



Article

Challenges of EFL Course Retaking: Toward a Model for Remedial Reading

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SUBMISSION TRACK

Received: August 12, 2024
 Final Revision: September 12, 2024
 Accepted: September 14, 2024
 Available Online: September 25, 2024

KEYWORDS

Classroom challenges, course specifications, English as a foreign language, reading, course retakers, remedial classes

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A B S T R A C T

Course retaking brings pivotal challenges for learning institutions all over the world. This urges many academicians to investigate the reasons why students retake courses. Therefore, this article identifies the micro and macro challenges associated with retaking a reading course. It also generates a remedial reading model for English as foreign language (EFL) contexts. Data was collected from reading course specifications, course report, and focused group discussions with six experienced language instructors at the preparatory year program of a Saudi university. Using grounded theory, the qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed a complex web of challenges associated with different stakeholders: the course retakers, language instructors, administration, and retakers' families; all of them share the challenge of time constraints, especially after the shift from two to three semesters. At the micro level, course retakers struggle with poor foundational skills and demotivation, focusing on passing exams. They also lack exposure to English and seldom invest office hours for help. Language instructors struggle with learning materials, demotivation, and assessment. At the macro level, students' families contribute to maximize these challenges. A gap exists between the intended learning outcomes and student levels and admission criteria. These challenges collectively hinder course retakers' reading skills. The study generates a five-pillar bridging model that integrates learning outcomes, exam-oriented teaching strategies, simplified reading materials, technology-assisted reading, and motivational strategies to foster EFL remedial reading. The study recommends some pedagogical implications for remedial reading classes.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is claimed that students who retake a course are low achievers; they are also demotivated and lack confidence in themselves (Abío et al., 2019; Takase & Otsuki, 2012). Studies reported various reasons behind getting students to retake a course. Some are psychological (Kim, 2009), others may be institutional (Adghar et al., 2023), and some others might be related to the teaching strategies and methods (Hsu & Chen, 2007). Therefore, stakeholders try to find solutions for the widespread of those who retake courses. One of these solutions is designing remedial programs.

Course retakers refer to those students who have not passed the regular examination. These

students are also called slow learners (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016), course repeaters (Kim, 2009), low-performance students (Abío et al., 2019), or low achievers (Eno, 2019). No matter what name is used, all terminologies agree on the criteria of these students. Course retakers differ in their ability to acquire knowledge. One of the challenges of teaching course retakers is their integration with high-ability learners or gifted. Another challenge may be related to the teachers' lack of training on how to react to this group of learners (Rosi et al., 2024).

Challenges of course retakers extend beyond classroom settings. They involve teaching and learning challenges inside and outside the

classroom (Jenks, 2020). This view suggests that micro-class challenges inside a classroom are not separated from macro-class challenges outside the classroom. Existing research also shows that there is a need to link course retakers' challenges and practices with their learning environment such as corridors, libraries, and extracurricular activities both inside language classroom and at home (Eno, 2019; Hu & Hsu, 2020; Louis & Pereira, 2003; Shanmugam & Jeevarathinam, 2021).

English as foreign language (EFL) remedial classes encounter several challenges (Huang, 2010; Luoch, 2014; Maawa & Cruz, 2019). Adghar et al. (2023) showed a lack of alignment of learning outcomes with classroom practices. Course retakers are also neglected in mixed-ability classes (Binu, 2021; Hazaea & Almekhlafy, 2022; Shanmugam & Jeevarathinam, 2021). This issue raises questions about the washback effect on teaching and learning (Hazaea & Tayeb, 2018; Spratt, 2005). One effective way is to implement the strategy of simplifying the learning materials (Eno, 2019). Al Othman and Shuqair (2013) added "remedial courses for EFL students should be given a new teaching approach to influence the required results about the skills of the students" (p. 137). Remedial studies examined the impact of remedial English courses on English proficiency (Huang, 2010; Luoch, 2014; Maawa & Cruz, 2019), the benefits of remedial teaching on poor-performing students (Eno, 2019), students' expectations of remedial English course (Obeidat, 2020) and teachers' perceptions and practices (Hsu & Chen, 2007). Remedial studies also examined integrated English skills (Eno, 2019; Hsu & Chen, 2007; Maawa & Cruz, 2019; Obeidat, 2020). As for segregated remedial English skills, specific attention was given to vocabulary and grammar (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016; Hu & Hsu, 2020; Huang, 2010; Luoch, 2014; Maawa & Cruz, 2019). Reading skills were not given due attention in EFL remedial studies.

Remedial courses have been reported in several studies in different parts of the world. Yulian et al. (2022) studied the perceptions of Indonesian EFL course retakers about the use of inclusive technology with authentic multimedia-assisted language learning in speaking skills. Similarly, Rosi et al. (2024) explored the applicability of Indonesian teachers to differential instruction of EFL course retakers in inclusive schools. Huang (2010) investigated the impact of an English

remedial program on low-achieving students in Malaysia. The program used self-developed learning materials and teaching assistants to assist the students. Data were collected through assessments of grammar and vocabulary, as well as a questionnaire. Qian (2008) investigated the everyday practices of course retakers and teachers in Chinese EFL classrooms. Two remedial studies were reported from Thailand (Hsu & Chen, 2007; Hu & Hsu, 2020). Both studies called for diagnostic assessments, teaching methods, and simplified materials to develop learners' primary skills and strategies to engage and motivate low-achieving students. In the United States, Luoch (2014) examined the impact of a remedial English course on the English proficiency of freshmen at an international university. Luoch's quantitative study is limited to measuring the achievement test of composition and grammar skills. Reading was not evaluated in this study. Other qualitative tools might provide deep investigation of the remedial courses.

Other EFL remedial studies were reported from the Arab world (Al-Ghathithi & Behforouz 2023; Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016; Almekhlafy & Alqahtani, 2020; Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Eno, 2019; Obeidat, 2020). For example, Eno (2019) examined the benefits of remedial teaching for 21 intermediate male students in an EFL classroom in the United Arab Emirates. In Saudi Arabia, the context of this study, three studies reported remedial experiences with Saudi EFL students (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016; Almekhlafy & Alqahtani, 2020; Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013). For example, Almekhlafy and Alqahtani (2020) investigated the impact of the visual memory development technique on the motivation of EFL students with low reading proficiency. The researchers compared the participants' levels of motivation before and after the experiment. The results demonstrated a significant difference in motivation levels between the two groups. These studies indicated that remedial English language programs need a comprehensive approach to deal with remedial reading courses. Al-Ghathithi and Behforouz's (2023) study is limited to the Omani elementary EFL learners, suggesting a need for further research involving different proficiency levels to better understand the impact of remedial classes. Al Othman and Shuqair (2013) investigated remedial courses for EFL in general. Almekhlafy and Alqahtani's (2020) study explored the enhancement of demotivated students with low

reading abilities. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no study has addressed the macro and micro challenges of reading course retaking and has proposed a model for developing the reading abilities of course retakers. The present study is an attempt to address this existing gap.

As in many EF contexts, many students join Saudi universities with poor English language skills (Moskovsky, 2018). Accordingly, Saudi universities prepare newcomers with a foundational program in English language skills to bridge the existing gap between school outcomes and university demands (Hazaea & Almekhlafy, 2022). This program typically involves EFL learners who need additional support before they can fully join some competitive undergraduate programs. Exam-oriented students (Hazaea & Tayeb, 2018) usually join foundational programs with mixed ability levels (Hazaea & Almekhlafy, 2022). From an ethnographic perspective, the researcher’s ten-year experience indicates that some language instructors focus mainly on the activities inside the classroom. Some slow learners drop language courses soon after the midterm because of poor performance. Yet, some others continue with these courses, but they fail and retake them more than once. Therefore, this study aims to identify the micro and macro challenges while retaking a reading course. It also generates a bridging model to enhance their reading skills. It addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the micro and macro challenges in retaking a reading course?
2. How can a remedial model enhance retaking an EFL reading course?

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design for investigating the micro and macro challenges associated with an EFL remedial reading course (Figure 1).

The case study approach enables the researcher to examine the challenges that EFL course retakers encounter. Using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), a bridging model can be generated out of this experience. By identifying effective strategies for enhancing classroom practices, this study can inform pedagogical practices that promote language learning and improve the overall quality of English language education in preparatory year programs.

Settings and participants

In the academic year 2022-2023, many Saudi universities shifted the academic calendar from two semesters to three semesters. This shift created new changes and challenges at the course level in terms of timing, teaching strategies, and syllabus breakdown. Intended learning outcomes and assessment methods almost remained the same. Admission plans had shifted from semester-based to

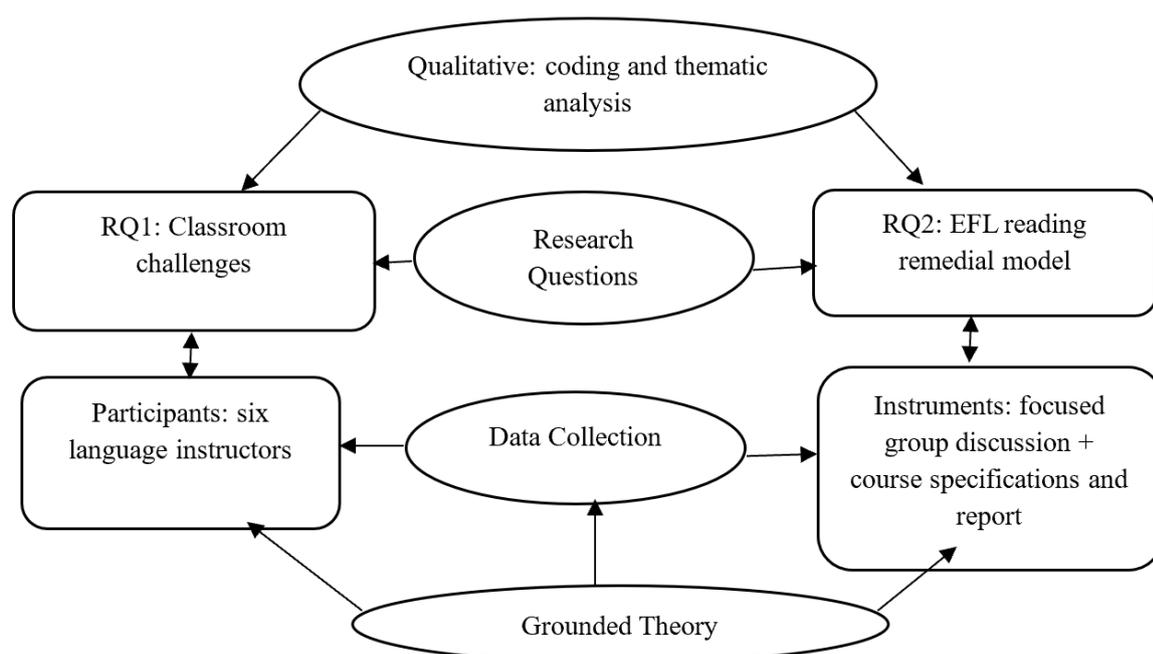


Figure 1. Qualitative research design for EFL remedial reading

annual enrolment. For English language courses at the preparatory year program of a Saudi university, these changes created more challenges. The annual enrolment plan changed the role of the preparatory year program from being a foundation program in the first semester into a remedial program in the second and third semesters. Students who fail a course in the first semester can retake the course in the second or third semester.

In this case study, the available data were collected from the course specifications, course report, and a focus group discussion with six experienced language instructors (coded LI-1 to LI-6), which provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their experiences with the classroom challenges of remedial reading. These instructors have rich experience that ranges from 5 to 10 years in this context. Arabic is the native language for three of them, two instructors are Indian, and one instructor is from Pakistan. Their ages range between 37 and 46. While the three Arab instructors share the linguistic and cultural codes with the course retakers, the Indian and Pakistani instructors face linguistic challenges with them.

Data collection and analysis

A course portfolio is a valuable tool for data collection in a reading remedial course (Louis & Pereira, 2003). In the reading course portfolio, two important documents were collected: course specifications and course report. At the beginning of the semester, course specifications outline the course plan including the course intended learning outcomes, teaching strategies, syllabus breakdown, and assessment methods. At the end of the course, a course report is prepared by the course team in collaboration with the exam and statistics committees. It involves students' results and improvement plans. By systematically collecting and organizing this data, the researcher, being the course coordinator, can make informed decisions about improving teaching practices and enhancing student learning experiences (Romova & Andrew, 2011).

Focused group discussions have become increasingly popular as a tool for data collection in qualitative case studies. This method offers a convenient way to gather information from participants, while also providing a platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing (Hennink, 2013). The researcher designed an online group discussion that involves the following probing

questions:

1. What are the classroom practices that language instructors encounter with course retakers?
2. What are the practices that language instructors observe with course retakers outside classroom settings?
3. What are the language instructors' suggestions to overcome retakers' challenges in terms of materials, teaching and motivational strategies, assessment, and use of technology?

The open discussion of these questions allowed the researcher to collect rich and detailed data. This method also offers a collaborative environment where participants can share ideas and insights. This can be particularly useful in qualitative studies where researchers are interested in exploring complex classroom practices. By bringing together participants with diverse perspectives and experiences, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the topic they are studying (Turney & Pocknee, 2005).

Focused group discussion involves several steps for analysis. First, it is recorded through the Blackboard system and transcribed through 365 Microsoft Word. Second, the researcher read the transcription several times for familiarization. Next, the data were coded into categorizing segments of meaningful units. Based on the initial coding process, the researcher developed a coding framework that organizes and structures the identified codes into broader categories or themes. After that, he compared different codes, identified relationships between them, and explored any emerging themes. Finally, he summarized the findings in a table which was explained later.

III. RESULTS

The course report shows that the course retakers were 100 (M=45, F=55) students (Table 1). These students struggle to achieve the basic skills in reading. Some of them have retaken the course for the third time.

As Table 1 shows, 85% passed the course in the third round. However, 15% failed the course even after the third round.

The analysis of the course report and the focused group discussion showed several challenges associated with different stakeholders.

Table 1. Reading course retakers

Gender	Started	Passed	Failed
Male	45	41	4
Female	55	44	11
Total	100	85	15

Table 2. Challenges of course retaking

Research Question	Stakeholders	Challenges
Micro challenges	Course Retakers	Time constraints Poor level Need for L1 enhancement strategy Demotivation Exam-driven students No visits during office hours Lack of exposure to English
	Instructors	Demotivation Time constraints Non-Arabic language instructors
Macro challenges	Families	Time constraints Demotivation Work with family or working and studying Sleepless nights Distant places
	Administration	Time constraints A mismatch between intended learning outcomes and students' level Teaching materials with answered exercises No placement test Lack of exposure to English Admission criteria

Micro challenges are associated with the course retakers and language instructors. Macro challenges are associated with administration, and retakers' families (Table 2).

As Table 2 shows, micro-challenges are associated with the classroom among the course retakers and language instructors. Some language instructors reported that student's level is "low level, too poor... even they don't understand English at all" (LI-2). Another language instructor described them as "slow learners" (LI-5). To show their weakness, a language instructor described their background knowledge as "very weak" (LI-6). Students' weakness is also described in terms of "low and poor comprehension... poor English language" (LI-1). Moreover, students expect language teachers to use L1 in their classes as it is reported by non-L1 language instructors: "... and for the teachers who don't know Arabic, it is very difficult for them to, I mean to go with their students" (LI-2). Another instructor stated that

"there is a mismatch between learning outcomes, students' level, and teaching materials" (LI-1). These statements indicate demotivation in the classroom including language instructors. Language instructors described students' motivation in terms of "lack of interest, demotivated, would not ask questions... careless" (LI-1) or "need encouragement" (LI-3). In addition, a language instructor described students as "exam-oriented students" (LI-1). An instructor stated that "once the class is over, we are disconnected with them [students]... The thing is how to connect with the student? We ask them they can visit us [during office hours], but they hardly visit us." (LI-2).

Macro challenges are beyond the classroom boundaries. For example, an instructor shows that due to the shift to three semesters, time constraints have resulted in a lack of course orientation where "there is a need for further course orientation for newcomers because this time is because of the shift to three semesters". (LI-1). Another

instructor opines that lack of exposure to English in extracurricular activities is one of the out-class challenges where reading marathons “*can motivate [students] to read in English*” (LI-2) instead of spending “*most of the time outside the classroom using their mother tongue*” (LI-2). Another instructor emphasized that “*teachers may provide students extra exercises to do at home...; they may revise what they learned during the day*” (LI-3). Another instructor showed that the role of the teacher is inside the classroom only where “*most of the teachers’ roles are restricted to be inside the classroom to teach students to understand the lesson.*” (LI-3). *We don’t need to stop taking once the class is over, it has to be continued outside the classroom as well, so what we need is to motivate the students to visit us during office hours.* (LI-2).

To come with administrative-based challenges, an instructor reported that because these students join the course without placement tests, “*it’s very difficult to compare different level[s] of students in the same classroom*” (LI-2). The shift to three semesters has led to a mismatch between the materials to be covered and the allocated time for a class session. An instructor reported that there is a “*shortage of time and we have to cover so much syllabus*” (LI-2). Another instructor stated that he faces the challenge of “*poor attendance, especially during Ramadan*” (LI-1). One instructor reported that “*we have issues beyond our class or beyond our control like admission criteria this time*” (LI-2). He added that “*within this semester, since three semesters we started. It’s very difficult, I tell you,*

to finish the syllabus and to orient the students to the exam pattern than to focus on the learning outcomes than to focus on the learning demand” (LI-2). An instructor showed that learning materials are another challenge that needs to be tailored with students’ level where “*the materials seem not interesting for them. There is a big gap between the learning materials and students’ level*” (LI-1). This issue is supported by another instructor who stated that “*the book that we are using and when we look at the level of the students so there is a big gap*” to the point that “*we should form a bridge course for that*” (LI-2). As course retakers, they either come with no textbooks or with reading answered textbook “*they don’t bother about [bringing the textbooks] and they don’t make any effort to comprehend any paragraph*” (LI-2).

For family-associated challenges, some students have part-time jobs where “*some students have their work, or they work with their family*” (LI-1). Such practice leads to “*inadequate after-class reading or lack of revision*” (LI-1) The same instructor showed that students join the class after sleepless nights where “*many students come late to class because of little sleep; they used to say the phrase “I’m Taiban” which politely means that I didn’t sleep well, especially during Ramadan*” (LI-1). Another family challenge is related to students’ distant places where “*some students came from distant places*” (LI-1).

In line with the second research question, a model to enhance EFL reading can be generated, Table 3.

Table 3. Dimensions of remedial reading model

Research Question	Descriptive category	Sub-category (source of data)
A bridging model to enhance EFL reading course retaking	Intended learning outcomes (LOs)	LOs are signed contracts among the parties (course specifications) LOs are assessed through exams (course report).
	Exam-oriented teaching strategies	Exam-oriented teaching (focused group discussion) Anchored activities (focused group discussion) Exposure to a variety of question types (focused group discussion)
	Simplifying the learning materials	use of simple words (focused group discussion; course report) use of simple sentences (focused group discussion) use of adaptive materials (focused group discussion) contextualized vocabulary (focused group discussion)
	Technology-assisted reading	use of a smartphone inside the class for blackboard activities (focused group discussion) flipped blackboard discussion (focused group discussion)
	Motivational strategies	Use of background knowledge (course report) activities tailored to students’ level (focused group discussion) Personalized learning (focused group discussion)

As Table 3 shows, five pillars need to work together for a remedial reading course to be effective. As reported by one of the instructors *“learning outcomes are the contract between the Deanship, language instructors and students, and they revolve around three domains: knowledge, skills and values”* (course report). While the deanship and instructors aim to achieve the intended learning outcomes mainly through exams as a direct method, students need to get high marks through exams which are shaped by the learning outcomes (course report). However, one instructor implied that the difficulty level of the exams does not go in line with the learning outcomes where *“the exam we are making [is] very easy.... we are trying our best to make the exam easy, but even then you see the performance of the student is not good. That is a very big challenge”* (LI-2). The same instructor expressed his dissatisfaction with students’ performance in the exam *“I’m not very much satisfied with that [students’ performance in the exams], but we have to because the students are too poor”* (LI-2). He attributed such practice to the students’ level *“If we make a standard exam, they won’t be able to qualify. But even then, they are not doing well in the exam”* (LI-2).

Exam-oriented teaching strategies are another important pillar in a remedial reading course. As course retakers, students’ comprehension skills were very weak. Subsequently, students *“should be given more time to practice reading”* (course report). It is also suggested that *“exam-oriented (washback) teaching methods, teaching tools, teaching materials, should be updated and made compatible to learning processes”* (course report). Another instructor reported that students need to be prepared for the exam. He stated that course retakers *“most of the time don’t understand the questions”* in the exam paper. Accordingly, *“they can’t write the answer. That is the big issue”*. He further suggested that they *“need more variety of questions”* (LI-2) during their classes. This claim is supported by another instructor who stated that *“weak students need revisions because sometimes we need to repeat many times to let them understand easily and to encourage them to involve them in situation in activities, whatever this I think it will be helpful for students”* (LI-3). Another instructor supported this kind of washback effect. He stated:

whatever we teach, we teach from the examination point of view. Of course, I am sure

that most of the teachers try the same way we try to expose different types of questions... we keep in mind that these students have to score good marks. We try to expose them to quizzes through progress tests and e-assignments” (LI-2).

Furthermore, conducting quizzes after each unit or topic can help reinforce learning and provide students with a sense of accomplishment. By orienting them through different types of questions similar to those asked in exams, students become more confident in their understanding of the material.

Another dimension of remedial reading is to simplify the reading materials. Teachers need to consider the level of their students and *“tailor activities”* (LI-5). One instructor reported that *“simplified materials relevant to students”* would *“make reading fun”* (LI-6). Another instructor argued that such simplification could be at the gradual levels: *“simple vocabulary”*, *“simple sentences”* and *“simple paragraphs”* (LI-4). Another instructor suggested *“contextualized vocabulary”* where *“we can use simple words”* (LI-1). Another instructor expressed the effectiveness of *“reading strategies, like skimming and scanning”* which are helpful for students to *“find the answers quickly.”* (LI-2).

Technology-assisted reading is another important pillar for effective remedial reading. A language instructor (LI-3) states that utilizing *various types of technology* can make language learning more engaging and enjoyable for course retakers. The same instructor suggested developing *“learning materials throughout the blackboard to enhance reading skills”* (LI-3). Another instructor reported that he *“ask[s] them [students] some questions in the discussion forum”*, an interactive feature of Blackboard. In so doing, he *“put[s] one or two or three questions”* (LI-4) to be followed up in the next classroom.

Finally, motivational strategies are of great importance for successful remedial reading. One effective external motivation strategy is to incorporate *“examples as often as possible”* (LI-3). By providing real-life examples, students can better understand and relate to the content they are reading. When the researcher asked the language instructors to put themselves on the students’ feet and to express their learning demands, a language instructor highlighted issues of simplicity *“explain*

things simply”, and *“use examples and explain them”*, teaching pace *“teach at a speed that is not too fast, not too slow”*, repetition *“repeat things”*, teaching processes *“teach things to step by step”*, allocating more time for classroom activities; i.e. to *“give enough time for practice”* and *“go over difficult exercises”* (LI-1). This personalized approach ensures that students are appropriately challenged and motivated in their language-learning journey.

VI. DISCUSSION

In line with the research questions, the results are discussed. In response to the first question, the study found that the micro and macro challenges are associated with EFL course retaking. These challenges are multifaceted, affecting students, instructors, families, and administrative processes.

As for the micro-challenges (Jenks, 2020), language instructors struggle with demotivation, time constraints, and language barriers, particularly when they are non-Arabic speakers. Course retakers face challenges such as time constraints, low proficiency levels, the need for strategies that incorporate their L1, demotivation, an exam-driven mindset, lack of engagement during office hours, and insufficient exposure to English. Some students are demotivated because the learning materials do not match the students' proficiency level. These findings push educational institutions, say universities in this situation, to minimize all these barriers that constrain students' and teachers' motivation in the learning process. These findings align with some studies (e.g., Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016; Almekhlafy & Alqahtani, 2020; Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Takase & Otsuki, 2012) who reported similar reasons for getting students to retake a course. The findings also coincide with those of Abío et al. (2019), Kim (2009), and Adghar et al. (2023) who reported that course retakers are demotivated and lack confidence in themselves. Likewise, Salmona Madriñan (2014) and Bhooth et al. (2014) found that using L1 in teaching EFL students increases their comprehension and facilitates the learning process.

Macro challenges, the second type, are beyond the classroom boundaries (Jenks, 2020). Families contribute to maximize these challenges by dealing with their own time constraints, balancing work and study, enduring sleepless nights, and living in distant locations. From an administrative perspective,

challenges include time constraints, a mismatch between intended learning outcomes and students' abilities, inadequate learning materials, the absence of placement tests, lack of English exposure, and inappropriate admission criteria that do not take into consideration the English proficiency level of the enrolled students. These findings raise some reasons that should have been prevented by the family and institutional administration. Whenever these challenges are taken into consideration, it is hoped that the number of course retakers will be minimized. These findings agreed with Adghar et al. (2023) who considered that the unalignment of course LOs with students' ability as well as the enrollment criteria are beyond some students' inability to pass the course. Furthermore, this finding is also confirmed by Hsu and Chen (2007), and Hu and Hsu (2020) who called for diagnostic assessments, teaching methods, and simplified materials to develop Thai EFL students' primary skills, and strategies to engage and motivate course retakers. Likewise, extracurricular activities are suggested to solve macro challenges as found by Urmston (2003) who reported that extracurricular activities help in developing the English of Hong Kong students where they can practice at home.

In response to the second question, a bridging model has been generated through an integration of various elements to enhance EFL remedial reading (Figure 2).

As Figure 2 shows, learning outcomes should be clearly defined and aligned with the specific reading skills and competencies that students need to develop. Motivational strategies should be employed to engage students in their reading tasks and create a positive reading environment. In so doing, learning demands should be taken into consideration, such as students' prior knowledge, language proficiency level, and cultural background. Technology-assisted reading can further enhance reading skills by providing interactive activities, adaptive materials, and immediate feedback. Additionally, simplified learning materials can be used to make the reading texts more accessible and comprehensible for EFL readers. Finally, exam-oriented teaching strategies can also be incorporated to help students become familiar with the nature and requirements of the reading exams. By understanding these demands as Bendak (2018) suggested, teachers can tailor their instruction to meet the course retakers' needs. By integrating

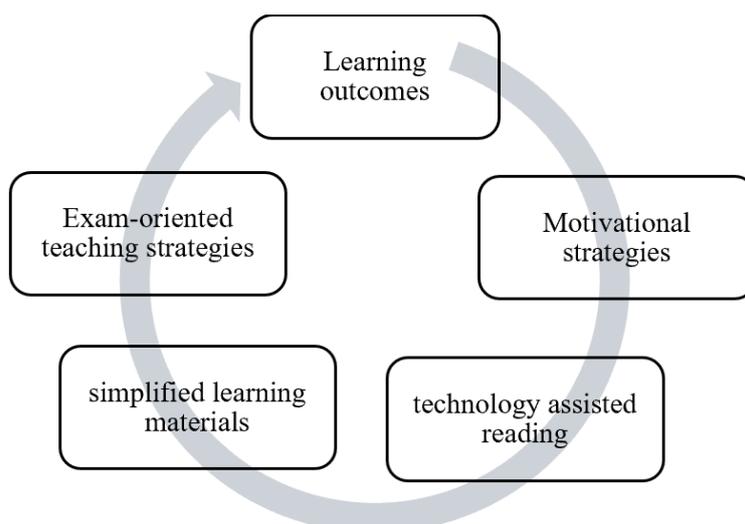


Figure 2. Bridging model to EFL reading course retaking

these various components into a bridging model, EFL remedial readers can effectively improve their reading abilities while also developing essential reading skills for academic success.

The proposed model coincides with several scattered calls in the existing studies. Technology-assisted reading coincides with similar calls to integrate technology in EFL reading (Hazaea, & Alzubi, 2018). Language instructors can adapt some of Dörnyei's (2001) suggested motivational strategies and find those that work with their classes. Similarly, Eno (2019) outlined various tools and procedures for remedial teaching, such as diagnosis, material preparation, motivation, addressing learning deficiencies, and helping struggling students succeed. Yulian et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of incorporating inclusive language learning in the context of English language teaching and higher education in Indonesia. Qian (2008) proposed teachers imply strategies and allocate time which help shift the classroom towards students' centeredness. Huang (2010) showed that remedial programs were effective, with significant improvements in grammar and vocabulary learning. The self-developed learning materials met the students' needs. The program also moderately enhanced students' learning motivation. In line with the present findings, Huang suggested that adaptive materials were effective with course retakers.

Finally, remedial programs at an early stage would be of great value at schools rather than at the while-college programs. In line with this implication, Luoch (2014) concluded that a

remedial program would be of great value at school "instead of overburdening university education with unnecessary remediation" (p. 1187).

The study has some practical implications for course retakers, language instructors, administration, and retakers' families. As for course retakers, the underutilization of office hours presents a missed opportunity for them to enhance their reading skills. Many of these students face challenges due to poor English proficiency, which hinders their comprehension and class participation. A significant issue is the reluctance of these students to communicate their difficulties or ask questions, even when they struggle to understand the material. Reducing absenteeism is critical for improving their learning outcomes. In terms of language instructors, it is essential to actively motivate students, adjust the teaching pace to match students' levels, and simplify materials to aid comprehension. Instructors should engage in reflective practices to identify and address areas needing improvement in remedial classes, provide individualized support, integrate technology such as the Blackboard, and conduct continuous assessments to trace student progress and provide feedback. For administration, learning outcomes should align with students' proficiency levels, and materials should be adapted to meet their needs. Admission criteria need to stipulate an English proficiency level, and placement tests need to be conducted. A two-semester academic calendar could be more effective than a tri-semester one. Additional support and orientation should be provided to newcomers to aid their adjustment. Families also play a crucial role in reducing

absenteeism, ensuring students are prepared and committed to their studies, improving study habits, and helping manage responsibilities alongside academic commitments. Lastly, assisting students in adapting to new academic routines and addressing issues like sleep deprivation and exhaustion due to family problems is essential for students' success.

This study has some limitations. This qualitative study examined EFL remedial reading from the perspective of language instructors and document analysis. The findings are limited to this study and context. Future studies could employ quantitative tools such as a survey to evaluate the course retakers' experiences in remedial reading. The proposed model opens the door for further action research in remedial studies. For example, future research could investigate the impact of specific motivational strategies on course retakers' outcomes. With the advent of AI technology, language instructors could investigate the effectiveness of technology-assisted remedial reading in terms of motivating students and using adaptive learning materials and assessment methods in the Saudi EFL context and beyond.

V. CONCLUSION

This study identified the micro and macro challenges manifested in retaking a remedial reading course during the shift to three semesters in a preparatory year program at a Saudi university. It also proposed a remedial EFL reading model that addresses those challenges. In so doing, grounded theory was employed to thematically analyze the content of the course specifications, course report, and a focused group discussion with experienced language instructors. The study reported several challenges associated with course retakers,

administrators, and families of the retakers.

For effective remedial reading courses, the study called language instructors to adapt motivational strategies that encourage course retakers to achieve remedial learning outcomes. In so doing, they can go through motivational strategies, find those that work with a class, simplify the content of the teaching materials, devote time for Blackboard activities inside the classroom, promote anchor activities, and continuous assessment. The study also urged that academic advising needs to reach students in places such as near cafeterias or corridors. The study emphasized the importance of orientation sessions at the beginning of the course. Diagnostic tests are also important for personalized learning. Accordingly, the study generated a bridging remedial reading model to enhance retaking an EFL reading course. It integrates five dimensions for an effective remedial program: learning outcomes, motivational strategies, technology-assisted reading, simplified materials, and exam-oriented teaching strategies.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study confirms that the relevant informed consent was obtained from the subjects and the university research ethics committee approval number 202406-076-021161-048454 dated 4/6/2024.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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