that critical materials evaluation helps learners analyze information, make evaluations, and develop deeper levels of understanding. The limited emphasis on inference, critical reading, and analytical thinking within the textbook suggests that students may have fewer opportunities to develop advanced comprehension abilities. As a result, their engagement with texts may remain largely at a surface level rather than extending to deeper interpretation and critical reflection. Therefore, a more balanced integration of both lower- and higher-order reading tasks would be beneficial in fostering comprehensive reading competence, critical literacy skills, and deeper engagement with textual content.

The quality of the textbook's written texts appears to offer both opportunities and challenges for the development of reading comprehension. On the one hand, teachers appreciated the inclusion of diverse text types, such as biographies, dialogues, short stories, and informational texts, which were perceived as engaging, accessible, and relevant to learners' experiences. This finding is consistent with Mamac and Bangga (2022), who emphasized that selecting relevant, structurally sound model texts in textbooks directly influences how easily learners relate to and engage with reading materials. The diversity of genres may also support the development of a range of reading skills by exposing learners to different textual structures, purposes, and forms of expression. On the other hand, participants expressed concerns regarding the linguistic complexity, length, and overall difficulty of reading certain

texts. Challenging vocabulary and complex content may create barriers to comprehension and reduce students' willingness to engage with reading activities. When texts exceed learners' proficiency levels, reading becomes a demanding task that may restrict both participation and understanding. Consequently, these findings suggest that effective reading materials should not only be relevant, engaging, and varied but also appropriately aligned with learners' linguistic abilities. Achieving such a balance is essential for promoting meaningful engagement, sustaining motivation, and supporting successful reading comprehension.

The frequent reliance on adaptation and supplementary resources highlights the limitations of using a textbook as the sole source of instruction. Teachers' practices of simplifying texts, modifying activities, and providing additional materials reflect their efforts to bridge the gap between the textbook content and students' proficiency levels. This observation aligns with Ameliana (2025), who found that teachers frequently modify or supplement textbook activities to better fit their students' proficiency levels and curricular needs. Furthermore, adding visual and multimedia tools is a highly effective way to help students understand the text and stay focused. By incorporating visual aids, summaries, and multimedia tools, teachers provide additional scaffolding that helps students process complex information and unfamiliar vocabulary more effectively. These practices suggest that the effectiveness of the textbook can be substantially enhanced when it is complemented by pedagogical adaptations and multimodal resources tailored to learners' needs. Consequently, successful reading instruction depends not only on the quality of the textbook itself but also on the teacher's ability to enrich and adapt its content to create more accessible and engaging learning experiences.

The inclusion of varied comprehension questions and reading-stage activities suggests that the textbook provides a structured framework for developing fundamental reading skills. Through activities that focus on identifying main ideas, locating specific details, and developing vocabulary, learners are given opportunities to engage with texts in multiple ways, which may contribute to improved comprehension and participation. This interpretation aligns with Maharani et al. (2026), who showed that English textbooks can offer meaningful exercises and communicative tasks that effectively help students practice and improve their language skills. Moreover, the inclusion of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities reflects established reading instruction practices that facilitate comprehension by guiding learners through different stages of text processing. These stages help activate prior knowledge, support meaning construction during reading, and encourage reflection after reading. However, teachers' observations indicate that the effectiveness of these activities depends largely on classroom implementation and the availability of supplementary support. This finding suggests that although the textbook offers a valuable foundation for reading instruction, teacher mediation remains crucial for maximizing the benefits of instructional tasks, addressing learners' diverse needs, and ensuring deeper engagement with reading materials.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study provides valuable insights into Algerian English teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' reading comprehension skills. However, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, participants were recruited through the researcher's own social network, as the researcher herself is an English teacher at a middle school in Algeria. This is a meaningful limitation to note explicitly: participants known personally to the researcher may respond differently than a neutral sample, potentially introducing social desirability bias or reluctance to candidly criticize the textbook or shared professional norms, and the researcher's dual role as insider/practitioner

and researcher could shape both data collection and interpretation. Second, teachers' descriptions of how they adapt materials, such as simplifying texts, adding visuals, or supplementing activities, were self-reported and not verified through observation; actual classroom practice may therefore differ from what was reported in the interviews. Finally, the study examined only reading comprehension, even though the 4MS textbook, and much of the literature reviewed, covers all four language macro-skills. As such, the findings cannot speak to the textbook's overall effectiveness beyond reading.

Future research may address these limitations in several ways. First, recruiting participants through more neutral or institutional channels, such as school administrations or ministry-facilitated contact, rather than the researcher's personal network, would help reduce the risk of social desirability bias and researcher positionality effects, while allowing for a more diverse range of teacher perspectives. Second, combining interview data with classroom observations would enable researchers to verify teachers' reported practices against actual instructional behavior, offering a more accurate picture of how textbook adaptation occurs in practice; incorporating students' perspectives, inspectors' judgments, and textbook content analysis alongside these observations would further support a more holistic evaluation of English language textbooks. Building on this, future studies may also employ mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to explore the relationship between textbook use and students' reading comprehension outcomes, providing empirical evidence to complement teachers' perceptions. Comparative studies between English textbooks of different educational levels or contexts would likewise help develop a broader understanding of textbook effectiveness. Finally, future studies could expand the scope of investigation beyond reading comprehension to examine the effectiveness of the 4MS textbook, or similar EFL textbooks, across all four language macro-skills, and to explore in particular the impact of textbook activities on the development of higher-order reading comprehension skills such as inference, critical, and analytical reading—offering a more comprehensive understanding of the textbook's overall instructional value.

CONCLUSION

This study examined teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the 4MS English textbook in developing students' reading comprehension skills. The findings indicate that although the textbook is generally aligned with curriculum objectives and includes a variety of texts and instructional activities that support the development of basic reading skills, several factors limit its overall effectiveness. These factors include the linguistic complexity of certain reading materials, the limited emphasis on higher-order reading skills, and the need for greater adaptation to accommodate learners' proficiency levels. The study also underscores the central role of teachers in enhancing the effectiveness of the textbook through adaptation, supplementation, and the integration of visual and multimedia resources. Such practices help facilitate comprehension, increase learner engagement, and address shortcomings in the textbook materials. Overall, the effectiveness of the 4MS textbook appears to depend not only on its content and design but also on the ways in which teachers implement and adapt it within the classroom. Therefore, future textbook development should place greater emphasis on providing learner-appropriate texts, incorporating higher-order thinking skills, and offering more flexible instructional support. Such improvements may contribute to more effective reading instruction and better reading comprehension outcomes in EFL contexts.

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