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**Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English**

**Section of English**

**The Impact of the Montessori Approach on Early Reading  
Process: Case of EFL Young Learners Aged (5-8), at the  
Language Centre 'Metro Languages', Oran.**

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the Requirements for Master's Degree in **Didactics of Foreign Languages**

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# STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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I hereby declare that this submission is entirely my own work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution. I also certify that the present work contains no plagiarism and is the result of my own investigation, and all materials that have been obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged in this dissertation. This work is submitted to the department of English, faculty of foreign languages, university of Abou-bekr Belkaid, Tlemcen. This dissertation is carried out under the supervision of Dr. Youcef MESSAOUDI.

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# DEDICATION

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*This project is dedicated to my parents in particular, to my family as a whole and to all who love me. I owe you a unique distinction for your continuous everlasting prayers, support and understanding when undertaking my research. Your prayers for me were what sustained me this far. I hope I made you proud of me. This is just the starting point...*

*Maroua*

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# ABSTRACT

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Early literacy is a worthwhile topic worldwide. Generating the most effective teaching methods to help young learners learn to read and write is the cornerstone of a myriad of educational investigations. However, in Algeria, there is a shortage of studies that have focused on EFL early reading. Therefore, the major aim of this study is to investigate the impact of the Montessori Approach on the EFL reading skills for beginner young learners 'A2'. Along with this, two objectives have been tackled which are perceiving the challenges that youngsters encounter when coming across EFL reading and exploring the effectiveness of the Montessori Method to foster the reading skills. In order to accomplish this aim and answer the research questions, an exploratory intrinsic case study has been carried out by conducting an exploratory-sequential mixed-method approach to collect data from diverse sources. Hence, two research instruments have been employed: a semi-structured interview addressed to five teachers of a private language centre called 'Metro Languages, Oran' in addition to the manager of the centre, and a post-test addressed to fifteen young learners. The results of this dissertation have been triangulated. Likewise, they revealed that using the Montessori Approach, namely phonics-based instruction as well as hands-on approach actually foster the children's reading skills and develop autonomous learning. To conclude, a list recommendations has been provided to refine the educational system. This study makes a great contribution to the educational scope, for it provides policymakers and curriculum developers with potential techniques and strategies that emanate from the Montessori Education to teach the reading skills effectively in primary schools. Additionally, some suggestions have been supplied for further research projects.

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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<b>ALM</b>	<b>Audio-Lingual Method</b>
<b>CBA</b>	<b>Competency-Based Approach</b>
<b>CEFR</b>	<b>Common European Frame of References</b>
<b>EFL</b>	<b>English as a Foreign Language</b>
<b>ELLs</b>	<b>English Language Learners</b>
<b>GTM</b>	<b>Grammar-Translation Method</b>
<b>L1</b>	<b>First language</b>
<b>L2</b>	<b>Second language</b>
<b>NCMPS</b>	<b>National Centre For Montessori in the Public Sector</b>
<b>RSI</b>	<b>Reading Style Inventory</b>
<b>SLA</b>	<b>Second Language Acquisition</b>
<b>TEFL</b>	<b>Teaching English as a Foreign Language</b>
<b>VARK</b>	<b>Visual/ Auditory/ Reading/ Kinesthetic</b>
<b>VTS</b>	<b>Visual Thinking Strategies</b>

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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Education in general, and language teaching in particular have been prevailing the arena of educational research since eons, pursuing to generate the most adequate teaching approaches, strategies, and techniques that cope with the learners prerequisites, or to solve problems to current instances. Thereby, the educational scope has witnessed a proliferation of a number of approaches and techniques that substantively aim at refining curricula and bringing about the most efficient version of education. For that exact purpose, a myriad of educational investigations have been undertaken.

However, the current reform that has proposed implementing EFL in the Algerian public elementary schools has become prominently the talk of the hour, as well as, implementing Montessori Education in private language centres. Nonetheless, we have identified a geographical vacuum for our dissertation, namely, the fact that no studies have focused on the issue of teaching the EFL reading to children in Algeria. Not only this, yet also some researchers have indeed shed light on how the reading skill is imparted via Montessori approach, however, this matter has not been studied as an entire research topic, nor listed as a title in Montessori's handbook's table of content. Hence, this fact makes it a researchable matter.

Along with this, communicating the reading skills to children, impacts positively their further reading ability, as Neuman and Dickinson (2017) stipulate, children are 88% likely to remain poor readers if they experience early reading challenges. Conversely, provided that they develop a healthy experience with the reading skill since their childhood, they will become good readers, and this delineates their academic achievements. Correspondingly, the young learners' reading development is not mainly linked to their cognitive ability, yet to the

method employed to introduce it. Likewise, Rossingh (2013) indicates that children who struggle with printing and spelling may get progressively irritated at not being able to express themselves verbally on paper. Additionally, Richardson (1997) opines that the use of the movable alphabets helps children to go through the process of creating words by segmenting and combining sounds as they gradually grasp the phoneme-grapheme association.

Accordingly, Marshall (2017) claims that one of the most researched teaching techniques is using phonics to teach children how to read. The latter is one of the major tenets of Montessori Education. Therefore, the researcher eagerly strives to explore how the reading skill is introduced by employing the Montessori Approach. This connotes that this study aims to investigate to what extent this method is efficient to impart the reading skill to beginner young learners that range between the age of five and eight.

Interestingly, two main objectives are settled in order to achieve the set goal. Firstly, this study attempts to perceive the challenges that children encounter when stumbling upon the reading skill. Secondly, it aims to look forward how the Montessori Approach contributes in enhancing the reading skill to young learners. For that particular reason, the researcher has chosen a school of foreign languages named 'METRO LANGUAGES, Oran, Algeria' that adopts this method to be the crux of her study.

Consequently, this inquiry seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What kind of challenges do EFL young learners encounter when dealing with the reading skill?
2. How does the Montessori approach contribute in fostering the reading skill for EFL young learners?

These questions have driven the researcher to identify the following hypotheses:

- a) The kind of challenges that impedes the reading skill for young learners is the incompatible relation between the morphological and the phonological aspects of the English language.
- b) The Montessori approach contributes in fostering the reading skills by developing an effective autonomous readability for young learners.

Unquestionably, in order to achieve the aim stated earlier, the researcher is devising an exploratory case study on beginner young learners aged around five and eight years old. The inputs that are going to be collected in conformity with the case study will be diversified between qualitative and quantitative data. The data were collected from diverse sources 'teachers, learners, and the manager of the centre' by conducting two different research instruments; a semi-structured interview with the tutors and the manager, and a post-test with learners, regarding that the pre-test has been administered in the school once the learners enrolled it. Along with this, the process of data analysis is going to be framed in accordance with the exploratory sequential mixed-method approach, by combining both qualitative and quantitative procedures, keeping in view that the former is going to be proceeded in the first place which actually will contribute in analysing the latter. Hence, all these procedures aim at triangulating the research findings.

To run this investigation, two meaningful chapters are undertaken. Therefore, the first chapter reviews literature in a top-down processing, including an overall view of the reading process and ending up with teaching early literacy employing the Montessori Approach. This chapter depicts the significance of the current study and provides it with a theoretical foundation.

The second chapter demonstrates the theoretical framework of our inquiry. It purposefully entails all the major conceptions that contribute in carrying out this study adequately. Likewise, it identifies the type of research, sampling methods, research tools, data analyses methodology and approaches, and triangulation. Not only this, yet, it also seeks to report the research findings associated with an objective analysis, interpretation and discussion of the main results. It mainly attempts to answer the research questions, and whether our findings converge or diverge with what has been hypothesised.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

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## **I.1 Introduction**

The research project entitled ‘THE IMPACT OF THE MONTESSORI APPROACH ON THE EARLY READING PROCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN’ encompasses two main inquiries; one broaches the challenges that the EFL young learners encounter when dealing with the reading skill while the other one tackles the contribution of the Montessori approach in fostering the readability for EFL young learners. Thereby, a number of studies have emphasised on examining the acquisition of the reading skill since eons. While there have been several investigations on the reading process in general in addition to the different approaches to teaching reading, only few of them have taken into consideration teaching reading to young learners through the Montessori approach. Therefore, some researchers’ studies are reviewed in this chapter, so as to draw new insights about the concerned matter and clarify its major conceptions.

## **I.2 EFL Reading**

### **I.2.1 Reading Process**

The reading process has been defined in various ways by a variety of researchers. The majority of researchers have defined it identically. However, each one sees reading from a particular perspective.

First and foremost, according to Harmer as Bakhouti and Atouane (2017: 3-12) quote, “Reading is the receptive skill in the written mode.” They also cite that according Ziegler and Gorwani (2005: 03), “Reading is the process of understanding written speech in order to understand the meaning”. Along with this, they quote that Mikulecky (2008) states that reading covers both conscious and unconscious thought

processes. The reader employs a variety of tactics to recreate the meaning intended by the author. Hence, the reader accomplishes this by comparing information in the text to his or her existing knowledge and experience. Accordingly, reading is a cognitive process that entails a variety of tactics, including improving existing knowledge and experience in order to recognize the desired meaning of the text. Apart from this, they add that Alderson (2000: 4) stipulates that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text. Additionally, Gani *et al* (2016: 2) cite that Ruddell (2005) asserts that reading is the process of constructing insights whilst dealing with the written product. Therefore, the reader understands the text better when they relate the knowledge schemata and experience to the available information in the text (Ruddell, 1993). Moreover, Paran (1996) categorises reading as a psycholinguistic model. In the light of this conception, the reading process depends on readers' cognitive ability when they try to guess the next concepts in the text and then validate their predictions from the text and repeat this process. Furthermore, Alyousef (2006) defines reading as an interactive process between a reader and a text that leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). The reader interacts dynamically with the text as they attempt to extract the meaning, and several types of knowledge are used: linguistic or systemic information (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (via top-down processing). Because reading is a complicated process, Grabe (1991: 379), contends that many researchers attempt to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analysing the process into a set of component skills.

### **I.2.2 Reading Comprehension**

Comprehension is the cornerstone of the reading process. Thereby, a written product is completely trivial without comprehending it. In the view of this, many educational researchers delineate what reading

comprehension stands for. By way of illustration Bekhouti and Atouane (2017: 10) cite that Pang *et al* (2014) defines comprehension as the process of extracting meaning from the text being read.

In fact, it requires understanding of lexis as well as thinking and analysing. As a result, understanding is a dynamic rather than a passive process. In other words, the reader actively interacts with the text to generate meaning. This active participation includes deriving conclusions from the words and expressions used by the writer to transmit information, ideas, and points of view. Gani *et al* (2016: 145) stipulate, "Reading comprehension is a complicated, cognitive, meaning-constructing process which involves the interaction of the reader, the text, and the context". Likewise, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) claim that reading comprehension is a complex process that covers components, processes, and factors intended to find better ways of improving it among learners. Reading comprehension, as described by Pressley (2000) and Birsch (2011), is the ability to derive meaning from what is read. It necessitates the swift application of many reading abilities such as word recognition, fluency, lexical knowledge, and pre-existing information in order for the reader to gain knowledge from the text.

### **I.2.3 Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension**

Correspondingly, there are some factors that affect reading comprehension whether positively or negatively. Therefore, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) depicts that the first aspect is the hardship of the texts is one of the aspects that influences learners' reading comprehension. This aspect is impacted by the learners' grasping of texts' insights. Hence, the oral skill plays a major role in the reading comprehension.

The particular reason for that is that the more learners are exposed to language, as much they enrich their lexis.

The second aspect is connected to the environment. Readers in a disorganised setting might struggle more to understand a written product than those who read in an adequate atmosphere. The third component is related to the psychological state of the learner. Exams, classwork, or homework assignments might impose greater strain on readers' reading than reading for pleasure whereby the learner develops a certain anxiety towards reading comprehension.

The fourth aspect is motivation and interest. Also, Dennis (2008) notes as Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016: 182) cite, "Reading comprehension is a complex process between identifying printed symbols and interpreting the meaning behind the symbols. Some factors affect reading comprehension skill. They are complexity of the reading text, environmental influences, anxiety during reading comprehension, interest and motivation, decoding or word recognition speed, and medical problems. In the following section, these factors are elaborated in detail." That is to say, fostering reading comprehension abilities requires learners' interest and drive. Readers will find it challenging to concentrate on their understanding if they find the reading content tedious.

The fifth component is connected to word recognition or decoding speed. Readers who stumble upon decoding and identifying words, tend to read more slowly and find it struggle to grasp sections than those who read faster. The final component is dealing with medical issues. "Poor reading comprehension skill may be related to the medical difficulty that does not get addressed until the child is older. This involves undiagnosed ADD (attention deficit disorder), speech problems, and hearing impairments. She emphasised that learners with speech and

hearing difficulties are less likely to take part in oral reading and class discussions. These are the two activities that help learners improve their reading comprehension skill”, conveys Hollowell (2013) as cited by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016: 182), i. e. a kid's poor reading comprehension ability may be due to a physical problem that was not early treated. This includes undetected ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), speech pathology, and hearing loss. She underlined that students who struggle with speech and hearing are less likely to initiate in oral reading and engage in class discussions. Along with this, Hayashi (1999) cites that Grabe (1997) states that reading is a two-way street between the reader and the text. It necessitates appropriate understanding of the language as well as knowledge of the world and a certain issue.

#### **I.2.4 Reading Strategies**

For the purpose of reading effectively and accurately, there are some paramount strategies that facilitate reading. According to Baker and Brown (1984) as Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) cite that reading strategies, are worthwhile and cognitive actions that learners take when reading to assist them in making and maintaining meaning. Therefore, reading comprehension methods are useful tools for a better learners' comprehension. They are also mindful programs and exercises that help students enhance and manage their text comprehension (Block and Pressley, 2002 and Keene and Zimmerman, 1997). Accordingly, extensive reading is used to teach lexis, syntax, or discourse systems in the L2. While intensive reading might help you construct knowledge and lexis. Correspondingly, skimming means reading quickly to develop a general overview of the text, whereas scanning is the process of reading rapidly to gain specific information and details.

### **I.3 Teaching Reading**

#### **I.3.1 Motivation and Teaching Reading**

Learning and teaching are two sides of the same coin. One cannot indicate learning to read without shedding light on the teaching process. For that, Alyousef (2006: 67) claims that the majority of investigations on reading currently focuses on effective reading practices that foster students' comprehension. "Guthrie (1996) argues that most researchers study a single cognitive strategy, rather than conducting a long-term study of multiple strategies. Besides, few studies have addressed the issues related to 'motivation' and 'engagement'". Thus, Alyousef (2006) elucidates that engaged reading is based on the reader's motivational and cognitive characteristics that is intrinsically motivated, acquires knowledge, employs cognitive strategies, and interacts socially in order to learn from text. These engagement mechanisms are seen in students' cognitive effort, persistence, and reading self-direction. Likewise, word recognition is an imperative component in reading mastery, and a myriad of data depict that the primary challenge confronting the beginning reader is the development of quick, automatic word recognition abilities. Individual letters, letter clusters, morphemes, word stems, and word patterns are all used by efficient readers to recognize word units. In fact, this will assist students in dealing with the phoneme-grapheme inconsistencies present in English. Most researchers, on the other hand, emphasise the significance of providing contextualised lexis as isolated words do not represent linguistic or psychological reality. Hamra and Syatriana(2010: 38) indicate that reading is a skill that must be practiced. The activities should take into account reading expertise, schemata knowledge, reading tactics, and reading engagement. Along with this, the learning and teaching processes should be tailored to boost students' reading motivation and

interest. Using a topic area or subject literature helps learners recognise the language of the subjects they learn in school.

### **I.3.2 History of Teaching the Reading Skill**

Teaching reading is not a conception that has emerged out of the blue. Conversely, a number of studies have considered this matter since eons. Hence, the method employed to teaching reading has progressed over time. For that exact reason, Benjamin (1988) demonstrates that Halcyon Skinner's device is one of many educational aids patented as educational appliances, devices, and apparatuses. Unquestionably, the first educational invention patent was granted in 1809 for a system of teaching reading. “Perhaps the earliest device patented by a psychologist was an educational appliance devised by Herbert Austin Aikins in 1911 that was flexible enough to teach ‘arithmetic, reading, spelling, foreign languages, history, geography, literature or any other subject in which questions can be asked in such a way as to demand a definite form of w o r d s . . . , l e t t e r s . . . , or symbols’”, (Aikins, 1913: 3, as cited in Benjamin, 1988: 704).

Moreover, Tierney and Pearson (2021) indicate that the first significant research of beginning reading techniques, the Cooperative First Grade Studies, helped to alleviate the hunt for a cure. With Chall's work came the conclusion that there was no such thing as a silver bullet or panacea, and that no single strategy was superior to any other. Despite these advancements, the teacher was still frequently positioned as a mechanic producing readers on an assembly line. Chall's studies taught him that there is no magic bullet or panacea, and that no strategy is superior to any other. By the 1970s, the discussions and ‘wars’ over the

optimal method of teaching reading had died down, and study had shifted to language acquisition and early literacy development.

Scholars from several domains (cognitive psychology, linguistics, and sociolinguistics) have been drawn to investigate how children, particularly early readers, learn language and reading comprehension. It has resulted in some unexpected findings, such as an increased interest in how to learn languages. Understanding and analysing how pupils acquire language, particularly, how they learn read and write, was a big accomplishment. Views on meaning creation were harmonised with readers' schema-theoretic conceptions and constructivist goals in the late 1970s. Psychology has investigated literacy as a laboratory-based study subject that focuses on the involvement of the mind and eyes. The 1960s were committed to locating the silver bullet: the most effective method of teaching reading. As a result, several techniques of teaching reading have proliferated.

According to Cahyono and widiaty (2006), GTM (Grammar Translation Method) was the first adopted method to language teaching that emphatically considered the significance of the reading skill. Then, it has collapsed with the advent of the ALM (Audio-Lingual Method) in the 1950s. This method emphasises on word knowledge, matching words in a foreign language text with meanings in the student's native language (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). Likewise, they claim that Charles Carpenter Fries believed that instruction in reading and writing should continue only after students have acquired the skills to speak (Rivers, 1970: 216). Following his ALM decline in reading instruction, new reading concepts inspired by Noam Chomsky's theory of language (Silberstein, 1987) and cognitive psychology focused on knowledge and its processing (Klatzky, 1980) emerged. This psycholinguistic view of reading later became popular as a top-down model of the reading process, exhibiting the reader's role in reading. Bekhouthi and Atouane (2017) identify that



Priyanka (2015) elucidates the teaching method in teaching reading. Thus, the teacher reads the text aloud and asks learners to read loudly one by one.

After reading, the teacher gives instructions and questions in L1, which learners may answer using L1 or a mixture of L1 and the target language. However, GTM does not give little attention to the content of the text, and no intention is given to pronunciation. Later on, the direct approach to teaching reading has emerged. A typical reading lesson, according to Priyanka (2015), is a three-step process: pre-reading, while reading, and after reading. First, before reading, the instructor anticipates the learners' background knowledge, prediction, and imagination in the first phase. Following the reading, comprehension questions and instructions are supplied in the target language, and pronunciation errors are rectified. The second stage explains the foreign language using explanations, gestures, or drawings.

The third phase employs audio-language to inspire learners about what is to come. The teacher and students read aloud, and new topics are conveyed in several languages or by using drawings or motions. According to Lui and Shi (2007), good target language speakers should be praised and encouraged. In the post-reading phase, students should answer comprehension questions in the target language. In other words, the instructor should offer a brief introduction to the topic and educate students how to read fluently, swiftly, and precisely. They should be able to discern the major concepts of the reading material and express their thoughts verbally after reading. Furthermore, the instructor should excite students and provide them opportunities to speak up, as well as supervise, manage, and assess them (Irmawati, 2012).

### I.3.3 Approaches to Teaching Reading

Teaching is a process that is not performed in a random manner. Of course there are some approaches and methods that have appeared to delineate how the teaching process should take place in particular in terms of the reading skill. Hence, Imerzoukene (2010) states that reading is both an input source and an end in itself. The former suggests that learners receive diverse input they require through reading, whilst the latter relates to the reading abilities that should be boosted since it is an everyday activity rather than a basic activity restricted to the classroom context. In so far as the concept of teaching reading is not new, several approaches to teaching reading have emerged over time. Thus, three primary methods to reading education in this study have been tackled.

To begin with, bottom-up approach is a method of teaching the link that exists between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). This requires students to read the text by pronouncing the written word and combining the sounds. Accordingly, this method puts oral and written language together. It is a straightforward method of converting words into thoughts. It is a method of working from the parts to the whole, gradually growing up in a growth process. Namely, it progresses from teaching minor aspects to teaching major features and follows a distinct route. That is, teaching reading with this technique begins with letters and words and progresses to meaning and context.

The 'part to whole' and 'phonics' approaches are other names for it. It is a text-based and analytical technique in which, pupils decipher words by analyzing the letters, letter combinations, and syllables to decode: the letters indicate the speech sounds and the text's meaning (Imerzoukene, 2010). Besides, top-down processing involves understanding the meaning and context of a text before reading it, in contrast to the phonics approach which starts with a picture of the whole

and goes down to its parts. The teacher monitors the learners gradually and encourages them to read and re-read the content. This approach emphasizes the personal meaning constructed by the readers who use their prior knowledge to interpret the reading selection. Apart from this, the interactive approach which is an approach to reading that emphasises the interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the information provided in the text in order to decipher its meaning. It is based on Goodman's psycholinguistic model in which the readers are supposed to use their background knowledge to understand the meaning of the text. Reading in this approach is the process of combining textual information that the reader brings to a text in a typical reading lesson, with three main phases: top-down and bottom-up.

First phase: Pre-reading wherein the learners must be inspired and drawn to read the text in this stage by: Introducing and piquing their interest in the subject; motivating them by giving them a purpose to read; and providing linguistic preparation for the material.

Second Phase: while-reading wherein the students read the text at this phase and focus on clarifying the text's language and substance, understanding the writer's intention, and understanding the text's structure.

Third phase which is the post-reading which aims to consolidate and reflect on what has been read, Connect the text to the student's knowledge, interests, and points of view, and act as a catalyst for further language-related activities. (Imerzoukene, 2010: 95)

#### **I.4 The Status of the Reading Skills in the Algerian EFL Syllabi**

Teaching the reading skill takes part in the Algerian syllabi starting from middle school curricula. As Ammour (2009) asserts the material assessment checklist developed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 100), “Reading is addressed in two areas of the curricula. ‘mise en oeuvre de la compétence2: Interpréter des documents authentiques oraux et écrits’ (the implementation of the skill 2: Interpret authentic oral and written documents) and ‘indications méthodologiques/ stratégies propres aux activités de lecture’ (methodological indications/ strategies specific to reading activities)”.

Teaching reading seeks to assist students in comprehending many sorts of authentic products. The important aspect, as given by the syllabus designers is meaning construction through the learner's engagement with diverse types of texts. This conception might be accomplished when linking the learners' schemata knowledge to the written product. Along with this, the Algerian middle school curricula are cyclical task-based curricula that encourage learners' interaction with texts. Consequently, they are congruent with formal studies indicating that a cyclical task-based curriculum is best suited for adopting CBA tenets in general and the interactive approach to reading in particular.

After examining the two portions of the four syllabi dealing with reading instruction, there have been stated that they prioritise reading strategy development through task-based teaching. Despite the fact that the syllabus seeks to explain to instructors what a course is about as well as key teaching concepts, no clear notion about what sort of assignments to implement or instruction pointers for teachers are supplied. Apart from this, Boukhentache (2020: 111) stipulates, “Reading is similar to listening in that they are both receptive skills.” Adding that almost the

same concepts are employed to teach both skills using CBA. Provided that the teacher's goal is to instill competency in reading stories, for example, the following steps might be taken to construct a competency-based reading sequence; clearly defining the learning objectives, activating previous information, presenting a model tale, explaining the text's actions, reading for gist, reading for details, reading for interpretation, practicing new vocabulary words, practice grammatical forms such as the past simple and, on occasion, the past perfect, practise pronunciation of certain complicated phrases or expressions, self-assessment, and integration situation thereby, students are invited to reinvest the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they gained throughout the sequence in order to read an authentic story and demonstrate their understanding of the message by answering comprehension questions and identifying fine shades of meaning.

### **1.5 Early Literacy**

Reading is not addressed only to a particular age category. However, also young children are concerned with the fact of learning to read which is known as early literacy. As Neuman and Dickinson (2017) indicate that learning to reading is a crucial milestone for youngsters who are raised in a literate society. Children's reading ability substantively determines their academic achievement. Children with intensive reading skills tend to read more. Consequently, they acquire greater knowledge across a wide range of subjects (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Echols, West, Stanovich, & Zehr, 1996; Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995).

Young learners who are avid readers have substantial advantages in vocabulary and content knowledge. However, those who lag in their reading skills receive less practice, miss opportunities to enhance reading comprehension strategies, and encounter reading material that is too

advanced for their skills. This leads to a ‘Matthew effect’ where those with poor reading skills fall further and further behind their more literate peers in reading and other academic areas. More than one in three children experience significant challenges in learning to read, and there is a strong continuity between the skills with which children enter school and their later academic performance. Those who experience early reading difficulties are unlikely to catch up to their peers. Therefore, Juel (1988) as cited in Neuman and Dickinson (2017), reports that children are 88% likely to remain poor readers if they experience early reading challenges. Namely, children who enter school with limited reading-related skills are at high risk of qualifying for special education services. Of those children who experience serious problems with reading, from 10 to 15% eventually drop out of high school.

Apart from this, Connor *et al* (2006) demonstrate that an emergent literacy perspective views literacy-related behaviours occurring in the preschool period as legitimate and vital aspects of the developmental continuum of literacy. Additionally, current inquiry into emergent literacy represents a broad field with multiple perspectives and a wide range of research methodologies. Along with this, recent years have seen the concept of literacy extended to any situation in which an individual negotiates the environment through the use of a symbolic system. Particularly, the majority of research on early literacy has been conducted with English-speaking children. Thereby, Comeau *et al* (1999) view that phonological processing skills are essential for the acquisition of reading and spelling in alphabetic languages. Accordingly, prior research has identified three interrelated clusters of phonological processing abilities: phonological sensitivity, phonological naming, and phonological memory.

The developing phonological sensitivity of young children progresses from sensitivity to large and concrete units of sound to sub-

syllabic units of onset and rime. Phonological memory refers to short-term memory for sound-based information and is typically measured by an immediate recall of verbally presented material. Phonological naming refers to the efficiency of retrieval of phonological information from permanent memory. Two measures of phonological naming have been used, isolated naming and serial naming. In isolated naming, the child is presented with a picture of a single object and the time to begin a pronunciation is measured. Performance on serial-naming tasks for older children is typically measured as the time it takes for all individual elements in an array of letters, digits, or colors to be named. In younger children, performance on a serial-naming task might be measured by asking the child to name a sequence of pictures of objects as fast as they can.

Efficiency in phonological access might influence the ease with which a child can retrieve the phonological information associated with letters, word segments, and whole words and increase the likelihood that he or she can use phonological information decoding. The developmental precursors of reading skills are already organized into outside-in and inside-out domains during the preschool period. Knowledge of print and phonological awareness is closely connected within the domain of inside-out skills and shows strong continuity over time, whereas oral vocabulary operates within a separately organized outside-in domain. By the time children are involved in formal reading instruction in first and second grade, the influence of the outside-in domain has waned and become indirect (Neuman & Dickinson, 2017).

Apart from this, Levy *et al* (2006) stipulate that in spite the fact that the majority of youngsters do not learn to read until they are in elementary school, it is thought that experiences in preschool assist kids construct their reading. Accordingly, a number of studies on emergent literacy have emphasised the significance of the early literacy

environment and experiences in scaffolding children's knowledge and abilities linked to reading acquisition (for a review, see Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Moreover, early reading acquisition has been largely focused on the development of early phonological sensitivity in young children. Bradley and Bryant (1983, 1985) identify a strong relationship between young children's ability to respond to sound units within words and their later reading acquisition.

Rhyming ability measures as well as syllable and phoneme deletion tasks, have become standard tools in detecting children who are at risk for reading problems. Correspondingly, Leveque *et al* (2019) conceive that in order to learn to read, a child must understand more than the phonological structure of the language and its grapheme–phoneme correspondences. Writing systems have specific conventions that govern the visual and orthographic aspects of print, such as orthographic constraints that determine what letter combinations can constitute words. In other words, spelling systems are influenced by spelling to sound regularities and encodes some morphological constancy. Furthermore, there are orientation and spacing constraints for printed language, such as letters not printed backward or upside down, spaces between (not within) words, and in English one reads left to right. A further instance of this is that Levy *et al* (2006) explore the development of visual/orthographic aspects of early literacy and home literacy experiences that may influence their development. They found that for Grade 3 children, orthographic knowledge (e.g., understanding acceptable letter combinations, understanding acceptable letter positions in a word, and understanding homophonic discrimination) predicted significant variance in their word recognition abilities after variance due to phonological awareness, memory, and nonverbal intelligence had been removed.

Interestingly, Hecht *et al* (2000) designate that the relation between this early print knowledge and other early emerging skills (phonological



awareness and reading) is shown by the intercorrelations among measures. Yet, the regression analyses show that the visual/orthographic skills are also related to reading development over and above the relation through phonology. These findings point to the importance of early print exposure to allow children to learn how language is coded in the written display. Accordingly, learning about the English writing system requires adults to engage young children with the print even before they are able to read it. Thus, a longitudinal study from preschool to the fourth grade suggested two paths linking early literacy skills to later reading skills; oral language and emergent code development Levy *et al*, 2006). This latter route may best capture the emergence of visual/ orthographic knowledge as Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) indicate.

## **I.6 Reading Challenges**

The majority of individuals struggle when dealing with the reading skill especially youngsters. For that particular reason, Rossingh (2013) indicates that children who struggle with printing and spelling may get progressively irritated at not being able to express themselves verbally on paper. Other children, especially English language learners (ELLs for short), may find that their apparent writing and spelling prowess soon impedes them from shading from pre-literacy to academic literacy development. The achievement of academic goals given by the curriculum and the instructor depends primarily on a vast and comprehensive vocabulary knowledge that may be recruited, mobilised, and managed. Likewise, Akbari (2017) states that the meaningful details in a written product are that current teaching practices have failed to enhance reading skills, such as the oral lecture and shortage of adequate tasks or exercises for intensive reading.

Research demonstrates that students find it intricate to understand texts in English and lack crucial skills when it comes to reading comprehension. For the exact purpose of improving reading skills, instructors should develop reading strategies and form a common understanding among EFL learners of what the complex process of reading encompasses. Additionally, students are not acquainted with basic paragraph structure, its organization, features such as coherence and cohesion in a paragraph, not familiarised with technical concepts in a given text, not having content schemata, not knowing where and how to find the meaning of unfamiliar words, not being conversant with online dictionaries, and lacking the ability to understand the syntactic and semantic relationship between words in a sentence and sentences in a paragraph.

### **I.7 VARK (Visual/ Auditory/ Reading/ Kinesthetic)**

The VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading, and Kinesthetic), or learning profiles in other words have been the crux of the educational research and psychology. Some educational and psychological researchers consider VARK as a consequential aspect in the teaching/learning process, whilst some others argue that the conception of learning profile does not currently exist. However, it is highly indispensable to not neglect the fact that individuals differ, and each individual has a style or rather a learning preference which serves the same insight. Hence, Carbo and Hodges (1988) designate that the Dunn model is the most widely used learning styles model in U.S. schools. It describes learning styles in terms of how the individual's ability to learn new or arduous material is affected by the following variables; the immediate environment, emotionality, sociological needs, and physical characteristics.

Research indicates that many at-risk students have not been taught with strategies, methods, and materials that accommodate their learning style preferences and strengths. Thus, learning-styles-based instruction makes use of the individual's strengths and preferences, thereby removing many of the learning barriers instilled after years of repeated failure. The positive results of using learning styles strategies are apparent almost immediately to teachers and students.

Snider (1992) opines that the reading style is an application of the learning style to the teaching of reading. The researcher cites that Marie Carbo (1982) defines it as an individual's learning style when engaged in the act of reading or when learning to read. She has designed a self-report rating scale to assess reading style and the RSI (Reading Style Inventory) produces profiles of students' reading styles and describes methods, strategies, and materials that cope with those profiles. Apart from this, Xu (2011) studies learning styles and their implication in learning and teaching, and suggests that tutors should match the teaching styles or teaching method with the student's learning and personality styles, in order to achieve better performance.

Additionally, Astir and Wahab (2018) report that the data from Husain's investigation (1999) has revealed that the average of students' pre-test scores was 38.92%, whilst the average of students' post-test results was 68.58%. It is possible to state that the pupils' progress in reading comprehension while using the reading instruction material is considerable. Hence, 100% of visual learners have improved the ability in English reading comprehension after being given the material. In addition, 100% of auditory learners also have discernibly improved in their English reading comprehension ability after providing them with adequate teaching materials. However, only 80% of kinesthetic learners experience an increase after the provision of teaching materials. Also, Carbo and Hodges (1988) indicate that reading methods should help children read with ease, enjoyment, fluency, and good comprehension.

Special tape-recorded methods are effective for poor readers, while commercial book recordings can help to increase comprehension and reading fluency. Phonics instruction should be reserved for analytic youngsters who are capable of learning and applying phonic rules.

### **I.7.1 Phonics-Based Instruction**

Snider (1992) opines that Carbo (1983, 1984) lists phonics, linguistic, and Orton-Gillingham methods as auditory/analytic approaches, while whole-word language-experience, Fernald, choral reading, and recorded books as visual/global approaches. To become accomplished readers, children must understand the alphabetic principle, which states that our language is composed of parts that can be segmented and that the reader must construct a link between orthography and the sounds of speech.

### **I.8 Montessori Approach**

Montessori approach is one of the most prominent approaches that focus on the children-centredness. It aims to engender autonomous, solution-oriented and critical thinker individuals.

#### **I.8.1 Montessori Philosophy**

Kocabaş and Bavlı (2022: 444) stipulate that Maria Montessori adopted a progressive educational philosophy, which is theoretically in line with the school of thought of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Seguin, and Itard. She rejected punishment and reward methods due to the idea that a child's desire should be shaped through external discipline. She also draws attention to cognition by being a pioneer in the field of cognitive psychology. In the Montessori learning environment, an uninterrupted work cycle is presented to the child in a dynamic process and the child's desire to learn is triggered. Children mainly work individually but may also work in small groups. Circle time activities allow the whole class to come together. Classroom management is different

from the classroom management perception that requires children to sit collectively during education.

### **I.9 Maria Montessori Biography**

Zierdt (2007) states that Maria Montessori was born in 1870 in Chiaravalle, Ancona, Italy. When she was twelve, her parents moved to Rome to ensure a better education for her than Ancona could offer. She began her studies in Engineering at the Regia Scuola Tecnica Michelangelo Buonarroti and went on to study medicine. After graduating from medical school, she was chosen to represent Italy in a Women's International Congress in Berlin and London, where she championed the cause of working women. Soon after graduating from medical school, she was appointed assistant doctor at the Psychiatric clinic in the University of Rome and took an interest in children with mental challenges.

In 1897, she had a revelation and theorized that mental deficiency presented chiefly a pedagogical, rather than mainly a medical problem. In 1900, she began to direct a small school (Orthophrenic) in Rome for "challenged" youth. Her methods were experimental and miraculous, and she suggested that teachers should find a way to teach the child "how-to" before making him execute a task. Maria Montessori was an Italian pedagogy professor from 1896 to 1906.

In 1907, she began to assert her theories and methods of pedagogy, known as the 'Montessori Method', by directing a system of daycare centers for working-class children in one of Rome's worst neighborhoods. She was invited to the United States of America by Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and others, and was invited to set up a classroom at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. She was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and her message to those who emulated her was always to turn one's attention to the child, to 'follow the child'. Since her death, an interest in Dr. Montessori's methods has continued to spread throughout the world. Her message to those who emulated her was always to turn one's attention to the

child, to 'follow the child'. Also, Ozerem and Kavaz (2013: 13) state that Maria Montessori was a scientist who earned the first female physician title in Italy. She was inspired by the work of French Psychiatrist E. Donad Seguin who developed special materials for children with cognitive handicaps. She opened classes for children between the ages of 2 and 6 in a poor neighbourhood of Rome in 1907. Montessori defended the idea that children should be enabled to learn on their own in a set environment where they choose their own materials. A pre-school environment set based on this principle includes Montessori materials on shelves to which pre-school children can reach. Teachers should be good observers and only intervene when the child requires guidance.

### **I.10 Montessori Tenets**

Ozerem and kavaz (2013) opine that the Montessori Approach is founded on a child's eagerness to learn. It assists a kid in learning in the best and simplest way possible and implementing independently (Kaylvevd *et al*, 2006). Montessori believed that children should appreciate and grasp the harmony, order, and beauty of nature. Science and the arts are based on the laws of nature. Learning the laws of nature is the basis of science because of this. (Montessori, 1966)

This method places a strong emphasis on the youngster making mistakes by seeking and attempting before realizing his error and fixing it on his own. The youngster is not yet sufficiently mature if he is unable to recognize his error. When the appropriate moment arrived, the kid recognized his error and fixed it. (Temel, 1994). In the Montessori Method, the environment's setting is crucial. In such a setting, the student's relationship with the subject matter takes precedence over that with the teacher. Only the proper application of the content is guided by the teacher. (1969) Dreyer and Rigler Children between the ages of 2 and 6 can be gathered in the same setting, and they are free to select age-appropriate materials from that setting. They don't have to use the same supplies when playing. In such a setting, the older children learn to assist the younger ones and the younger children learn to grow themselves by looking

up to the older children as role models. (Onur, 1995). The environment, the student, and the instructor are the three primary components of this education. The Montessori Method of Education is based on eight basic tenets as Wilbrandt (2011) delineates as cited by Ozerem and kavaz (2013):

1. There is a connection between movement and cognition. Thinking and learning are improved by exercise.

2. Having a sense of control over one's life improves learning and wellbeing.

3. When people are interested in what they are learning, they learn more effectively.

4. When an activity is linked to extrinsic rewards, such as money for reading or excellent exam scores, doing that activity suffers when the benefit is taken away.

5. Learning may be greatly facilitated by collaborative arrangements.

6. Learning that is located in meaningful circumstances is frequently richer and deeper than learning that is situated in abstract contexts.

7. Specific types of adult engagement are linked to better results for children.

8. Children benefit from order in the surroundings.

The time when the child's ideal environment is created, is the time when people learn languages and use their mouths and bodies to explore their surroundings as illustrated in the table below that show the developmental phases of a child according To Montessori (Wilbrandt,2011:52) as Ozerem and kavaz (2013: 14) cite:

**Table I.1 Developmental Phases of a Child according To Montessori (Wilbrandt, 2011: 52 as cited by Ozerem and Kavaz, 2013: 14)**

Phase	Age	Characteristics
<b>First phase</b>	(0-3) years old	The child constructs himself through instinctive development and 'internalization'

<b>Second phase</b>	(3-6) years old	The child gradually moves from unconscious knowledge to conscious knowledge.
<b>Third phase</b>	(6-12) years old	The child is ready to get information about the universe. At this stage, the child shows efforts to satisfy his intellectual needs.
<b>Fourth phase</b>	(12-18)years old	The child is a humanistic explorer. He tries to understand his role in the society and how he can help to that role. At this stage, the children re-adapt themselves as social creatures, rational researcher of justice and problem solvers. This phase lasts for a lifetime.

### I.10.1 The Significance of a Defined Environment

According to Isaacs (2015), the Montessori approach aims to empower the child to be self-reliant by authorising them to select the work materials and produce on their pace. Authenticity and naturality are key factors in the Montessori approach, and the order of the set environment is also important. That is to say, the child will accomplish the given task with the materials he has selected and contribute to the order of the environment, developing responsibility and self-discipline. The materials in the classroom must be natural and authentic, and peaceful environments will develop the child's personal discipline.

### I.10.2 Sensory Education

One of the major tenets of Montessori education is the sensory education. Richardson (1997) opines that the sensorial materials are designed to attract children's attention, "educate the senses," and allow



manipulation by the children. The goal is to assist children in their task of creating order and sequence in sensory input by presenting a carefully constructed sequence of experiences that proceed slowly from the concrete to the abstract. The Montessori materials for "sense training" represent a selection from the material used by Itard (1962) and Seguin (1907) in their attempts to educate deaf and/or mentally retarded children, from objects used as tests in experimental biology, and from materials designed by Dr. Montessori. The materials are grouped according to sense and each sense is trained in isolation. Contrasts are always presented first, identities are established through matching, and finally, gradations of quality are presented for finer discrimination.

Isolation of a single quality in the material helps children focus their attention on the stimulus. Because children may have difficulty organizing incoming stimuli, the sensory information is presented in a systematic, orderly way. Unquestionably, "Touching the letters and looking at them at the same time, fixes the image more quickly through the cooperation of the senses. Later, the two facts separate: looking becomes reading; touching becomes writing. According to the type of individual, some learn to read first, others to write" (Montessori, 1912: 325, as cited in Richardson, 1997: 251)

### **I.10.3 Autonomy**

Setiawan and Ena (2019) claim that according to the Montessori philosophy, instructors were directed to create a productive learning environment by the autonomy of the students. Additionally, it aids instructors in incorporating the concept of autonomy support into their lesson plans (Koh & Frick, 2010). Regarding learner autonomy, Mocanu (2012) researches foreign language teaching strategies that view students as distinct individuals with sentiments, emotions, and interpersonal ties. The Montessori idea of supporting learner autonomy served as the

foundation for one of Caleb Gattegno's methodologies. According to Frierson (2016), pupils nowadays lack autonomy. According to Frierson (Frierson, 2016), this is because pupils aren't often placed in circumstances where they can practice being autonomous. The Montessori Method, on the other hand, enables pupils to take responsibility (Frierson, 2016). Dhiksha and Suresh (2016) examined the differences in self-esteem and anxiety between 60 students in Montessori programs and 64 students in non-Montessori programs in India. According to the findings, compared to non-Montessori pupils, Montessori students exhibited better self-esteem and less academic anxiety. The prior study suggests that it is essential to investigate how the Junior High School Montessori pupils perceive their own reading comprehension skills.

#### **I.10.4 Implementing the VARK in Montessori Education**

Akbar (2017) demonstrates that a teaching and learning approach known as 'visual learning' links concepts, facts, and other information to visual aids and procedures. According to the popular Fleming VAK/VARK model, it is one of the three fundamental categories of learning styles. As evidence, visual learners, who make up around 60%–65% of the overall population, learn and remember information best through seeing. People who learn best by seeing things are people who favor this method of learning. Hence, Alkhasawneh *et al* (2008) claim that visual they may forget material that has just been heard and prefer to see directions and information. Because of their capacity for visualisation, they frequently utilise mind maps and envision pictures and images when recalling information. Also, they tend to write, draw, and imagine, and they like to read for themselves and make their own notes. Although visual learners frequently have high spelling skills, they could forget names. They prefer a less formal learning environment; a

regular classroom setting may not be the most helpful for them. A person who learns via hearing is said to have an auditory learning style. Speaking and listening are the two main components of an auditory learner's method of instruction.

In order to understand, Prithishkumar and Michael (2014) explain that auditory learners need to hear what is being said, hence written instructions may be challenging for them. In order to process through the information that is supplied to them, they also make use of their listening and repetition abilities.

As proof, Akbar (2017) provides that auditory learners, who make up around 30% of the population, acquire information best by hearing they may have trouble writing down what they say, even when they can communicate well verbally. The least but never the last, kinesthetic learning is a type of learning in which the learner genuinely engages in a physical activity rather than just listening to or observing a lecture. It is additionally known as tactile learning. Kinesthetic learners are also frequently referred to as doers. As evidence, tactile and kinesthetic learners, who make up around 5% of the population, learn best by doing, experiencing, touching, moving, or being active in some way. Along with this, these children require little verbal or written guidance and are comfortable engaging in hands-on activities. As a result, Tyas and Safitri (2017) opine that kinesthetic learners would like creating things and learning via hands-on activities. They learn best in dynamic situations like a lab, workshop, gym, or a real or simulated environment. Kinesthetic learners typically excel in activities like chemical experiments, sports, painting, and acting. In addition, they could play music as they study or learn. They frequently concentrate on two separate things at once. The utilisation of one's own body's motions by kinesthetic learners helps to develop both short- and long-term memory. They frequently use mental travel to recall information by picturing the

actions of their own bodies. Additionally, they have excellent hand-eye coordination and rapid sensors.

In fact, as Prithishkumar and Michael (2014) stipulate, the VAK model states that the students' preferred methods of information perception and reception determine their preferred learning styles. They could favor a single style of information presentation, two modes (bimodal), or all three modes (tri-modal). A variety of settings can use the VAK. The VAK enhances communication in situations outside than its conventional use in educational environments, including coaching in sports, workplace dynamics, and even interpersonal interactions.

#### **I.10.5 Critical Thinking and the Reading Ability**

Hosseini *et al* (2012) stipulate that critical thinking has been applied to learning since 2000 by Socrates and John Dewey. They found that learners with higher critical thinking ability and resilience had better performance in reading texts with strange lexical items. Fahim and Sa'eepour (2011) investigate the impact of teaching critical thinking skills on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. Results depict that teaching critical thinking skills could enhance readers' comprehension ability. Moreover, a large, positive relationship was observed between critical thinking and reading comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners in general.

It was discernable that affective strategies along with critical thinking and general reading strategy use were among the predictors of learners' reading comprehension ability. These findings might be helpful to those who develop a curriculum for EFL teachers to include purposeful course(s) of reading with the purpose of training capable and competent critical readers as well as critical thinkers.

### **I.10.6 Critical Thinking in Montessori Education**

Broome (2022) depicts that The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) and Philip Yenawine make the case for visual thinking strategies (VTS) as a way to implement these techniques in the Montessori learning environment by putting an emphasis on engagement with art. They do this by drawing on over thirty years of study. Through an open-ended discussion of visual art, VTS aims to create an accessible, transformational learning experience that improves students' reading, language, and critical thinking abilities. When VTS and Montessori are combined, it results in a synthesis of two pedagogies where talking about, analysing, and writing about art serve as tools for developing visual and critical thinking as well as language and social skills. “Visual Thinking Strategies in Montessori Environments focuses on the connection between VTS and Montessori education. The authors describe the strengths of both models of learning but argue that they are greater together: ‘We have gained an appreciation of how the two pedagogies align in purpose and in practice, putting students at the center of learning and creating opportunities for them to engage in critical thinking, complete conversations, and meaningful collaborations’” (Broome, 2022: 45).

### **I.11 Collaboration in the Montessori Classroom**

Kocabaş and Bavlı (2022) identify that the Montessori learning environment emphasizes a respect-based classroom climate. Collaboration between the instructor and the student results in the desired good outcomes in Montessori classrooms (Estes, 2018). The optimal outcomes that are desired are achieved through collaboration-based learning and the communication style that children develop with adults (Lillard, 2007). Additionally, when children of different ages meet in Montessori classes, they are in solidarity with one another, notably

older children support younger children, and collaboration rather than competition takes place (Flynn, 1991). As a result, less undesirable conduct is seen in Montessori classrooms than in conventional classrooms (Brock, 2017; Duckworth, 2008; Lillard, 2018; Mushamba, Burney, & Kent, 2017). Instead than concentrating on cerebral growth, Maria Montessori views education as a complete having moral, mental, and emotional elements (Duckworth, 2006). As a result, one of the top concerns for instructors and children in Montessori classrooms is learning to communicate in a calm environment (Thayer-Bacon, 2011). Nevertheless, some kids behave badly in Montessori classes. According to Montessori, children's undesirable actions are shown because they don't use their right to move freely.

Negatively behaving children typically have to remain close to the instructor and are denied the freedom to move about the classroom. When this occurs, the instructor sympathizes with the student and addresses the situation face-to-face (Lillard, 2007). Because of this, the role of Montessori educators in fostering cooperation and communication in the classroom is vital.

### **I.11.1 Learning Materials in the Montessori Classroom**

Montessori education is famous by its kinesthetic natural learning materials, as Lillard (2008: 21) articulates, “Montessori watched children in the classroom and thought about their developmental needs; she developed materials that she thought would suit those needs; and she then watched the children with the materials, and revised and refined them until she thought she had a material that would meet one or more specific needs”. Marshall (2017: 2) indicates that the first learning materials that the child is likely to encounter in the Montessori classroom are those that make up the practical life curriculum. These activities involve pouring different materials, using utensils, cleaning and

polishing, preparing snacks, laying the table and washing dishes, arranging flowers, gardening, doing up and undoing clothes fastenings, and so on. Moreover, Sattorova (2022) conveys that as the child settles into the cycle of work and shows the ability to focus on self-selected activities, the teacher will introduce the sensorial materials. The key feature of the sensorial materials is that each isolates just one concept for the child to focus on. The aim of the sensorial materials is not to bombard the child's senses with stimuli, but to enable the child to classify and put names to the stimuli that he will encounter on an everyday basis.

According to Chisnall and Maher (2007), the long rods, which comprise ten red rods varying solely in length in ten centimeters increments from ten centimeters to one meter, have an equivalent in the mathematics materials. The touch-boards in Montessori classrooms are used to prepare the child for the sandpaper globe in geography, the sandpaper letters in literacy, and the sandpaper numerals in mathematics. Key elements of the literacy curriculum include the introduction of writing before reading, the breaking down of the constituent skills of writing, and the use of phonics for teaching sound-letter correspondences. Furthermore, Kristiyani (2018) stipulates that grammar is taught systematically through teacher and child-made materials, and principles running throughout the design of these learning materials are that the child learns through movement and gains a concrete foundation with the aim of preparing him for learning more abstract concepts.

There are two aspects of Montessori classrooms that are very different from conventional classrooms: the learning materials themselves, and the individual, self-directed nature of the learning under the teacher's expert guidance. All of these elements could potentially benefit development and learning over the teaching of the conventional classroom. Apart from this, as stated by Aysen and Ozerem (2013) that the guidelines for utilising the equipment are displayed to children. The

kid returns the supplies to their original locations after each activity. When a behaviour is repeated frequently, it develops into a habit. On a particular carpet, several materials are handled. After the exercise, it is the child's job to transport these items back to their shelves from the carpet. The youngster is encouraged to display the behavior. As he makes use of these resources, the youngster actively learns. In a child's view, prepared knowledge is not reliable or lasting.

Materials have five key components that make them relevant for children:

1. The content should include the difficulty or error the youngster encountered while investigating.
2. From basic to sophisticated, the shape and application of the materials should be arranged.
3. The learning materials should get the kid ready for the following lesson.
4. Materials don't give ideas their physical form, but rather their abstract one.
5. Montessori resources are created to support each child's unique development.

### **I.12 Studies Done on Montessori Education**

A number of studies have been done on the Montessori approach to verify its effectiveness par rapport to the traditional approaches. Hence, Ozerem and kavaz (2013) cite that Tzuo (2007) came to the conclusion that Montessori education is a factor that complements the work of the instructor and that children are empowered to learn on their own by utilizing the Montessori materials. Along with this, they cite that according to McCarty (2007), students were motivated by Montessori



education and became more creative outside of school, replacing the need for homework.

Children with and without disabilities participated in Eratay's research (2011). Both groups demonstrated developmental gains, demonstrating that the program includes distinctive elements and satisfies the demands brought on by individual variances.

Likewise, according to Islamoglu (2018), in 1907, Montessori opened her first school in Rome. Children from low-income households between the ages of 4 and 7 attend this full-day program (Aydin, 2006). The party that Mussolini formed abolished all democratic institutions including Montessori schools in Italy between the years 1922 and 1943. Following this time, Montessori was given the chance to spread the word about her educational philosophy around the world. Pollard (1996) articulates that the Montessori Method quickly became the most widely used educational approach in the globe after extensive travels to several nations, including the Netherlands, Spain, and India (Durakoglu, 2010). They also indicate that Montessori education aims to raise citizens who are open to lifelong learning, problem-solvers, self-directed, talented, responsible, and harmonious.

The Montessori Method attaches importance to the physical and mental needs of the child and opposes education being made according to a predetermined program. The child chooses to work according to his/her interests, does what he/she wants to do, teaches himself/herself, and becomes aware of their freedom. Montessori (1932) argues that without freedom, personality cannot ideally develop. The first objective of education for Montessori is the child's self-discovery and liberation. Thereby, the self-education principle is a principle that allows the child to be liberated, aims to bring the potential available in children to the highest, and expresses that it is appropriate for the child's natural growth and development. In Montessori education, the environment is a lifeless

teacher and the child learns by constantly being stimulated in this environment.

The key phrase in the Montessori approach is the prepared environment, which is based on the child's development of his or her individual characteristics within the "prepared environment". The Montessori approach is seen in general as an approach that attaches importance to the freedom of the child, provides the socialization of the child, and makes the child feel important, and is based on the child's self-learning, discovery, and intertwining with nature. Examples of schools designed based on these principles are given in the second phase of the study. Apart from this, According to Setiawan and Ena (2019: 29), "Shankl, Genolini, Riou França, Guelfi, and Ionescu (2010) specify that students from alternative schools, including Montessori, regulate better to higher education than their peers from traditional schools."

### **I.13 Roles of the Teacher in the Montessori Education**

As in any approach, tutors have some particular roles to perform their teaching practices accordingly. Therefore, in the Montessori Method, the teacher's job is to modify and arrange the environment in ways that will support the child's growth and meet their requirements. The instructor should also arrange the contents in a simple to sophisticated arrangement. A guide or router is a Montessori instructor. The instructor provides the student an opportunity to reach his or her full potential. (Linard, 1972)

With regard to viewpoint, appearance, and personality, the teacher must set an example for the students and convey respect. The qualities of a good teacher include adaptability, humanism, affection, patience, and understanding. (Temel, 1994)

The Montessori teacher prioritizes family and social time. The classroom was set up by the instructor so that the child would be free to walk around, converse, and interact with his peers. In addition to this, Kocabaş and Bavlı (2022) stipulate that the teacher in a Montessori classroom assumes the role of a guide, pointing the child in the direction of self-education that is appropriate for their stage of development (Montessori, 2004). Depending on the requirements of the child, Montessori teachers provide assistance and support. During the educational process, this assistance is drastically diminished (Edwards, 2002). This illustrates that the instructor will not impede the youngster until absolutely required.

The teacher who is sometimes referred to as the classroom manager, serves as the supervisor of a system wherein kids regulate their conduct while they are at school. Throughout this process of self-education, the children and the Montessori teachers work together (Montessori, 2004). Since the child is being told what to do and how to act by an outside authority figure, the instructor must resist this (Harris, 1995). As a result, the goal of the Montessori teacher is to support children's internal self-control and development of self-belief (Edwards, 2002). The ability to enforce internal discipline is made possible by the fact that children may choose their own activities in the learning environment. Children's self-assurance and internal self-discipline support Montessori peace education.

According to Montessori (1912), abilities like passion and creativity, as well as values like respect, global citizenship, and responsibility, all contribute to peace education (American Montessori Society, 2021; Duckworth, 2008; Signorello, 2017). One of the tenets of the Montessori approach is respect for the child (Isaacs, 2018; Pickering, 1992). Accordingly, Harris (1995) emphasizes that Montessori teachers should encourage their students to build pleasant, mutually respectful relationships with one another. Teachers need to be mindful to speak in a

quieter tone and set an example with their attitudes, conduct, and body language (Montessori, 2009).

Montessori (2009) emphasises that the instructor and the instructional materials work together to carry out education. Instead of being engaged during the children's learning process, Montessori instructors take on a passive position (Montessori, 2013). Teachers examine the work cycle of children like a researcher would, attempting to scientifically understand the process. When a kid is developmentally ready for new work, teachers who continuously and carefully examine the child provide him or her that task (Whitescarver & Cossentino, 2008). By continuously watching the students in the learning environment, the teacher who assumes a directing role must also provide a need-oriented setting (Baynham, 2016). Because of this, educators must "set a prepared environment according to the child's needs" (Bărbieru, 2016: 12). In the Montessori Method, the teacher, the child's own activity, and a prepared environment all assist the child's personal and social development. The collaboration and communication that is established between Montessori teachers, who support the children as guides by observing them, and the children who are at the center of learning by following their own preferences in a prepared environment will help to reveal the connection between the Montessori philosophy and the practice.

#### **I.14 Teaching Reading and Writing through Montessori**

Richardson (1997) stipulates that the auditory sense introduces whole-word awareness to children between the ages of birth and two. However, a sophisticated internal analysis enables them to create individual sounds and syllables, and eventually full words. Building off of this basic process, Montessori teaches kids to listen for individual sounds again while adding visual, auditory, tactile, and especially

kinesthetic perceptions of the written sign. Montessori successfully connected language growth to sensorimotor instruction, with the one supporting the other. She didn't develop a particular strategy for instructing reading per se. In fact, reading is not included in her handbook's table of contents. However, there is a part on reading material for writers and another on writing tasks for "alphabetical signs." To train a child's attention to follow sounds and noises produced in the environment, to recognize them, and to discriminate between them is to prepare his attention to follow the sounds of articulate language more accurately. (Montessori 1965) Written language is seen as an extension of oral language. Children's development of phonemic awareness benefits from this kind of attention (listening). Children can practice or improve their phonemic awareness and capacity to break down spoken words into their component sounds and syllables through exercises using sandpaper letters. With the use of the movable alphabet, children are guided through the process of creating words by segmenting and combining sounds as they gradually grasp the phoneme-grapheme association.

Grant (1985: 455) states, "Montessori believed that a child has a mind to absorb knowledge. He has the power to teach himself". That is to say, youngsters may hold and control the cardboard letters that make up the movable alphabet in a box that is divided into sections. Children will naturally begin writing, first letters and then words, thanks to the kinesthetic technique utilised with the sandpaper letters, word construction with the movable alphabet, and also via the training of the hand in sensorial and practical life exercises. The researcher adds that graphic or written language provides a kid with a necessary tool for communication as well as a way to hone spoken language. This crucial issue about speaking and writing working together in tandem has been ignored in education and has just lately come to light in language study. In addition to this, the exercises in practical life that start to prepare the

hand for writing and establish control of movement and eye-hand coordination, the sensorial materials that develop the child's perceptual abilities, visual and auditory discrimination, ability to compare and classify, and learning precise nomenclature are all examples of indirect preparation for written language, according to Montessori (1912). These are all essential for written language. Through repetition, the hand develops the ability to manipulate the metal insets on a pencil; sandpaper letters and a movable alphabet help the kinesthetic sense to remember shapes that are important for written language. At the same time, sounding out letters and words improves a kid's auditory memory, auditory discrimination, and oral (articulatory) kinesthetic memory. It also helps the youngster reach the pinnacle of speech perfection. Accordingly, Liberman (1979) makes it abundantly evident that understanding the phonological structure that the letters stand for is necessary if readers and writers are to make effective use of the alphabetic principle. So, children that use sandpaper letters are investigating language sounds and the forms of the symbols that represent these sounds; nevertheless, this is not writing or reading practice. Also, children are guided into the process of forming words by their growing capacity to break down spoken words into their component sounds and through their knowledge of the relationship between sound and written sign.

Unquestionably, as Montessori (1912) emphasizes that the movable alphabet gives a kid the ability to construct words, however, this tool is just for the mechanical manufacture of children's words, and subsequently their phrases and sentences, as a preparation for reading and writing. Using the movable alphabet, the instructor may combine a variety of phonemic awareness exercises. This is illustrated with the fact of phoneme counting, such as asking the children how many sounds are in words such as box, sat, top, etc. Phoneme identification, such as saying the first or last sound in monosyllabic words; matching, as in

rhymes; substitution of the initial consonant of a word to make a new word; reversal, such as saying cat backwards, or deletion of a letter in a word to make a new one, such as deleting the / m / from smack. After each word or sound is said, the kids select the right letter(s) from the alphabet box and arrange them on the table or mat in the proper sequence. "Touching the letters and looking at them simultaneously fixes the image more quickly through the cooperation of the senses," claims Montessori (1912).

Later, the two truths diverge: touching turns into writing while gazing becomes into reading. Some people learn to read first, others to write, depending on the person's personality. Children can create a mental image of the written word for themselves by arranging the cardboard letters in the order that they hear them being pronounced. They are then guided through the process of mechanical reading, which involves breaking the written word down into its constituent components, articulating each one, and combining them to create the spoken phrase. Children who can make a word out of letters from the movable alphabet are not reading or writing, but they are practicing for these skills. We briefly addressed the evolution of writing and mechanical reading, or decoding. However, for a youngster to read with understanding, further practice of a different, more direct sort is necessary. "I do not consider as reading the test which the child makes when he verifies the word he has written. He is translating signs into sounds, as he first translated sounds into signs . . . . What I understand by reading is the interpretation of an idea from the written signs . . . . So, until the child reads a transmission of ideas from the written word, he does not read" (Montessori 1912: 296).

Children who are able to form a word out of letters from the movable alphabet are not reading or writing, but they are practicing for these skills. Here, the evolution of writing and mechanical reading, or decoding is addressed. Conversely, for a youngster to read with

understanding, further practice of a different, more direct sort is necessary. Phonogram cards and ‘puzzle words’ (non-phonetic) are presented, and the origins of words are investigated later, following the grammar games. Typically, children between the ages of six and nine grow interested in roots, prefixes, and suffixes, however this may not be the case for children with learning problems for some time. The youngsters gradually begin to investigate the functions of words. This is the first time Montessori used the phrase ‘reading introduction’. "Before the child can understand and enjoy a book, the logical language must be established in him. There is the same difference between knowing how to pronounce a word and knowing how to make a speech between knowing how to read the words and knowing how to comprehend the sense of a book", articulates Montessori (1912: 304).

Many grammar games are introduced one after the other over time. These are offered to small groups of youngsters, generally around the age of five or six, who have learnt to decode via all of the previous activities. Denny (2008) depicts that the nouns come first, followed by their modifiers: articles, ‘then little words’, and adjectives, ‘then describing words,’ before conjunctions, ‘then joining words,’ prepositions, ‘then placing words,’ and finally the dynamic ‘doing words,’ verbs, and their modifiers: adverbs, ‘the word describing the doing word,’ and pronouns, ‘the person words.’ The exercises necessitate the use of numerous little items as well as the participation of youngsters.

#### **I.14.1 Phonics-Based Instruction to Teach Reading in Montessori Education**

Marshall (2017) claims that one of the most researched teaching techniques is the phonics-based instruction to teach children how to read. Phonetics is the articulation of letter-sound correspondences that enable children to decipher alphabetic codes. The first Montessori school was in



Italy, and because the orthography of the Italian language is relatively transparent in the one-to-one correspondences between letters and sounds, phonetics has emerged as a logical method of teaching children how to read and how to spell. Conversely, English orthography is not very regular. There are many correspondences between letters and sounds, and for this reason the use of phonetics as a method of teaching English has been questioned. Yet, despite the irregularities of the English language, there is overwhelming evidence of its effectiveness. At the same time, significant progress has been made in explaining the neurological processes behind early reading and reading disabilities, demonstrating the significance of integrating auditory and visual representations to successful reading. The devil is always in the details in schooling. Importantly, systematic phonics programs have the greatest influence on reading accuracy.

By systematic, it is indicated that letter-sound correlations are taught in an organized sequence rather than on an as-needed basis. However, there are two distinct methods to systematic phonics instruction: synthetic phonics and analytic phonics. Synthetic phonics begins with the parts and progresses to the whole: youngsters learn the sounds associated with letters or groups of letters and use this information to sound out words from left to right. Analytic phonics begins with the total and works its way down to the parts: Sound-letter associations can be deduced from groups of words that share a letter and a sound, such as h-- at, h-- en, h—ill.

### **I.15 Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter encompasses some major investigations on the educational field, notably the teaching/ learning of the EFL reading skill. However, EFL early literacy implementing the Montessori Approach is the pivot of this chapter. The last-mentioned

diversifies a number of significations and conceptions that concern the reading skill initiating from the broader scope, which mainly covers the overall understanding of the reading process and its advent over history employing various approaches that each one emerges as a reaction to the shortcomings of the pervious one, till reaching the target arena which embraces the Montessrian Method to impart the reading skill to very young learners. Therby, the Montessori Approach fosters the reading competence through the introduction of phonics, in addition to the fact that it prompts the learners' autonomy to learn at their own pace, utilising self-directed kinesthetic activities. Nevertheless, there should be undertaken some comparative experimental studies to verify to what extent this approach is efficient to teach EFL reading in elementary schools, and whether it is affordable to be implemented in the Algerian elementary curricula.

# **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES**

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## II.1 Introduction

This chapter broaches the methodology that frames this research work as well as the data collection and analysis processes. The methodological part entails the research design and its major conceptions whilst the data collection section covers the reporting and analysis of the findings obtained from different sources.

## II.2 Research Methodology

### II.2.1 Sampling

The task of conducting a research project cannot be accomplished without working on a particular sample that emanates from a target population. Accordingly, the term sample refers to a group of individuals that are selected by the researcher to provide him/her with some qualitative, quantitative, or both data that serve his/her research questions and enable him/her draw conclusions. The last-mentioned makes the process of sampling the cornerstone of any investigation, as selecting an adequate sample delineates the value of the data collected, and so the ratio of success of the undertaken study. Cohen *et al* (2007: 100) state, “The quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted”.

However, this process is categorised into probability sampling which refers to the selection of one’s informants randomly. As Etikan and Bala (2017: 2) state, “probability sampling permits every single item from the universe to have an equal chance of presence in the sample. Nonetheless, the none-probability sampling requires from the researcher to select his sample based on a particular aim or characteristics, as Etikan and Bala (2017) designate it as a sampling technique that does not provide a framework for any opinion of likelihood that items would share equal opportunities to be selected as are search sample. In this

method, one finds five major techniques which are as following; quota sampling, accidental sampling, judge mental or purposive sampling, expert sampling, snowball sampling, and modal instant sampling.

Thereby, the researcher must cautiously select his sample. Thus, it is up to the researcher to select the appropriate method for his investigation. Nevertheless, for our dissertation, the none-probability sampling method has been selected, notably the purposive/ judgmental sampling method. The latter is based on the researcher's assessment of who would offer valuable insights to achieve the study objectives, as indicated by Etikan and Bala (2017). The researcher has to concentrate on individuals who share the same viewpoint in order to obtain the necessary knowledge and be willing to share it. Additionally, Cohen *et al* (2007: 115) note, “In purposive sampling, often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought”. In this approach, the study conductor may compile a sample that meets their exact requirements. As the name implies, the sample was picked for a particular goal.

Consequently, this sample design has been selected for our study for the reason that our subjects should have been selected rigorously and not randomly, so as to cope with our research circumstances and variables (aim, questions, settings, and accessibility). The researcher has chosen her sample population from her workplace based on her assumptions about them.

### **II.2.2 Teachers' Profiles**

For our investigation, we have picked five EFL teachers who work in a languages school labeled “Metro Languages School”

to be a source of data, from the target population that consists of thirteen practitioners. Those tutors have been selected rigorously based on some requirements that qualify them to serve the aim of our inquiry. Hence, first, the informants range between the age of twenty-two and thirty years old. Therefore, it designates them to be in the prime of their youth which authorises them to be likely to be energetic, proactive, eager, and enthusiastic about teaching. Along with this, all tutors teach young learners using the concerned approach “Montessori Approach” which was adopted in August 2022. Apart from this, they are all female individuals which actually happened by chance, and it does not aim at investigating the impact of gender on the teaching process. The participants share some characteristics which have to do with the skills to treat and manage young learners and how they create a fun and healthy learning environment for youngsters. Hence, these teachers have contributed in responding our semi-structured interview.

### **II.2.3 Learners’ Profiles**

For our research project, we have selected a sample of fifteen learners among sixty young learners whose age ranges between five and eight. Those participants have been studying EFL at the school of languages Metro Languages School for seven months using the Montessori approach. Their current level is A2 following the CEFR model. When the learners accomplished ninety hours of studying under the Montessori approach, an achievement test has been administered to them to examine their progress and how the Montessori approach has impacted their learning especially in terms of the reading skill which is in fact the main concern of our study.

Thus, those pupils have been selected purposively for their age, current level, and the approach that frames their learning process. Therefore, they have been chosen as the subjects of our research instrument; testing.

## II.2.4 Research Design and Methodology

Before undertaking any research study, the researcher should first identify his research design and work on his paper accordingly.

### II.2.4.1 Case Study

It is a research method that authorises the researcher to make generalisations, supply suggestions, and draw conclusions about a particular instance, as Cohen *et al* (2007) indicate that a case study is a particular instance that is typically employed to demonstrate a more general concept. A bounded system is represented by a single instance, such as a kid, a clique, a class, a school, or a community. Accordingly, it presents a one-of-a-kind phenomenon of real people in actual situations, allowing readers to grasp concepts more explicitly than just introducing abstract theories or principles. Along with this, a case study enables readers to comprehend how concepts and abstract principles work together. Case studies may probe instances in ways that numerical analyses are unable to do so. Apart from this, Baxter and Jack (2008: 547) cite that Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) define case studies in diverse terms. With that being said, Yin (2003) categorises case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. He also distinguishes between single, holistic and multiple-case studies. Stake identifies case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective.

#### II.2.4.2 Exploratory Intrinsic Case Study

As stated by Tellis (1997), fieldwork and data collecting may be conducted prior to the formulation of research questions and hypotheses in exploratory case studies. This form of research has been regarded a preamble for certain social research. Accordingly, Baxter and Jack (2008) state that according to Yin (2003), this case study is designed to investigate circumstances in which the intervention being assessed does not have a clear, single set of outcomes. Hence, this type of case study enables the researcher to investigate a particular concern and refine the existing instance. For that reason, this method is adequate for our study since it aims at investigating the efficiency of the Montessori approach on the reading skill for young learners. Correspondingly, since our study emphasizes on exploring the studied phenomenon more than attempting to generalize; then, it is also an intrinsic case study as cited by Baxter and Jack (2008) that Stake (1995) asserts that when the aim is to get an in-depth understanding about the given issue, researchers with an authentic interest in the topic should employ this strategy. It is conducted not primarily owing to the fact that the instance reflects other instances or exhibits a certain feature or problem, yet for the reason that the case itself is of interest in all its distinctiveness and ordinariness.

#### II.5 Study Settings

This study has been done on a language centre called ‘Metro Languages School’ that is located in Oran. This school offers some language trainings for all age categories starting from five-year olds till an unlimited age. The learners are segmented according to their age category and their actual level which determined after passing a placement test. The levels and the teaching programmes follow the CEFR model (Common European Frame of References) and the



programmes are internationally recognised. For the category of young learners, the Montessori approach is the approved method in this centre.

The semi-structured interview is administered to a number of EFL teachers that teach young learners in this school using the concerned approach, and also to the manager of this establishment, whilst the test is administered to the A2 learners who have started with an empty entry profile.

### II.2.6 Mixed-Method Approach

Mixed-method research refers to the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is best utilised when adopting case studies. Creswell (1999) identifies that a mixed-method study is one in which the researcher implement both qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis approaches in the same study. This form of study empowers a policy researcher to interpret intricate items qualitatively as well as illustrate them quantitatively using figures, charts, and basic statistical analysis. According to Fetters et al (2013), three basic designs derive from the mixed-method approach that entail exploratory sequential, explanatory sequential, and convergent designs.

This study has been framed in accordance to the exploratory sequential wherein the qualitative data and analysis delineates the quantitative data collection and analysis. As Fetters *et al* (2013) cite that Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, and Nelson (2010) stipulate that the study conductor gathers and analyses qualitative data first in an exploratory-sequential approach, and the findings steer future quantitative data gathering. For that exact reason, the researcher has conducted a semi-structured interview which encompasses mainly a number of qualitative insights in the first place. Once qualitative data have been collected and interpreted, a test has been administered for the collection of some

quantitative data. The former has been designed on the basis of the findings of the semi-structured interview.

## **II.2.7 Instruments**

Hamzaoui and Neggadi (2012: 47) stipulates, “ The researcher will have to fully describe any tools or instruments used such as, assessment instruments, surveys, interview formats, questionnaires, observation protocols, or other data collection devices.” Research instruments refer to the methods or tools utilised to collect quantitative, qualitative, or mixed data to help the researchers answer the research questions, confirm or reject the hypotheses, or to draw conclusions and supply suggestions

### **II.2.7.1 Semi-Structured Interview**

We have conducted a semi-structured interview which is designated as a comprehensive discourse wherein the interviewer is aware of his prerequisites, and hence prepares a set of questions to ask and a

general concept of what subjects will be addressed. Yet, the conversation is flexible and likely to alter significantly across informants (Fylan, 2005). For that particular reason, in order to obtain valuable qualitative insights from the respondents without guiding them or restrain their viewpoints, we have selected the semi-structured interview. In fact, our semi-structured interview is segmented into three rubrics: the first rubric ‘teacher’s background’ consists of seven questions. This rubric aims at collecting data about the teachers’ background and getting to know them better and to understand their inclinations. The second rubric ‘early reading challenges’ covers four questions. It mainly aims at collecting teachers’ perspectives and viewpoints to get an in-depth understanding on the young deal with the reading skill in accordance to their cognitive and psychological readiness and what compels them to

struggle with it. The last rubric ‘Montessorian teaching’ encompasses mainly seven questions for the teachers and one extra question for the manager. This section aims at collecting valuable data on how the Montessori approach is applied in the given school, how the teachers employ it in their teaching, how they teach the reading skill using this approach, and finally how it impacts their teaching process. The final draft of the interview is found in the appendix.

### **II.2.7.2 Achievement Test**

Testing is generally known as an instrument designed to examine someone’s knowledge and skills in a given scope. Conversely, tests are not only for the purpose of examining knowledge, yet they are also utilised as a research procedure, so as to collect data for a particular investigation. As Perry (2008) opines that one of the major procedures widely used in research is tests, usually known as assessment. Despite the fact that he is certain that all researchers and educationalists are acquainted with the concept of test owing to years of experience, the researcher merely proposes that a test is an instrument meant to examine what participants can recall or perform physically and/or cognitively. Due to the fact that a single test can perform all three functions, depending on the test items implemented.

Accordingly, he adds that test items alter according to the cognitive prerequisites on participants. Some items necessitate participants recalling knowledge. This is accomplished by elements like fill in the blank and completion. Other tasks, such as examining the writing skill wherein respondents have to write an essay, require participants to retain and integrate knowledge. These things are also known as open-ended or constructed responses. Other test items necessitate subjects to select the best adequate response from a list of possibilities. Multiple choice, matching, and alternative choice are popular items used for this purpose.

For our study, the most adequate test items are the ones of recalling knowledge. Since the learners young learners and beginners, some figures are presented to them whilst they are required to recognise them and recall what they have been learning during their learning journey through Montessori approach. The test mainly attempts to examine to what extent the informants are able to recognise the figures, then uttering what they recognise, subsequently they are asked to write what they utter in order to investigate the compatibility between what they articulate and write. Hence, here the main aim is achieved which is being able to match the morphological aspect with the phonological aspect which is referred to as the reading skill. The final draft of the test is found in the appendix.

## **II.2.8 Analysis Techniques**

After accomplishing the process of collecting data and reporting the research outcomes, the researcher should reveal the significance of the findings obtained through the process of data analysis. However, this process will be done adequately provided that it follows a certain approach or technique that copes with the research requirements.

### **II.2.8.1 Qualitative Analyses**

For the analysis of the semi-structured, the researcher has adopted some qualitative procedures, for the data have been presented in form of verbal items that entail individuals' viewpoints and experience narration. The analysis of qualitative verbal data alters from the one of numerical data, as Perry (2008: 149) mentions, "Creswell (1998) likened data analysis to a "contour" in the form of a "data analysis spiral," where the researcher engages the data, reflects, makes notes, reengages the data, organizes, codes, reduces the data, looks for relationships and themes, makes checks on the credibility of the emerging system, and eventually draws conclusions". Along with this, Lauri (2011: 34) cites that

according to Guba (1981), qualitative investigators ought to examine four standards to boost the credibility of a study. These standards include credibility which refers to validity; transferability which entails generalisability and accuracy; dependability which emphatically refers to reliability; and conformability which refers to objectivity. Therefore, the reporting and analysis of the semi-structure interview data have been done in a narrative manner where the researcher engages and reflects on the findings. Nevertheless, the process of data analysis cannot be said to be definitely unbiased, there must be some bias since it depends on the researcher's own interpretation and perspective.

### **II.2.8.2 Quantitative Analyses**

For the reporting and analysis of the test findings, we have adopted some quantitative procedures which are presented in form of figures "pie chart" and a table to illustrate the numerical data. As Perry (2008: 163) stipulates that in broad terms, numerical data are more straightforward to manage than verbal data. There are a variety of statistical techniques available that can not only quickly reveal patterns and correlations in big collections of data, yet also gauge whether the results are more significant than random chance.

### **II.2.9 Triangulation**

The concept of triangulation refers to the conception of adopting diverse analysis procedures and sources of data in order to achieve reliable and valid results in the research work. As Lauri (2011: 34) proposes that the principles of validity and reliability are viewed as critical for providing an appropriate interpretation of outcomes. While the concept is widely known in quantitative research, validity and reliability take another track in qualitative research. Accordingly, she

also cites that Patton (2001) promotes employing triangulation and claims that it enriches research by incorporating approaches. Besides, Golafshani (2003) believes that triangulation may comprise different data collection techniques and numerous data analysis methods and contends that the methods employed in triangulation to verify the validity and reliability of a study rely on the research criterion. Correspondingly, triangulation does not hinge only on analysis techniques; however, it also encompasses the use of different data sources. As in our study, we have used teachers, learners and the manager as sources of data.

Moreover, it entails conducting various research instruments as in our case; we have administered a semi-structured interview and a test. The least but never the last, it covers different techniques of analysis, since the approach adopted is a mixed-method approach, so we have relied on the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the research outcomes. All in all, the process of triangulating the research findings ensures reliability, validity and objectivity of the study.

## **II.3 Data Collection and Analyses**

### **II.3.1 Reporting the Semi-Structured Interview Findings**

The semi-structured interview addressed to teachers of a foreign languages school labeled ‘METRO LANGUAGES, Oran’, tackles the aim of our research project entitled, ‘THE IMPACT OF THE MONTESSORI APPROACH ON EARLY READING FOR LEARNERS AGED AROUND (5-8) YEARS OLD’, which is identifying the effectiveness of the given approach on learning to read for young learners.

#### **Rubric 1: Teacher’s Background**

##### **1. Age category:**

After categorising the interview respondents according to their age, there have been found that all teachers are around (22-27) years old except for the manager who is 31 years old.

**2. Years of experience:**

After classifying the subjects in accordance to their period of teaching EFL, we have found that 3 out of 5 teachers reported that they had been teaching for around 2-5 years and two teachers for 7 months

**3. Training on the use of the Montessori Approach in EFL education:**

Our respondents have been asked if they had any training on the use of the Montessori approach, and here are what have been obtained from their responses. Most teachers (4 out of 5) have reported that they had been trained on the use of the Montessori approach at their workplace for two weeks except for one teacher who claimed that she had missed the training for some reasons. Along with this, 3 out of 5 teachers have mentioned that they had had self-paced training in addition to the training at their workplace. Additionally, one reported that she had had an open online course that had lasted for around three months. The least but never the last, the manager also has stipulated that she had had two online trainings for one month in addition to the self-paced training via YouTube tutorials.

**4. The content of the training:**

Teachers have been asked to provide us with the content of the training that they had. We have been noted that all interviewees (5 out of 5) have reported that the training had covered the use of the Montessori reading and writing station, the positive discipline how to deal with kids and classroom management. Likewise, the manager has indicated that it had covered the Montessori approach and positive discipline in particular, classroom management. Additionally, the respondent has

mentioned that it also had encompassed the five areas of Montessori and how to implement each one of them in the learning process. Therefore, here have been depicted that Montessori education had five major learning areas which were language spoken and written, mathematics and logic, history and geography, culture and art, and the fine motor skills and gross motor skills which were the development of the big muscles and small muscles and how to apply these areas starting from infants till 3 years old kids, preschoolers from 4 to 6 years old, then 6 to 8 years old, 9 to 13....etc. Hence, these were the areas that have been mentioned by the interviewee.

#### **5. Teaching 5+:**

After collecting data from the interview subjects, all respondents have reported that they had taught young learners around 5 to 8 years old. However, 2 out of 5 teachers reported that they had taught A1, A2, B1 and B2 (following the CEFR model). Conversely, 2 out of 5 teachers have reported that they had taught A1 and A2. Additionally, 1 out of 5 teachers had taught A1. Whereas the manager reported that she had taught A1, A2, B1, and B2. She has also, indicated that they had not had any C1 and C2 5+ groups because usually the 5+ get old very fast. Each level requires 60h. So, the time they reach B2 they were already 9 years old, thence, they just move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> category which is 9+

#### **6. The impact of the Montessori approach on their teaching strategy:**

After asking the tutors about how the Montessori approach impacts their teaching practices and strategy, we have obtained the following findings; 3 out of 5 interviewees have claimed that this approach saved them time and energy. Whilst all teachers have reported that it facilitated their job and facilitated for learners to read and write correctly. Along with this, 1 out of 5 teachers has mentioned that it made the teaching fun. Likewise, 3 out of 5 teachers have reported that it encouraged autonomous learning and learning through experience using hands-on



learning. Also, one teacher has reported that it helped getting out of one's comfort zone and knowing one's limits. Finally, the manager has stipulated that it affected her teaching and training strategy in terms of getting good results and creating very healthy links with the learners, being able to manage the situations that people had used to call or describe as difficult to handle or how they had used to label kids as difficult and challenging or trouble makers or even stupid, while the Montessori approach stated that this conception did not exist as intelligent and none intelligent. Therefore, she claimed that those were the changing concepts in her teaching experience, for since then, they had more peaceful lessons more peaceful communications with the learners and most importantly a very good outcome because it respected no authority, no punishment and no scolding the learners.

## **Rubric 2: Early Reading Challenges**

### **1. Reading in English challenges for young learners:**

Respondents have been asked to provide the researcher with their point of views based on their experience on the challenges that EFL youngsters encounter when learning to read in English. Thus, all teachers have reported that being conversant with letters' first names instead of letters' sounds made reading tiresome for young learners. Besides, 2 out of 5 teachers have claimed that learners got confused between capital letters and small letters and they thought they were not the same letters and eventually could not read it. Additionally, 1 teacher claimed that letters that had multiple pronunciations and none phonetic words were confusing. Apart from this, one teacher has reported that the French background confused learners to read in English. Lastly, the manager has opined that reading started when recognising the letters and there is confusion between if they should display the upper-case, lower-case, the cursive or the scripts kind of letter. Besides, the confusion and the fact

that it was not really interactive and internationally speaking kids were to integrate school at the age of 7. In fact, expecting a five-year old using a method that was used with adult such as learning to read they usually sit down having a copybook, a book and a person lecturing them, moreover, they were supposed to pay attention knowing that the attention span that a kid could have is 10 to 15 minutes maximum. One cannot expect them to focus with a task for more than 15 minutes. So, if he was not moving, touching letters, playing nor engaged, he would not be engaged in the learning process. The challenge was that the learning process was slower and they ended up learning to read but they did not develop a healthy relation with reading and writing sometimes yes but most of the times according to what had been observed, it was substantively not and it took longer. At last, Montessori proposed touching the materials, having actual objects to compare and to use and the most important factor was that the classical method did not teach sounds and when one does not teach sounds, it gets harder. Teaching sounds helped the kids really learn to read and write faster.

## **2. The factors that make young learners encounter those challenges:**

After categorising the interview subjects according to their point of views on the factors that compel youngsters to struggle in reading, there have been gathered that 4 out of 5 teachers have reported that using the wrong methodology by introducing the letters' first names instead of the letters' sounds impeded the process of reading. In addition to this, 3 out of 5 teachers claimed that lack of practice made learners unable to memorize how to pronounce letters. Moreover, 2 out of 5 teachers reported that it was because English is new for them and they were not familiar with. Eventually, one subject has indicated that the challenge was that it was longer, boring and sometimes it represents pain for the

child and they ended up as adults not liking reading most because most likely they had experienced that reading had not been introduced in a positive way.

### **3. The cognitive readiness to read in English:**

The interview respondents have been asked about the cognitive readiness of youngsters to read in English. Thus, all respondents have reported that kids were capable to read and their brain grasped very well. Not only this, but also 2 out of 5 subjects have reported that it differed from a child to another. Some were capable while some others were not. Besides, 2 out of 5 teachers have claimed that it was all about practice. Along with this, 3 out of 5 instructors have reported that they were capable as long as the concerned made them see letters as symbols and shapes that had names which were the sounds they could read them just as they could see a door and name it a door. Correspondingly, the manager have provided in-depth insights about the given matter. She has reported that kids could start reading at the age of 2 and a half. However, people should pay attention to make the difference between learning to read and learning to write. Because writing was not a skill that a very young kid could learn as they did not have the fine motor skills in the hand it could have been given to them some activities to develop their fine motor skills until they reached the age of 5 or 6. Yet, learning to read was all about understanding the concept of reading. Thence, reading was like an image that their brain decrypted before they read a word, they saw pictures, they saw a door and they knew it was a door and named it a door. So, the age a kid started to read actually was when they started to speak. Therefore, if they were able to say a car, an apple, a banana, brother, sister...etc, letters were actually just images and symbols so they could start reading but of course not by using the traditional method, yet with Montessori they learnt sounds starting with

the basic ones like /p, b, m, n / each time introducing just 1 or approximately 2, starting from vowels without following the alphabetical order of the letters that was wrong. They followed the steps of Montessori; learning a single sound, then associating it with a vowel to form a word, then simple sentences that contained mostly cvc words until they moved to the most complex sounds like /w, nj/ etc. That was how they learnt reading and writing. It had to involve all the 3 ways of learning kinesthetic mostly, visual and auditory using games etc. The moment they started speaking was actually the moment they were cognitively ready to read and starting with the cursive preferably when they started writing and linking, then, they use the script where they have to separate the letters

#### **4. The psychological readiness:**

After collecting the teachers' views on how the kids are psychologically ready to read in English, there have been obtained that 3 out of 5 participants have reported that they were not ready to learn reading. Also, one participant has reported that they actually hated it. However, 4 out of 5 teachers have reported that it depended on the way reading is introduced. If it was fun and engaging, learners would definitely love it. If not, they would freak out. Lastly, one participant has reported in details that the Montessori approach was based on when the child showed interest in the skill. It was about being able or having intense training and a very detailed training when actually they were able to tell when a kid was ready. There were actually some signs that a kid showed that made parents and teachers know that they were actually ready to move on to the next step. She illustrated it with the skill of being able to transfer from a cup to another cup or may be a scoop of ice-cream from a plate to another usually the parents knew that the kid was ready to do so or not was actually when they saw them voluntarily going to do so

themselves or opening a sugar container and starting messing up with it or with the flour so there they understood that the kid was not interested in making the mother angry or to mess up yet, it meant he had felt a need to practice transferring so the parent knew that his kid was interested i. e, it was the time to introduce the pedagogical games and activities to help him with that skill. The second approach was the way to introduce reading, it should be interesting if the kid had acceptance then they went forward, if they did not have acceptance, that did not mean they could not, but they just had not found it fun and interesting. It became overwhelming if it was just a slate, copybook, book and sitting down for whole one hour. So it was all about the strategy to initiate kids to read.

### **Rubric 3: Montessorian Teaching**

#### **I. Content of the lesson during the 3h:**

The interviewees have been asked to elucidate the content of the lessons during three hours of class. All participants have agreed on the same point. They all have reported that they started the lesson by socialising with the kids. Then, they had the habit to make learners say positive affirmations. Then, displaying some pictures or quizzes to review the past content. Then, the lesson following the PPP model presenting the lesson, practicing through choral and individual repetition and through games and hands-on activities, then performance when learners were engaged in a dialogue, role play or a particular practical situation. The last part of the lesson was the Montessori reading and writing workshop. Teachers introduced the letters of the day that shouldn't exceed 2. They introduced the sound of the letter and learners repeated after the teacher while tracing on air using two fingers. Then, one by one they went to trace on sand paper letters using 2 fingers and said the sound simultaneously. Then, they moved to the next step which was tracing on a textured sand tray using a wooden pen and keep saying

the sound. Then, they formed cvc words using some movable letters on a mat that contained lines and read the words. Then, they wrote on their slates. The last step, they went to copy on their copybooks the letters and the words by their own. Along with this, each 20 minutes learners had an energizer or a brain break.

## 2. Teaching Reading:

The participants were asked about the method they employ to teach young learners the reading skill. All interview subjects have reported that they introduced the sounds using tactile and kinesthetic materials learners touched while producing the sound for further reinforcement. Starting first with vowels. Then letters that were easy to articulate, then letters that were hard to articulate, then the phonograms. Gradually they learnt to read simple phonetic words and simple short sentences then moving to more complex words that contain phonograms till they were able to read passages. And the goal was to make learning to read fun and that the kid did not associate the fact of reading to something painful and boring.

### 2.1. Teaching materials:

The respondents have been asked to list the teaching materials that they utilise. All teachers listed the following materials: Montessori workshop materials ( sandpaper letters, sand tray, moveable alphabets, and slates), textbook let's go, TV, balls, bean bags, carpets, puppets, and some other kinesthetic materials depending on the lesson content.

## 3. The contribution of Montessori approach to foster reading for young learners:

After gathering the subjects' point of views on the contribution of Montessori approach in fostering the reading skill for young learners, we have found that all participants have reported that it was fast and well organised. Additionally, 4 out of 5 teachers have reported that learners enjoyed learning to read and got excited for the Montessori reading and

writing station. Along with this, 4 out of 5 interview subjects have claimed that it facilitated their task. Moreover, 4 out of 5 respondents have reported that it had developed the sense of autonomous learning in learners. Furthermore, all participants have indicated that this method was so effective and for a short time. The last but never the least, one subject has depicted that it was very affective because they had received good feedback from the clients “the parents of the kids”. They had started to use it just in September and the results for then were good comparing to the traditional method and kids were able to read complex words.

#### **4. Progress learners made in 60h:**

The interviewees have been asked to inform us about the progress that their young learners have made in one level. All tutors have identified that the learners’ entry profile was 0, they had had no background and some learners barely knew just some alphabets names and numbers from 1-10. Not only this, but also 3 out of 5 teachers have reported that their learners had not reached 60h yet, however, they were able to read simple words and sentences that contained cvc words. Likewise, 2 out of 5 teachers reported that their learners were able to read and form full sentences with a correct language structure. Finally, the manager claimed that they started definitely mastering how to introduce themselves in English, speaking about their daily routine their likes and dislikes, food presenting their family members, being able to read short sentences and mainly cvc words which was a big achievement for 60h for somebody who did not even know how to read and write in addition to the other components of the programme they could use the everyday language and the entry profile is nothing.

**5. Recommending public primary and preschools to adopt this method:**

The participants have been asked to provide their opinions about recommending the public sector to adopt the Montessori Method to teaching reading. Most teachers 4 out of 5 have reported that they recommended adopting that method in public primary and preschools, except for one teacher who opined that it was difficult for the public sector to adopt it for the large number of learners but it would be great when it was done when homeschooling children. With that being said, one subject has opined that adopting it for public schools was going to be a big challenge because of the material itself, the training of teachers and the fact that some schools contained a large number of learners that exceeds 15 learners with just one monitor it is so challenging. Of course adopting it would be nice but at least the private sector could start and for the public sector we gradually implemented it and it started with homeschooling.

**6. Challenges that teachers encountered when teaching Reading through Montessori:**

After classifying the interview subjects in accordance to their responses on the challenges that they encountered when adopting the Montessori approach to teaching reading, 1 out of 5 teachers has reported that she had encountered no challenges. While 4 out of 5 respondents have reported that time management was a challenge if it was a large group and that it was hard to watch the learners who were waiting and at the same time making sure the other learners had followed the steps correctly. Eventually, one correspondent has elucidated that not having enough trainers or resources in Algeria had been a big challenge. She had had to rely on the international resources the material was new since they were relying on the local production of lot of things so it had become



new so it was kind of a challenge to require the materials. Every single teacher who joined the school had had to be trained. It had taken time to practice it had taken time for teacher to adapt to that method.

### **7. What inspired the manager to adopt this approach:**

This question was selectively addressed to the manager of the school so as to know what have inspired her to adopt this approach. Thus, she has stipulated that she had never stopped learning about education since it was evolving just like technology, getting to come across videos, links, getting into details deeply. Then, she had been trained on it. Then she had tested it and had seen that it actually worked since it was applied internationally so she had decided to adopt it.

## **II.3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Semi-Structured Interview's Findings**

From the data that have been obtained from the teachers' point of views and experience, one can discernibly notice that children are equipped to learn reading in English at a very young age. However, the question arose here is that since the young children are equipped to read in English, why do they find it intricate? In fact, the interview depicts that the problem was not centralised at the learners' cognitive readiness, yet the method adopted in teaching them the EFL reading skill. Therefore, although young learners are cognitively ready to learn EFL reading, they still do not possess the skill to recognise the items that seem illogical for them.

First and foremost, that challenge is illustrated with the fact of introducing just the alphabets' first names instead of introducing only the primary sounds in the first place in order not to put them in a dilemma; such as the letter "c" as /si:/ instead of /k/ when followed by /a o u/ and /s/ when followed by /e i/. Learners get confused, should I say /sieite/ for

the word “cat”. Yet if the sounds are introduced, then the kid would definitely produce the word “cat” as /kat/

Besides, one of the major tenets of Montessori is that young beginners should start learning reading through phonics and this is actually the cornerstone of this approach. i. e, introducing only the letters’ primary sounds and impel them to read sound by sound, then syllable by syllable, then word by word till they are capable to read sentences and even passages. Along with this, introducing the lower-case letters first in isolation, and keeping the upper-case once they master the former. Inasmuch as the young learners are more likely to come across the lower-case letter than the upper-case letters. Apart from this, as what has been observed, this approach prompts autonomous learning through self-directed activities and learners’ initiation in learning to read in English throughout the Montessori reading and writing station. And this last actually prioritises the main principle of CBA that is the dominant approach in Algeria. On the one hand, all the kinesthetic items utilised in this method are made up of natural materials such as wood, sand, cotton and glass, for the reason of promoting the sensorial exploration and recognition of surroundings for young learners.

As the learners are likely to touch and feel the letters pattern made of sand paper, then tracing them on actual sand while producing its sound simultaneously, will definitely make the patterns and sounds to be engraved in their minds. On the other hand, providing at sand for the learners does not seem to be costly to adopt and adapt this method. Moreover, the tutors seemed to be satisfied and confident when demonstrating the application of this method on their learners which reveals the flexibility and efficiency of Montessori for both tutors and tutees.

As a matter of fact, trainers in a Montessori classroom are guides, scaffolders, facilitators and supervisors. They develop independent

learners which veritably smoothens their task and makes their burden lighter comparing to traditional classrooms. The particular reason for that, young tutees are actively immersed in the reading task. They are impelled to trace the letters patterns alone and tracing on the sand, then forming phonetic words while keeping articulating the sounds which authorises them to relate the pattern with the sounds and enables them to link sounds to form syllables then linking syllables to make words until they become capable to read sentences and even passages using the contents that they have already studied and are familiar with.

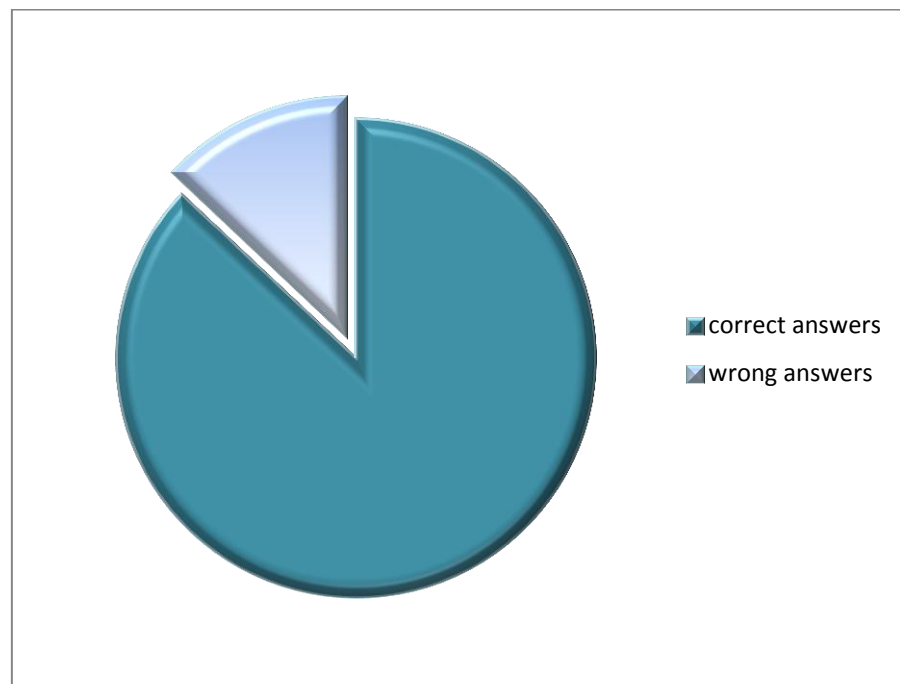
All in all, based on what have been obtained from the teachers' interview, it is vital not to neglect the fact the Montessori approach is effective in empowering the young learners with reading skill. However, there are still some shortcomings that should be reconsidered in order to ensure its efficiency. These shortcomings are presented in the number of learners that should not exceed fifteen learners. Along with this, if we speak about the Algerian syllabi, there should be at least one hour a week devoted to the Montessori reading station.

### **II.3.3 Reporting the Post-Test's Findings**

The test is addressed to young learners around (5-8) years old who accomplished 90 hours of learning through Montessori. It entails some activities to verify the learners' progress in recognising the words and figures via their responses. The participants have been given some activities bearing in mind that they are around the age of five to eight years old, thus, the tasks were level and age adequate. Therefore, the tasks required the subjects to answer mainly verbally and of course to write in order to check their spelling and word recognition. The report below covers the findings that have been collected early on based on the respondents' responses:

- Learners' recognition of the tasks:**

This task aims at verifying the learners understanding of the written instructions which require them using their reading skills. The test takers have also been provided some pictures that needed to recognise, say and write them, so as to check their ability to associate reading with writing. Therefore, the data obtained depict that 13 out of 15 respondents have provided correct answers while only two test takers provided wrong answers as shown in the figure below:



**Figure II.1 Learners' Recognition of the Tasks**

## **2. Learners' spelling:**

The respondents have been examined on their sounds recognition and to what extent they are able to distinguish between the letters and sounds that seem to be identical for them. Hence, we have found that 9 out of 15 subjects have spelled all the words correctly whereas 6 test takers have encountered the given challenges:

- a. 2 out of 15 learners have not distinguished between the sounds “e” and “i”.

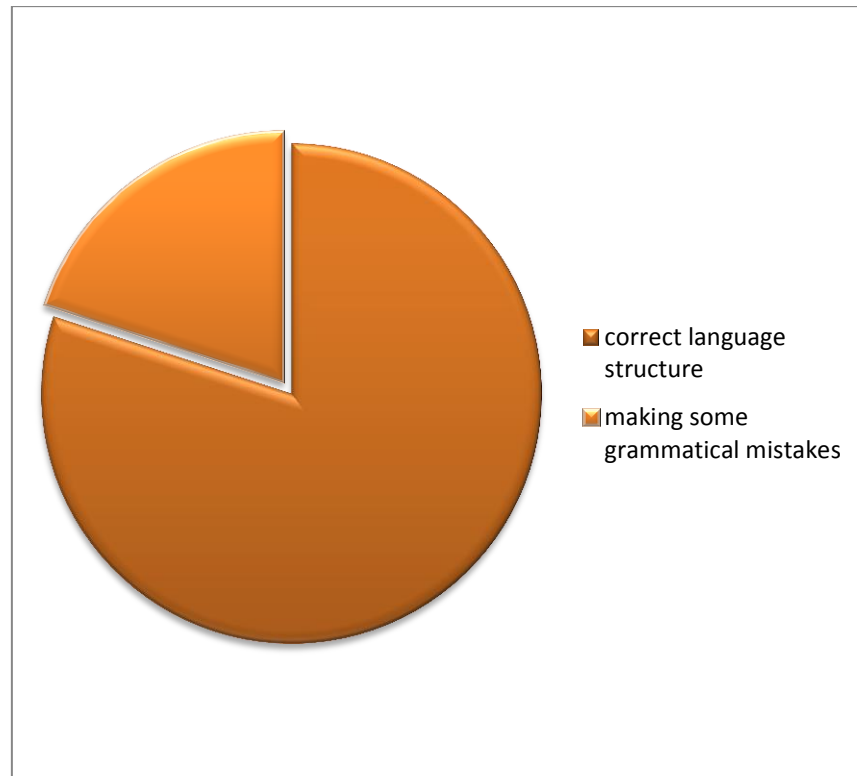
- b. 6 out of 15 learners have not distinguished between the sounds “o” and “u”.
- c. 1 out of 15 learners have not differentiated between the sounds “g” and “j”.
- d. 5 out of 15 learners have not differentiated between the sounds “c” and “s”.

**Table II.2 Learners’ Spelling**

<b>participants’ common spelling mistakes</b>	Confusion between the letters “i” and “e” and their sounds /e/ and /i/	Confusion between the letters “o” and “u” and their sounds /o/and /ʌ/	Confusion between the letters “g” and “j” and their sounds /g/ and /dz/	Confusion between the letters “c” and “s” and their sounds /s/and /k/
<b>Absolute frequency of Informants</b>	2 /15	6/15	1/15	5/15

**3. Morphosyntactic recognition:**

The test takers have been examined on their language structure. There have been found that 12 out of 15 have not made any grammatical mistakes while 3 respondents have not differentiated between has/ have and this/ these. The pie below illustrates the findings:



**Figure II.2 Recognition of the Morphosyntactic Language Aspect**

#### **II.3.4 Analysis and Interpretation of the Test's Findings**

The test addressed to young learners around the age of (5-8) aims at identifying the progress of the learners' reading skill that they accomplished in 90 hours of learning through the Montessori approach. The test would authorise them to level up to A2+.

The findings that have been obtained from the administered test demonstrate how learners in only 30h of learning reading through Montessori without counting the entire sessions' hours, could answer the test without the help of the teacher. This sheds light on their ability to recognise the test items and instructions which indeed indicates their reading comprehension. Besides, the majority of learners have produced and spelled the words correctly while only the minority of them could not distinguish between some letters and sounds that have seemed to be

identical for them in particularly the letters “j” and “g”, “c” and “s”, “o” and “u”, and “e” and “i”. And those learners are the ones who have already learnt the alphabets’ first names before enrolling the concerned establishment as well as the francophone ones. This actively depicts that the learners who have kept relating their prior knowledge that have been grasped in a way that contradicts the core of the concerned approach, still have a problem in reading and spelling some sounds. For the stated reason, learners got confused of the correct spelling and pronunciation of some letters in the words whilst the learners who have depended only on what they have learnt via Montessori could definitely spell and read correctly.

Along with this, the reading skill does not hinge only on the words recognition and flawless pronunciation. However, the morphosyntactic aspect of language matters likewise. It is discernible that all learners formed a correct language structure, except for only three participants who have had a problem with the present form of the verb “to have” and with plural form of “this” which results from the lack of practice from the part of the learners. Apart from this, the learners’ oral placement test depicts that they have no schemata knowledge on the EFL in general and reading in particular. Although some pupils barely knew the alphabets’ first names and could count from one to ten, yet when they were required to read some words they could not. The latter indicates that the learners’ entry profile only covered the alphabets’ first names and numbers from one to ten for some subjects while the rest had an empty entry profile. Consequently, the post-test exhibits a crystal clear difference between the respondents’ entry and exit profile. All in all, the learners’ progress in learning is discernible and at the present time they are able to read sentences that mainly contain phonetic words.

## II.4 Discussion of the Main Results

There has been spotted a geographical gap for our research project. That is to say, no studies have addressed the matter of TEFL reading to children in Algeria, notably that TEFL has been recently implemented in the Algerian public primary schools, which makes it a brand new topic in the domain of educational research in Algeria.

After conducting the semi-structured interview and the test, the findings indicate that learning to read is considered to be an effortful task for kids provided that it is introduced in a confusing way; such as introducing the alphabets' first names, both upper-case and lower-case, and introducing the different sounds that a single letter makes without providing them with a logical explanation. The latter answers the research question: what kind of challenges do EFL young learners encounter when dealing with the reading skill? However, through phonics, the introduction of lower-case letters before introducing the upper-case letters and the self-directed activities prompt autonomous learning, engage all learning styles "visual, auditory and kinesthetic", and foster the reading skill for the beginner youngsters, and ensures an adequate environment of learning in an engaging and amusing manner. The results answer the research question: How does the Montessori approach contribute in fostering the reading skill for EFL young learners? Likewise, the findings of similar studies as illustrated in Marshall' (2017) and Richardson' (1997), depict that the Montessori approach is substantively effective in enhancing the reading skill for beginner children.



## II.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter is segmented into two sections. The first one mainly entails the basic conceptions that frame our investigation wherein one finds the process of sampling, the choice of instruments, the research design and the process of triangulation. Whereas, the second one covers the collection of data and the analysis of the findings which mainly broaches the semi-structured interview and post-test's findings reporting as well as the analysis of outcomes, bearing in mind that the semi-structured interview's reporting and analysis precedes the test's analysis. Thus, this process realises the exploratory-sequential design, likewise, the research outcomes have been successfully triangulated which indeed escalate the ratio of validity and reliability of this research project.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

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Early literacy is eagerly covered in several educational papers worldwide. Notably, Montessori Education purposefully highlights its significance and addresses the most adequate teaching strategies and materials to impart it appropriately. Given that TEFL to children has become a prominent topic and that a number of private language establishments adopt this approach, this drives the researcher to have an epiphany to investigate this matter. Therefore, this dissertation makes a valuable contribution to explore a novel topic; nationally speaking, and provides some advantageous insights on how the EFL reading skill is transmitted to young children employing the Montessori Approach. Admittedly, the researcher has not found any studies that have addressed the matter of TEFL reading to children in Algeria and notably through the Montessori Method, in particular that TEFL has been recently implemented in the Algerian public primary schools.

This investigation is sectioned into two comprehensive chapters. The first chapter reports what has been scholarly stated on the matter of the reading process and how it is imparted through the Montessori Method. Then, the second chapter introduces the methodological process to carry out this paper that is basically an exploratory case study. Not only this, yet also it entails a triangulation of the findings derived from the data collected using a semi-structured interview with teachers and a manager and a post-test with the children.

After devising our dissertation and conducting some research instruments, analysis procedures and the process of triangulation, the results reveal that learning to read is considered to be an effortful task for kids provided that it is introduced in a confusing way; such as introducing the alphabets' first names, both upper-case and lower-case, and introducing the different sounds that a single letter makes without

providing them with a logical explanation. The latter answers the research question:

1. Research question 1: What kind of challenges do EFL young learners encounter when dealing with the reading skill?

In fact, the research outcomes validate the first hypothesis that states that:

a) The kind of challenges that impede the reading skill for young learners is the incompatible relation between the morphological and the phonological aspect of the English language.

However, through phonics, the introduction of lower-case letters before introducing the upper-case letters and the self-directed activities prompt autonomous learning, engage all learning styles ‘visual, auditory and kinesthetic’, and enhance the reading skill for the beginner youngsters, and ensures an adequate environment of learning in an engaging and amusing manner. These results answer the following research question:

2. Research question 2: How does the Montessori approach contribute in fostering the reading skill for EFL young learners?

Consequently, they confirm the second hypothesis that claims that:

b) The Montessori approach contributes in fostering the reading ability by developing an effective autonomous readability for young learners.

Likewise, the findings of similar studies as illustrated in Marshall (2017) and Richardson (1997) depict that the Montessori approach is substantively effective in enhancing the reading skill for beginner children.

In the view of the obtained findings, this study makes a crucial contribution to the educational area owing to the fact that Montessori education prompts autonomous learning for children through the self-directed and hands-on activities. Not only this, but also it boosts their motivation and focuses on establishing a healthy, enjoyable, and engaging environment where the kid reveals his best version, and this how kids learn to read through the use of phonics and the Montessori reading and writing stations starting from tracing the letter in the air while producing its sound. Then, the learners trace on the sand paper letters using two fingers which actually fosters their sensory perception and of course they keep producing the sound synchronically. Subsequently, they write the letter on sand. After that, they form phonetic words using movable alphabets and decode the given word. Therefore, after passing by all these stations, the learner is able to perceive the letters and sounds and read out phonetic words and even sentences that mainly entail phonetic words.

Consequently, this research project suggests:

- ❖ The curriculum developers should implement the Montessori tenets and techniques of imparting the reading skill to youngsters in our elementary schools.
- ❖ University policy makers ought to include this approach to the tertiary syllabi to be communicated as one of the approaches to teaching EFL to young learners.

For further research works, I suggest:

- ❖ Educational researchers should undertake a comparative quasi-experimental study in elementary schools to investigate the efficacy of this approach to foster the reading skill in public schools by comparing the effectiveness of the Montessori approach with traditional teaching methods for reading skills, such as phonics-based instruction. This could help to determine whether the Montessori approach is

superior, or whether a hybrid approach that incorporates elements of both methods would be more effective.

- ❖ They ought to investigate to what extent using this approach to teach the reading process is affordable to be adopted and adapted in elementary schools.

- ❖ Educational researchers should replicate this study, however they need to enlarge the sample size, and add more quantitative tools.

- ❖ Researchers could assess the effectiveness of incorporating Montessori-inspired reading activities into traditional classrooms. By adapting the Montessori practices to suit the needs of traditional classrooms, educators could potentially leverage the benefits of the Montessori approach to improve reading in a wider range of students.

- ❖ Studies could explore the long-term effects of Montessori education on the reading skill in students. Research could consider whether Montessori students continue to demonstrate a strong reading ability in later academic years, and whether these skills translate into a better academic performance and career outcomes.

This study is limited to a small sample size, for the two groups that we conducted the post-test on them contain only fifteen participants, and they were the only available groups that cope with our research requirements. Hence, this drives our study to encounter a lack of generalisability. Accordingly, it could be improved by increasing the sample size. Besides, it would have been better to develop a questionnaire with the parents of the learners to collect their viewpoints about their kids' progress; however, we could not access the parents due to the school's policy. Additionally, it would have been better to conduct a classroom observation tool to enlarge the scope of understanding. The researcher could not carry out a classroom observation, for it requires an

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

accurate follow up since the beginning of the course, and the researcher could not realise this, as the timings of the sessions did not match her availabilities. Moreover, the quantitative procedures need to be boosted in order to ensure the validity of the study. This could not be realised for the lack of the questionnaire. Apart from this, since the learners have taken a placement test before enrolling the school back in September 2022, the researcher could not have access to the concrete draft of the test. Thus, the analysis of the post-test was done based on the assumption of the researcher. It would have been better to get a concrete draft of the learners' performance in the pre-test; because it would help the researcher collect more quantitative data.

To conclude, it is imperative to state that the Montessori Approach is genuinely effective to teach the reading skill to young learners. It prompts the readability by developing autonomous learners, critical thinkers who learn to read effectively through self-directed activities and that their teacher is not their spoon-feeder.

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# APPENDICES

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## TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

Dear teacher, this interview is a part of a master research, entitled 'THE IMPACT OF THE MONTESSORI APPROACH ON THE EARLY READING PROCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN' This school has been chosen to be the crux of our research. Your contribution and efforts to answer our questions would be highly appreciated.

### RUBRIC 1: Teacher's Background

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been teaching EFL?
3. Have you had any training on the use of the Montessori approach in EFL education?
4. If yes, what was the content of the training course and for how long?
5. Have you ever taught young learners 5+?

If yes, what are the 5+ levels (A1/ A2/ B1/B2/ C1/ C2) that you've taught before/ still teaching?

6. How does this approach affect your teaching strategy?  
What does it add to your teaching practices?

### RUBRIC 2: Early Reading Challenges

1. What are the challenges that young learners (aged (5-8) years old) encounter when learning to read in English?
2. According to you, what makes them face these challenges?
3. What do you think of the cognitive readiness of young learners to learn to read at a young age?  
Are the young learners capable to learn to read at this age?
4. How do you find their psychological readiness to learn to read in English?

### RUBRIC 3: Montessorian Teaching

1. Would you explain how your teaching process takes place during the 3h of the lesson, please?

2. Would you please elucidate more about how you teach the reading skill in particular using the Montessori approach?

What are the teaching materials and the textbook used?

3. How does this method contribute in fostering the reading skill for young learners?

How does it help in meeting their needs in terms of reading?

To what extent do you think this method is effective? Why?

4. Could you please describe the progress that you believe that your young learners made in 60h? I mean between their entry profile and exit profile.

5. Do you recommend public primary schools and preschools to adopt this approach for teaching the reading skill? Why?

6. What are the challenges that you encounter when using this approach?

7. (For the manager) What inspired you to adapt this teaching method in your school?

8. Could you provide more details about it, please?

# A2 ACHIEVEMENT TEST

Where are you from my friend? Check the colors on the screen!



I point to the object and say if it's: "This- That- These- Those".



What does your friend have?



I tell what others can do, example: "They can speak English".



I write the correct answer:

Is this a picture?



Yes, it is.

Is that a workbook?



No, it isn't.

Is this a clock?



\_\_\_\_\_

Is that a window?



\_\_\_\_\_

For my parents

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## SUMMARY

This dissertation tackles the contribution of the Montessori approach to foster the reading skill for Young children. The researcher executed an exploratory intrinsic case study: Case of young learners of a language centre, Oran. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview and an achievement test. The results have revealed the effectiveness of this method in enhancing the reading skills. The learners have developed autonomy, critical thinking and are now able to decode words, sentences and understand written instructions.

*Key words: Montessori Approach, reading skill, autonomy, and critical thinking.*

## المخلص

يتناول هذا البحث مساهمة منهج مونتيسوري في تعزيز مهارة القراءة للأطفال الصغار. أجرى الباحث دراسة حالة استكشافية جوهريّة: حالة متعلمين صغار في مركز اللغة بوهراّن. أجرى الباحث مقابلة شبه منظمة واختبارًا كفاءة. أظهرت النتائج فاعلية هذه الطريقة في تعزيز مهارات القراءة. طور المتعلمون الاستقلالية والتفكير النقدي وأصبحوا الآن قادرين على فك تشفير الكلمات و الجمل وفهم التعليمات المكتوبة. الكلمات المفتاحية: منهج مونتيسوري و مهارة القراءة و الاستقلالية و التفكير النقدي.

## RESUME

Cette thèse aborde la contribution de l'approche Montessori pour favoriser la compétence en lecture des jeunes enfants. La chercheuse a réalisé une étude de cas intrinsèque exploratoire: cas de jeunes apprenants d'un centre de langues, Oran. La chercheuse a réalisé un entretien semi-directif et un test de rendement. Les résultats ont révélé l'efficacité de cette méthode pour améliorer les compétences en lecture. Les apprenants ont développé leur autonomie, leur esprit critique et sont désormais capables de décoder des mots, des phrases et de comprendre des consignes écrites.

*Mots clés: L'approche Montessori, la compétence en lecture, l'autonomie, et l'esprit critique.*