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Integrating Reading-Based Needs Analysis Into Syllabus Design And Material Development In English Language Education

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Abstract

Reading plays a central role in English language education, particularly in higher education contexts where learners are required to engage with complex academic texts. Despite its importance, reading instruction is often designed without sufficient consideration of learners' actual reading needs, resulting in misalignment between instructional objectives, materials, and students' academic demands. This study aims to explore how reading-based needs analysis can be integrated into syllabus design and material development in English language education. Employing a qualitative, curriculum-oriented research design, the study analyzes curriculum documents, instructional materials, and reading-related learning practices within an undergraduate English language education program. Data were derived from document analysis, classroom observations, students' reading-related tasks, questionnaires, and reflective records. The findings indicate that students initially experienced difficulties in understanding academic texts, applying reading strategies effectively, and engaging confidently in reading activities. After the integration of reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development, improvements were observed in students' reading engagement, comprehension processes, strategy use, and attitudes toward academic reading. The revised syllabus emphasized progressive reading skills, while the developed materials incorporated structured reading stages, explicit strategy instruction, and discipline-related texts. These findings suggest that reading-based needs analysis serves as a crucial foundation for developing responsive syllabi and effective instructional materials that address learners' academic reading demands. The study highlights the importance of positioning needs analysis as an ongoing pedagogical framework in reading-oriented curriculum development.

Keywords: Reading-Based Needs Analysis, Syllabus Design, Material Development, Academic Reading, English Language Education

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I INTRODUCTION

Reading has long been recognized as a fundamental skill in English language learning, particularly in academic contexts where learners are required to engage with a wide range of written texts to construct meaning, acquire knowledge, and develop critical thinking. However, students' difficulties in reading are not limited to decoding texts or comprehending meanings at the sentence and discourse levels. In many cases, reading problems are closely related to learners' motivation, exposure to appropriate texts, and the relevance of reading materials to their academic and personal needs. At the tertiary level, students are expected to read more extensively and intensively than they did in previous stages of education, as reading becomes the primary means through which knowledge is accessed across disciplines. This situation places reading at the core of English language education, particularly in programs where English functions as a medium for academic literacy.

In higher education contexts, reading is not only required for completing academic assignments but also for developing long-term academic and professional competencies. University students are expected to read textbooks, journal articles, research reports, and various digital texts to support their learning and intellectual growth. Nevertheless, many students experience tension between the demands of academic reading and the realities of their daily lives, which often involve tight schedules, multiple courses, organizational activities, and social commitments. As a result, reading is frequently perceived as a compulsory academic task rather than a meaningful learning activity. This condition is especially evident among learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), who must simultaneously cope with unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and culturally embedded meanings while attempting to understand academic texts written in English.

For EFL learners, reading plays a particularly critical role because it serves as the main source of linguistic input. Through reading, learners encounter vocabulary, grammatical patterns, discourse structures, and rhetorical conventions that may not always be explicitly taught in the classroom. Grabe and Stoller (2020) emphasize that reading provides sustained exposure to language forms and meanings that are essential for developing overall language proficiency. In this sense, reading is not merely one of the four language skills, but a central component that supports the development of other skills, including writing and academic communication. Consequently, problems in reading may have a cascading effect on learners' overall academic performance and engagement in English-medium learning environments.

Despite its importance, reading instruction in many English language programs is still designed without sufficient consideration of learners' actual needs. Reading courses are often based on predetermined textbooks or institutional requirements, with limited attention paid to students' reading purposes, preferred text types, proficiency levels, and learning contexts. This mismatch can result in reading materials that are either too difficult, too simplistic, or irrelevant to learners' academic goals. Nation and Macalister (2019) argue that effective language curriculum development should begin with a systematic analysis of learners' needs, as such analysis provides a rational basis for making informed decisions about course goals, content selection, and instructional sequencing. Without a clear understanding of learners' needs, syllabus design and material development risk becoming arbitrary and disconnected from the realities of the classroom.

Needs analysis has therefore become a central concept in contemporary language curriculum development. It refers to a systematic process of collecting and analyzing information about learners' needs, wants, lacks, and learning

contexts in order to inform curriculum-related decisions. Brown (2016) highlights that needs analysis is not limited to identifying linguistic deficiencies but also includes learners' goals, preferences, and situational factors that influence learning. In English language education, needs analysis has been widely applied in the design of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs; however, its relevance extends beyond ESP to general English and skill-based courses, including reading. When applied to reading instruction, needs analysis can help identify the types of texts learners need to read, the purposes for reading, the strategies they need to develop, and the challenges they face in engaging with texts.

In the context of reading-focused courses, needs analysis plays a crucial role in determining the direction of syllabus design. A syllabus is not merely a list of topics or materials, but a pedagogical plan that reflects decisions about learning objectives, content organization, and instructional priorities. Richards (2017) asserts that syllabus design should be grounded in a clear understanding of learners' needs and institutional goals, ensuring coherence between what is taught and what learners are expected to achieve. For reading courses, this means that decisions about text selection, reading strategies, and task design should be informed by an analysis of learners' reading needs rather than by textbook availability alone. A reading-based needs analysis can thus serve as a foundation for developing a syllabus that is relevant, contextualized, and responsive to learners' academic demands.

Closely related to syllabus design is the development of instructional materials, which translates curricular plans into tangible learning resources. Materials development involves selecting, adapting, or creating texts and tasks that support learners in achieving the objectives outlined in the syllabus. Tomlinson (2018) emphasizes that effective materials should be meaningful, engaging, and appropriate to learners' needs and contexts. In reading instruction, materials are particularly significant because texts themselves function as both input and content. If reading materials are not aligned with learners' proficiency levels, interests, and academic purposes, they may hinder rather than facilitate learning. Therefore, integrating

reading-based needs analysis into material development is essential to ensure that materials support learners' comprehension, motivation, and strategic reading development.

The rapid growth of digital technology has further complicated the landscape of reading in English language education. Learners now have access to an abundance of digital texts, ranging from academic journals and online articles to blogs and multimedia resources. While this availability offers new opportunities for learning, it also raises challenges related to text selection, information overload, and varying levels of text difficulty. Richards (2021) notes that curriculum designers must consider how digital resources can be meaningfully integrated into language programs, rather than assuming that access alone will lead to effective learning. In this context, needs analysis becomes even more important, as it can help identify which types of reading materials—print or digital—are most relevant and beneficial for learners within a particular program.

Although previous studies have acknowledged the importance of needs analysis in language curriculum development, there is still a need for research that explicitly examines how reading-based needs analysis can be systematically integrated into both syllabus design and material development within English language education. Many studies tend to focus on needs analysis as a diagnostic tool without sufficiently exploring its implications for subsequent curriculum components. As a result, the connection between identified reading needs and concrete curricular decisions remains underexplored. Addressing this gap is essential for developing reading courses that are pedagogically sound and aligned with learners' academic realities.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the integration of reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development in English language education. By adopting a curriculum-oriented perspective, the study seeks to demonstrate how information derived from learners' reading needs can inform coherent decisions about course objectives, content organization, and instructional materials. Rather than proposing a one-size-fits-all model, this article offers a conceptual and analytical discussion that highlights the role of needs

analysis as a guiding principle in designing reading-oriented English language curricula.

In curriculum planning, the integration between needs analysis, syllabus design, and material development should be viewed as a continuous and interconnected process rather than as separate stages. Nation and Macalister (2019) explain that curriculum development is most effective when information gathered from learners is systematically translated into pedagogical decisions. In reading-focused courses, this integration is particularly important because reading outcomes are highly influenced by the suitability of texts, tasks, and instructional sequencing. When learners' reading needs are clearly identified at the outset, curriculum designers are better positioned to select text types, determine levels of complexity, and design activities that support both comprehension and strategic reading development.

Nevertheless, in many English language education contexts, reading syllabi and materials are still developed based on institutional traditions or commercially available textbooks, with limited adaptation to specific learner needs. This practice often results in a gap between curricular intentions and classroom realities. Learners may be expected to achieve certain reading outcomes without being provided with materials that adequately reflect their proficiency levels, academic purposes, or learning constraints. Richards (2017) notes that such misalignment can reduce learner engagement and limit the effectiveness of instruction, particularly in skill-based courses such as reading.

Material development also plays a critical role in bridging the gap between curriculum plans and learning experiences. Tomlinson

(2018) argues that materials should not only present language input but also facilitate meaningful interaction with texts and encourage learner autonomy. In reading instruction, materials must support learners in developing strategies such as skimming, scanning, inferencing, and critical evaluation of texts. Without a clear understanding of learners' reading needs, materials may fail to address these strategic dimensions and instead focus narrowly on comprehension questions or vocabulary exercises.

Given these considerations, there is a clear need for research that foregrounds reading-based needs analysis as a central component of curriculum development in English language education. Rather than treating needs analysis as a preliminary or peripheral activity, this study positions it as a guiding framework for both syllabus design and material development. By examining how reading needs can inform curricular decisions, the article seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on learner-centered curriculum innovation in ELT.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to explore how reading-based needs analysis can be integrated into syllabus design and material development within English language education. The study aims to provide a conceptual and analytical account of the relationships among learners' reading needs, curricular planning, and instructional materials, with particular attention to higher education contexts. It is expected that the findings of this study will offer insights for curriculum designers and instructors who seek to develop reading courses that are both pedagogically sound and responsive to learners' academic needs.

II RESEARCH METHODS

In order to address the research objective, this study employed a qualitative research design with a curriculum-oriented approach. The study focused on examining how reading-based needs analysis can be integrated into syllabus design and material development in English language education. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore processes, rationales, and curricular decisions

rather than to measure variables quantitatively. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research allows researchers to investigate educational phenomena in depth by capturing contextual and interpretive dimensions of practice, which aligns with the focus of this study on curriculum planning and instructional design.

More specifically, this research adopted a design-based qualitative inquiry, which emphasizes the analysis of educational designs and their underlying principles. Design-based inquiry has been widely used in curriculum and instructional research to examine how theoretical concepts, such as needs analysis, are translated into practical curriculum components, including syllabus structures and instructional materials (Reeves & McKenney, 2019). In this study, reading-based needs analysis was treated as the central analytical lens through which syllabus design and material development were examined.

The research context of this study was an undergraduate English language education program at a higher education institution in Indonesia. The context was selected because reading courses constitute a core component of the curriculum and play a significant role in supporting students' academic literacy. Rather than focusing on a single classroom intervention, the study examined curriculum-related documents and instructional planning practices associated with a reading course offered at the tertiary level. This context provided a realistic setting for analyzing how reading needs inform curricular decisions at the course level.

The primary data sources of the study consisted of curriculum-related documents, including the course syllabus, lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessment guidelines used in a reading course. These documents were analyzed to identify how learners' reading needs were reflected in course objectives, content organization, and material selection. Document analysis is a widely accepted method in qualitative curriculum research, as it allows researchers to examine formal representations of educational intentions and practices (Bowen, 2009; O'Keeffe & Mark, 2021). In addition to document analysis, this study also drew on a synthesized reading needs framework derived from relevant literature on reading instruction and needs analysis in English language education.

To support the needs analysis component, the study employed a conceptual needs analysis framework based on recent models of language curriculum development. Needs analysis in this study was not conducted through large-scale surveys or tests, but through analytical synthesis of established needs categories, such as target

needs, learning needs, and contextual factors related to reading instruction (Brown, 2016; Nation & Macalister, 2019). This approach allowed the researcher to systematically map potential reading needs relevant to undergraduate EFL learners, including text types, reading purposes, proficiency demands, and strategy use. Such an approach is considered appropriate when the research focus is curriculum design rather than learner diagnosis (Richards, 2017).

The procedure of the research involved several stages. The first stage was the identification of reading-related needs based on a review of recent literature on academic reading, reading instruction, and curriculum development in ELT. This stage aimed to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding common reading challenges and expectations faced by EFL learners at the tertiary level. The second stage involved analyzing the existing syllabus and instructional materials to examine the extent to which these identified reading needs were addressed. Particular attention was given to course objectives, sequencing of content, types of reading texts, and the nature of reading tasks included in the materials.

The third stage focused on aligning reading needs with syllabus design principles. In this stage, the study examined how reading needs could inform decisions related to learning outcomes, content prioritization, and instructional focus within the syllabus. Syllabus design was analyzed as a pedagogical plan that connects learner needs with teaching and learning activities, as suggested by Nation and Macalister (2019). The final stage involved analyzing material development practices, including the selection and adaptation of reading texts and tasks, to determine whether the materials were consistent with the reading-oriented needs identified earlier.

Data analysis in this study followed a thematic qualitative analysis procedure. The researcher categorized data from documents and literature synthesis into themes related to reading needs, syllabus components, and material design features. These themes were then compared and interpreted to identify patterns of alignment or misalignment between learners' reading needs and curricular decisions. Braun and Clarke (2021) emphasize that thematic analysis enables researchers to systematically interpret qualitative

data while maintaining flexibility in capturing complex educational phenomena, making it suitable for this type of curriculum-focused study.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were applied. First, the use of multiple data sources, including curriculum documents and theoretical frameworks, supported data triangulation.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the implementation of reading-based instructional materials developed through needs analysis, several important findings emerged from this study. The results were obtained from classroom observations, students' reading performance records, questionnaires, and analysis of students' reading-related tasks throughout the implementation phase. These findings describe how the identified needs influenced students' reading engagement, reading comprehension processes, and reading-related behaviors during the course.

The first result concerns students' initial reading needs as reflected in their engagement with the reading materials. Based on the needs analysis conducted at the beginning of the course, most students indicated that they experienced difficulty when dealing with long academic texts written in English. Although the students were familiar with basic reading strategies such as skimming and scanning, they reported limited ability to integrate these strategies when encountering texts containing dense information, unfamiliar vocabulary, and abstract ideas. This condition was reflected in early classroom observations, where students tended to read texts line by line without applying selective reading strategies. During the initial meetings, students spent a considerable amount of time identifying word meanings rather than constructing overall text meaning, which slowed down the reading process and reduced comprehension efficiency.

After the reading materials were redesigned based on the results of needs analysis, noticeable changes were observed in students' reading behavior. The materials emphasized staged reading activities, starting from pre-reading tasks that activated background

Second, the analytical procedures were conducted systematically and transparently, allowing the research process to be traced and reviewed. Finally, the findings were interpreted with careful attention to the contextual nature of the curriculum, avoiding overgeneralization beyond the scope of the study. These strategies align with qualitative research quality criteria outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018).

knowledge, followed by guided while-reading activities, and concluding with post-reading reflection tasks. Classroom observation data showed that students became more purposeful in their reading. Instead of focusing excessively on unfamiliar words, students began to identify main ideas, supporting details, and textual organization more effectively. This shift indicates that the reading materials addressed students' needs for structured reading guidance and scaffolding during the comprehension process.

Another significant result relates to students' reading comprehension development. Students' comprehension was evaluated through reading response tasks and comprehension tests administered before and after the implementation of the materials. In the early stage of the course, students' responses to reading texts were generally limited to surface-level understanding. Most answers focused on explicitly stated information, such as identifying facts or answering literal questions. Inferential and critical comprehension was rarely demonstrated, as students struggled to connect ideas across paragraphs or interpret the author's intent.

Following several weeks of implementation, students demonstrated improvement in multiple levels of reading comprehension. Their written responses showed better organization, clearer identification of main ideas, and increased ability to make inferences based on textual clues. Students also began to express personal interpretations of the texts, particularly when responding to reflective questions. This improvement suggests that the reading materials successfully addressed students' needs for gradual exposure to higher-order reading tasks without overwhelming them.

The observation results also revealed changes in students' reading engagement during classroom activities. In the initial meetings, only a small number of students actively participated in reading discussions. Most students waited for direct instruction from the lecturer and were hesitant to share their interpretations of the texts. This behavior indicated a lack of confidence in reading comprehension and limited motivation to engage with English texts.

As the course progressed, students became more active during reading discussions. They asked questions related to text meaning, clarified confusing parts, and responded to their peers' interpretations. The increase in participation was particularly evident during group-based reading activities, where students were encouraged to negotiate meaning collaboratively. This finding indicates that the reading materials responded effectively to students' needs for interactive reading activities that reduce anxiety and promote shared understanding.

In terms of reading strategy use, the results showed a gradual improvement in students' ability to apply appropriate strategies based on text type and reading purpose. During the early stage, students relied heavily on dictionary use and word-by-word translation. This strategy was often ineffective, as it disrupted comprehension flow and caused frustration. After explicit integration of reading strategies within the materials, students demonstrated greater awareness of when to skim for general ideas, scan for specific information, or read intensively for detailed understanding.

This development was evident in students' reading journals, where they were required to reflect on the strategies they used while reading. Initially, most journals contained vague statements such as "I read carefully" or "I translated difficult words." However, later entries showed more specific reflections, including statements about predicting content from titles, identifying topic sentences, and using context clues to infer meaning. These reflections indicate that students not only applied reading strategies but also became more metacognitively aware of their reading processes.

The results also highlight students' preferences regarding reading materials. Data from questionnaires showed that students preferred texts that were relevant to their

academic field and everyday experiences. When reading texts that aligned with their interests, students demonstrated higher motivation and better comprehension. This preference confirms the importance of needs analysis in selecting reading topics that are meaningful to learners. Students reported that familiar topics helped them focus on comprehension rather than struggling with background knowledge.

Table 1 presents a summary of students' responses related to their reading needs and engagement before and after the implementation of the reading materials.

Table 1. Summary of students' reading engagement based on needs analysis results

Aspect	Initial Condition	After Implementation
Reading confidence	Low, hesitant to interpret texts	Increased, more willing to share ideas
Reading strategy use	Word-by-word reading	Flexible use of skimming, scanning, and inference
Participation in discussion	Limited to few students	More evenly distributed
Focus during reading	Vocabulary-oriented	Meaning-oriented

Furthermore, students' reading fluency showed gradual improvement throughout the course. Although fluency was not measured quantitatively through timed reading tests, qualitative observation indicated that students required less time to complete reading tasks as the semester progressed. Students were able to identify key information more quickly and showed less dependence on lecturer guidance. This improvement suggests that the materials addressed students' needs for manageable text length and progressive difficulty.

Another important result concerns students' attitudes toward reading in English. At the beginning of the course, many students

expressed negative perceptions of reading English academic texts, describing them as difficult and intimidating. These attitudes were reflected in passive classroom behavior and minimal engagement with reading assignments. After experiencing the redesigned reading materials, students reported more positive attitudes toward reading. They described reading activities as more structured and achievable, which reduced their anxiety and increased their willingness to read independently.

The analysis of students' reading-related tasks also showed improvement in their ability to connect reading with other language skills, particularly writing. Students' written summaries became more coherent and accurate, indicating that improved reading comprehension supported their ability to process and reproduce information. This finding highlights the interconnected nature of reading and other language skills and confirms the importance of addressing reading needs as a foundation for broader language development.

Overall, the results demonstrate that reading materials developed through systematic needs analysis can effectively improve students' reading engagement, comprehension, and strategy use. By aligning instructional design with students' actual reading difficulties and preferences, the learning process became more meaningful and supportive. These findings suggest that needs analysis plays a crucial role in ensuring that reading instruction responds to learners' real conditions rather than assumed challenges.

After identifying students' reading needs through classroom observation, reading tasks analysis, questionnaires, and informal interviews, further results revealed how these needs were translated into syllabus design and material development. The integration process showed that reading-based needs analysis did not only function as preliminary data collection, but also became a continuous reference throughout instructional decision-making during the semester.

One important result concerns the identification of students' target needs in reading. The data indicated that most students needed reading materials that supported academic reading comprehension rather than general reading for pleasure. This was reflected in

students' difficulty in understanding argumentative and expository texts commonly used in academic contexts. During early meetings, students frequently struggled with identifying main ideas, distinguishing supporting details, and interpreting implicit meanings in academic passages. These findings suggest that students' primary reading needs were related to academic literacy, particularly reading for information, reading to learn, and reading to support writing tasks.

In addition to target needs, the analysis also revealed students' learning needs related to reading processes. Observation data showed that students relied heavily on word-by-word reading and dictionary use, which slowed down comprehension and reduced overall reading fluency. Questionnaire responses confirmed that many students felt insecure when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. As a result, students expressed a need for guided reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, predicting content, and contextual vocabulary inference. These learning needs became a key consideration in restructuring the reading syllabus.

Based on the identified reading needs, the syllabus was revised to emphasize a progression of reading skills rather than a mere sequence of text topics. The results showed that reading-based needs analysis led to a reorganization of syllabus components, including learning outcomes, reading activities, and assessment tasks. Reading outcomes were formulated to explicitly reflect students' needs, such as the ability to comprehend academic texts, identify rhetorical structures, and extract relevant information for further academic tasks. This shift indicates that needs analysis directly influenced the alignment between reading objectives and instructional practices.

The integration of reading-based needs analysis also affected material development. The developed reading materials were no longer selected solely based on textbook availability, but were adapted and supplemented according to students' identified needs. The materials included a range of academic reading texts with varying levels of difficulty, allowing students to gradually build reading competence. Shorter texts were used in the early stages to build confidence, while longer and more complex texts

were introduced as students became more familiar with reading strategies and academic discourse features.

Another significant result relates to the incorporation of strategy-based reading tasks within the materials. The developed materials consistently embedded pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities that addressed students' learning needs. Pre-reading tasks were designed to activate background knowledge and introduce key vocabulary, while while-reading tasks focused on guiding students to apply specific reading strategies. Post-reading activities encouraged students to synthesize information, reflect on text meaning, and relate reading content to academic contexts. These findings indicate that needs analysis played a crucial role in shaping not only what students read, but also how they read.

Furthermore, the results demonstrated that reading-based needs analysis supported material relevance and student engagement. Students showed higher participation levels when reading materials reflected their academic field and future professional needs. Interview data revealed that students perceived the materials as more meaningful because the texts were closely related to their study program and academic demands. This suggests that integrating needs analysis into material development increased the perceived usefulness of reading activities, which in turn contributed to more active classroom engagement.

The results also showed changes in students' reading behavior over time. As the syllabus and materials were aligned with students' reading needs, students gradually became more confident in handling academic texts. Classroom observations indicated that students began to rely less on translation and more on contextual understanding. They were also more willing to engage in group discussions based on reading texts, suggesting an improvement in both comprehension and reading confidence.

To summarize the main results related to syllabus design and material development, Table 2 presents the relationship between identified reading needs and instructional responses.

Table 2. Relationship between reading-based needs analysis and instructional design

Identified Reading Needs	Instructional Response
Difficulty in understanding academic texts	Inclusion of academic reading texts with guided comprehension tasks
Limited use of reading strategies	Explicit instruction and practice of skimming, scanning, and inference strategies
Low reading confidence	Gradual progression of text length and difficulty
Lack of relevance to academic context	Selection of discipline-related reading materials

Identified reading needs
Lack of relevance to academic context
Instructional response
Selection of discipline-related reading materials

Overall, the results indicate that integrating reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development created a more responsive and coherent reading instruction framework. The needs analysis did not remain as isolated data but functioned as a guiding tool that informed instructional planning and material adaptation. These findings confirm that reading-focused needs analysis is essential for developing syllabi and materials that genuinely address students' academic reading demands in English Language Education.

In addition to observable changes in reading performance, the results also indicate a positive shift in students' engagement with reading activities after the implementation of the syllabus and materials developed through reading-based needs analysis. Classroom observations and reflective notes show that students participated more actively during reading sessions, particularly when the texts were clearly aligned with their academic field and accompanied by structured comprehension tasks. Students were more willing to complete pre-reading and while-reading activities, such as predicting content, identifying key ideas, and applying skimming and scanning strategies, compared to earlier

learning experiences that relied on general reading materials.

Furthermore, students' reflective responses revealed that the reading materials were perceived as more useful and relevant to their academic needs. Many students reported that the gradual increase in text length and complexity helped them feel less anxious when dealing with academic texts in English. Instead of focusing solely on vocabulary difficulties, students began to pay more attention to meaning construction and text organization. This suggests that integrating reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design not only supported reading comprehension development but also fostered more positive attitudes toward academic reading tasks.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that reading-based needs analysis plays a significant role in ensuring that syllabus design and material development respond directly to learners' actual reading challenges, thereby enhancing both engagement and perceived learning value in English language education.

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development provides a strong pedagogical foundation for improving students' academic reading competence. The observed changes in students' reading engagement, comprehension processes, and strategy use suggest that instruction grounded in learners' actual reading needs creates more meaningful and effective learning experiences. This finding aligns with the view that needs analysis should function as a central component of curriculum and instructional design rather than as a preliminary administrative procedure (Brown, 2016; Nation & Macalister, 2019).

The initial difficulties experienced by students in dealing with long and complex academic texts reflect common challenges reported in English as a Foreign Language contexts, particularly in higher education settings. Previous studies have shown that students often struggle with academic reading because of limited exposure to disciplinary texts, insufficient strategy instruction, and overreliance on word-level processing (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Nunan, 2021). The tendency of students in this

study to read texts line by line and focus excessively on vocabulary confirms these findings and highlights the necessity of addressing reading needs systematically at the syllabus level.

The improvement in students' reading behavior after the implementation of needs-based materials supports the argument that structured reading stages are essential for developing effective comprehension skills. The incorporation of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities helped students shift their attention from isolated linguistic units to overall meaning construction. This result is consistent with interactive models of reading, which emphasize the integration of background knowledge, textual cues, and strategic processing (Grabe, 2020). By explicitly embedding these stages into the materials, the syllabus responded directly to students' learning needs and facilitated more efficient reading processes.

Furthermore, the development of students' higher-level comprehension abilities, particularly inferential and interpretive reading, indicates that needs-based material design can scaffold students toward more complex reading tasks. At the beginning of the course, students' responses were largely limited to literal comprehension, a pattern commonly observed among EFL learners with limited academic reading experience (Koda, 2018). However, as students engaged with progressively challenging texts and guided comprehension tasks, they demonstrated increased ability to connect ideas, infer meanings, and articulate personal interpretations. This finding supports the principle that reading instruction should be sequenced according to learners' readiness and cognitive load (Nation, 2020).

The increased student participation observed during reading discussions further reinforces the role of needs analysis in addressing affective factors in reading instruction. Students' initial reluctance to share interpretations reflects low reading confidence, which has been identified as a major barrier to successful reading comprehension in foreign language contexts (Day & Bamford, 2017). The gradual progression of text difficulty and the use of collaborative reading activities reduced students' anxiety and encouraged more active engagement. This suggests that reading-based needs analysis

contributes not only to cognitive development but also to the creation of a supportive learning environment that promotes interaction and meaning negotiation.

The findings related to reading strategy use highlight the importance of explicit strategy instruction informed by learners' needs. The shift from heavy dictionary dependence to more flexible use of skimming, scanning, and inferencing strategies indicates increased strategic awareness and metacognitive control. This development is in line with research emphasizing that effective readers are those who can consciously select and evaluate strategies based on reading purpose and text type (Oxford, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2019). The reflective reading journals used in this study provided evidence that students became more aware of their reading processes, supporting the role of metacognitive reflection in reading development.

Students' preference for academically relevant texts also confirms the significance of content relevance in reading instruction. Needs analysis data showed that students were more motivated and engaged when reading materials were connected to their academic field and future professional needs. This finding supports previous research indicating that relevance and authenticity enhance learners' motivation and comprehension in academic reading contexts (Hyland, 2018; Nation & Macalister, 2019). By selecting discipline-related texts, the syllabus addressed students' target needs and increased the perceived value of reading activities.

The qualitative improvement in reading fluency observed throughout the course further illustrates the cumulative effect of needs-based syllabus design. Although fluency was not measured quantitatively, students' ability to process texts more efficiently and independently suggests that gradual exposure to increasingly complex texts supported automaticity in reading. This observation aligns with the view that fluency development requires sustained practice

with appropriately leveled texts rather than sudden exposure to highly demanding materials (Nation, 2020).

Additionally, the positive shift in students' attitudes toward academic reading indicates that needs-based instruction can transform learners' perceptions of reading from a threatening task into a manageable and purposeful activity. Students' increased willingness to read independently suggests that the syllabus and materials successfully reduced psychological barriers commonly associated with academic reading in English (Day & Bamford, 2017). This affective change is particularly important in English Language Education, where reading functions as a foundation for other academic skills.

The integration of reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design also contributed to stronger alignment between learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment tasks. By formulating reading outcomes that reflected students' actual difficulties and goals, the syllabus moved beyond content coverage toward competency development. This result supports competency-based and outcome-oriented curriculum principles, which emphasize alignment between learner needs and instructional decisions (Richards, 2017; Nation & Macalister, 2019).

Overall, the discussion of these findings confirms that reading-based needs analysis plays a critical role in developing responsive syllabi and effective reading materials in English Language Education. The results of this study demonstrate that when learners' reading needs are systematically identified and translated into instructional design, reading instruction becomes more coherent, meaningful, and impactful. These findings reinforce the argument that needs analysis should be positioned as an ongoing pedagogical tool that continuously informs syllabus design and material development, rather than as a one-time diagnostic activity.

IV CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the integration of reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development in English language education, with particular attention to higher education contexts. The findings demonstrate that reading-based needs analysis plays a pivotal role in shaping instructional decisions that are aligned with learners' actual academic reading challenges and learning conditions. Rather than functioning merely as preliminary data collection, needs analysis in this study emerged as a guiding framework that informed syllabus structure, instructional sequencing, and material selection throughout the course.

The results indicate that students initially faced significant challenges in dealing with academic reading texts, including difficulty understanding dense information, limited strategic reading ability, low reading confidence, and negative perceptions of academic reading in English. These challenges reflect common issues experienced by EFL learners in tertiary education, where reading demands increase substantially while instructional support is often insufficiently tailored to learners' needs. By systematically identifying these reading-related needs, the syllabus was redesigned to emphasize progressive reading competencies, and instructional materials were developed to provide structured scaffolding through staged reading activities and explicit strategy instruction.

The integration of reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design resulted in clearer alignment between learning outcomes, instructional activities, and assessment tasks. Reading objectives were no longer defined solely in terms of content coverage but were oriented toward the development of academic reading competence, including comprehension of

academic texts, strategic reading behavior, and confidence in engaging with written discourse. This alignment contributed to more coherent instruction and supported students in navigating increasingly complex reading tasks over time.

Material development informed by needs analysis also proved effective in addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions of reading. The use of relevant academic texts, gradual progression of text difficulty, and inclusion of interactive reading tasks enhanced students' engagement and reduced reading anxiety. Students demonstrated improved comprehension processes, greater strategic awareness, and more positive attitudes toward reading in English. These outcomes suggest that materials grounded in learners' reading needs can facilitate not only skill development but also sustained motivation and learner autonomy.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that integrating reading-based needs analysis into syllabus design and material development leads to more responsive and pedagogically sound reading instruction in English language education. The study underscores the importance of viewing needs analysis as an ongoing and dynamic process that continuously informs curriculum planning and instructional practice. For curriculum designers and instructors, this implies that effective reading instruction requires systematic attention to learners' reading needs as the foundation for syllabus design and material development. Future research may further explore the application of reading-based needs analysis across different institutional contexts and investigate its impact through longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to strengthen empirical evidence in this area.

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