Gender Differences in Reading Comprehension Abilities Among Undergraduate Students in English Texts

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Abstract

This study assesses the reading comprehension ability (RCA) of undergraduate students at Mid-West University, Nepal, focusing on gender and academic program differences. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected using a reading comprehension test based on English fiction and non-fiction texts adapted from CEFR test items, each accompanied by ten multiple-choice questions. The sample comprised 342 students (43.2% female and 56.8% male) from six graduate schools. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted to evaluate RCA across gender and academic programs. Findings revealed that most male and female students achieved an upper basic (A2) or lower independent (B1) level of reading proficiency. Gender-specific comparisons showed no significant differences in mean RCA scores (t = -0.941, p > 0.05). Across academic programs, no statistically significant variances in RCA were observed between genders, as supported by program-specific t-tests. The study found no significant gender differences in reading comprehension abilities (RCA) among students, with both male and female students showing moderate to good understanding of English texts. Despite individual variations in performance, the findings indicated that gender did not significantly impact RCA, aligning with previous research suggesting minimal gender differences in language comprehension. Notably, variations in RCA within each gender were attributed to individual factors such as motivation, exposure to English, and learning strategies. This study highlights the need for inclusive and personalized approaches to improving RCA, emphasizing individual learning needs over gendered interventions.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension ability, gender, academic programs, reading texts*

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a complex, multifaceted process, and its development presents a significant challenge. Various factors influence the development of reading skills, including a reader's background knowledge, linguistic competence, cultural awareness, physical and psychological characteristics, the strategies they employ, and their level of motivation. Additionally, text-related factors such as content, title, text type, item format, readability index (including word and sentence count), and grammatical complexity can all directly or indirectly impact reading ability (Alderson, 2000; Khalifa & Weir, 2009; Kobayashi, 2002; Urquhart & Weir, 1998, as cited in Ismail & Zubairi, 2022). In both learning and assessment contexts, differences in L2 (second language) reading comprehension can arise from text characteristics, item formats, and the specific reading purposes set by the task. These task characteristics include linguistic complexity, organization, length, genre, and the type of items used to assess comprehension (Brunfaut et al., 2021). The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, which is typically evaluated based on a student's ability to recall the key details of the text (Allington, 2001). Assessing reading ability in one's first language (L1) is already a complex task, but this challenge is amplified in a second language (L2) context (Alderson et al., 2015, as cited in Alshammari, 2021). Furthermore, the use of reading strategies has been shown to be closely linked to reading comprehension, particularly in foreign language contexts (Rianto, 2021).

People read various types of reading texts. Generally, reading texts can be categorized into authentic and non-authentic reading texts. These reading texts are the real exposure of the language use which ultimately leads the learners to develop not only reading skill but also the language. Advocating the use of authentic reading texts, Alexander and Fox (2013), Collie and Slater (2009), Harmer (1991), Richards and Renandya (2010), Richards and Rodgers (2014), Ur (2013), and Vrastilova (2018) argue that the authentic texts such as stories, poems, novels, plays, newspapers, magazines, technical books, and so on enhance reading skills in second language learners. In addition, they provide learners with authentic cultural information about the target language and get learners exposed to authentic language use, which can address the needs and interests of learners.

Despite the growing emphasis on reading comprehension research, the influence of gender on RCA remains a topic of debate. While some studies suggest slight differences in reading ability between genders, others argue that such disparities are minimal and context-dependent. Global frameworks like UNESCO's Gender Equality Framework (2008) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 stress the importance of ensuring gender equality in education, highlighting the need for equitable access, quality instruction, and unbiased assessment practices (UNESCO, 2019). In this regard, investigating RCA across genders provides valuable insights into the fairness and inclusivity of educational systems. The present study is rooted in the context of Mid-West University, Nepal, where English is increasingly adopted as a medium of instruction. Undergraduate students encounter diverse reading challenges due to limited exposure to English, exam-oriented learning habits, and varying academic backgrounds. Understanding the role of gender in RCA within this context is crucial for developing inclusive pedagogical practices. This research aims to fill the gap by examining RCA across genders and academic programs, employing quantitative methods to ensure robust and reliable findings.

The primary objectives of this study were threefold: to assess the reading comprehension ability (RCA) of undergraduate students in English texts, providing insights into their proficiency

levels and identifying areas for improvement; to analyze gender differences in RCA by comparing the performance of male and female students to determine whether significant disparities exist, and to explore variations in RCA across different academic programs, with a particular focus on the role of gender in shaping these differences. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing RCA and provides evidence-based recommendations for fostering gender-neutral educational policies. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of adopting personalized learning strategies that cater to the unique needs of individual learners, thereby promoting equitable literacy outcomes in diverse academic contexts.

Review of Literature

Gender is a significant variable influencing reading comprehension, with noticeable differences in language use between men and women. This review critically examines the literature on gender-related disparities in reading performance across different genres, focusing on language use, classroom dynamics, strategy application, and motivation. Despite the classroom dominance of male students, research indicates that female students tend to excel in reading more than males.

Researchers believe that when it comes to language learning, most male and female students have different styles and ways of thinking (Rianto, 2021). Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) investigated the differences in the strategy use between the native English speakers (USA students) and the non-native speakers while reading academic content, found that the female students in the native-speaking group reported a much higher frequency of strategy use, while the group of ESL students did not reflect this gender influence. Rianto (2021) from the study claimed that in terms of the self-assessed online reading ability and the online English proficiency, no gender difference was identified, although the female students having a better mean score than the male students. In the case of less skilled readers, despite having small effect size values, there were significant gender differences in the use of overall strategy and support strategies, with the male students having lower mean scores than the female students.

In addition, there were no significant gender differences in the use of problem-solving strategies and global strategies, despite the fact that in both strategies the female students having higher mean scores than the male students. Ahmadian and Pasand (2017) explored the use of the strategies in relation to self-efficacy revealed that the female students used more online reading strategies globally, while the male students considered themselves more effective in reading texts online. Access to English is a strong indicator of socio-economic success for girls and there is a strong narrative in Nepalese society of the importance of English (Upadhaya, & Sah, 2019). Because English symbolizes modernity and prestige, there is a recent trend for even the lower-middle class shopkeepers, migrant workers, and small farmers to send their children to private English-medium schools in hope of getting a quality education (Pandey, 2020).

It is widely believed in Nepal that English-medium private schools (locally called boarding schools) provide a much better quality of education than community schools with a local language of instruction, and are often regarded as a passport to higher education in disciplines like engineering and medical sciences, which is partly the consequence of the ideology of English linguistic capital. In the meantime, community schools (often Nepali-medium) are known for poor-quality education

(Upadhaya, & Sah, 2019). However, another bigger group is the upper- and middle-class families who mostly reside in urban areas and have better access to expensive private schools. They are influenced and motivated more as they aim to send their children for further education to English speaking countries like the US, UK, and Australia (Pandey, 2020). Parents are busy to make their children's English good at any cost. As English language is also an important medium to study abroad, the present generation has to learn English language to study abroad (Sharma, 2022). This divide of the public and private schooling system in Nepal shows a clear gender disparity in family-level decision-making; there is a trend among Nepalese parents to send their sons to private schools that are generally English medium. Daughters are more likely to be sent to public schools (Upadhaya, & Sah, 2019).

Despite extensive global and regional research on reading comprehension ability (RCA), the gender dimension in this area remains underexplored, particularly in the context of Nepalese higher education. Previous studies have highlighted the role of factors such as text type, reading strategies, and socio-economic influences on RCA but lack a clear consensus on gender-specific differences in reading proficiency. While international research suggests minimal gender differences in language comprehension, local studies have not sufficiently validated these findings within Nepal's unique sociocultural and educational context, where access to English education is often influenced by gender-related family and societal dynamics. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence on how academic programs intersect with gender to influence RCA, particularly in multilingual and exam-focused education systems like Nepal.

Methodology

Following survery resign design, this study used a quantitative data collection through reading comprehension test and analysis for the assessment of reading comprehension ability of the undergraduate students in terms of gender. In this research, two reading texts (fiction and non-fiction in nature) were adapted from Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFER) test items to determine the level of Nepali undergraduates reading ability in non-native context. As the CEFR is a globally recognized framework that categorizes language proficiency from A1 to C2 level. By adapting these items, the research ensures alignment with international standards, providing a reliable and objective measure of reading skills. This approach also allows for meaningful comparison of Nepali undergraduates' reading abilities to broader language proficiency benchmarks, especially in a non-native context. This research specifically focused on undergraduate students from six graduate schools: Graduate School of Education (GSE–B Ed), Graduate School of Engineering (GSER- BE), Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences (GSHS-BA), Graduate School of Management (GSM-BBS), Graduate School of Law (GSL-BALLB) and Graduate School of Science and Technology (GSST-BSc) at Mid-West University, Surkhet, Nepal as the target population. The sampling frame consisted of students in their fourth semester of bachelor's programs. The sample population was confirmed to be 342 (15%): 148 (43.2%) females and 194 (56.8%) males selected using a random sampling strategy from the students of six graduate schools of MU. The quantitative data from the reading comprehension test related to assessing RCA in English texts were presented, analysed, and interpreted using both descriptive and inferential statistical measurement across gender

and academic programs in English fiction and non-fiction texts.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected to examine students' reading comprehension ability (RCA) in English texts. The findings are organized under two sub-sections: Gender-Texts-wise Assessment of RCA in English Texts and Gender-wise Aggregate RCA in English Texts, offering insights into performance variations based on gender and text types.

Gender-Texts-wise Assessment of RCA in English Texts

The RCA in English texts in terms of the gender of the students was assessed based on the CEFR reading level (A1, A2, b1, B2, C1, and C2) and analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistical measurements. Reading comprehension ability across gender explores the potential differences in how males and females understand and interpret fiction and non-fiction English texts across academic programs which has been analyzed and interpreted as follows:

Table 1

Program-wise Reading Comprehension Ability across Gender

RCA across Genders and Academic Programs					
Academic Programs	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GSM (BBS)	Male	24	7.63	3.255	.664
	Female	26	8.58	3.408	.668
GSE (B Ed)	Male	32	8.31	2.799	.495
	Female	30	7.90	3.387	.618
GSER (BE)	Male	42	11.90	3.747	.578
	Female	18	12.72	2.585	.609
GSHS (BA)	Male	23	7.65	3.185	.664
	Female	27	8.96	3.044	.586
GSL (BALLB)	Male	34	9.62	2.730	.468
	Female	25	10.36	2.675	.535
GSST (BSc)	Male	39	7.74	2.741	.439
	Female	22	8.73	3.239	.691

Table 1 presents data on RCA across different academic programs and genders. According to the data, the distribution of RCA of GSM (BBS) students across gender was found to be males (N=24): Mean=7.63, Std. Deviation=3.255 and females (N=26): Mean=8.58, Std. Deviation=3.408; GSE (B Ed) students as males (N=32): Mean=8.31, Std. Deviation=2.799 and females (N=30): Mean=7.90, Std. Deviation=3.387; GSER (BE) students as males (N=42): Mean=11.90, Std. Deviation=3.747 and females (N=18): Mean=12.72, Std. Deviation=2.585; GSHS (BA) students as males (N=23): Mean=7.65, Std. Deviation=3.185 and females (N=27): Mean=8.96, Std. Deviation=3.044; GSL (BALLB) students as males (N=34): Mean=9.62, Std. Deviation=2.730 and females (N=25): Mean=10.36, Std. Deviation=2.675; and GSST (BSc) students as males (N=39): Mean=7.74, Std. Deviation=2.741 and females (N=22): Mean=8.73, Std. Deviation=3.239. These results show that females tend to have slightly higher mean RCA level than males in most programs, but this is

inconsistent across all programs. The variation in scores (standard deviation) varies across programs and genders. For example, GSER (BE) has relatively higher standard deviations than other programs, indicating greater variability in scores, especially among males. The standard error of the mean is relatively consistent across programs for each gender.

Table 2

Reading Comprehension Ability Level of Students across Gender in Non-Fiction English Texts

RCA of UGS across gender		RCA level in Non-Fiction English Texts					Total
		BR-A1	BR-A2	IR-B1	IR-B2	PR-C1	
Gender	Male	23	79	69	22	1	194
		11.9%	40.7%	35.6%	11.3%	0.5%	100.0%
	Female	25	41	44	36	2	148
		16.9%	27.7%	29.7%	24.3%	1.4%	100.0%
Total		48	120	113	58	3	342
		14.0%	35.1%	33.0%	17.0%	0.9%	100.0%

Table 2 presents the distribution of RCA levels among the students based on gender in non-fiction English reading texts. Among male students (194 participants), the majority of them were found to be in the "BR-A2" (40.7%) followed by "IR-B1" (35.6%). On the other hand, among female students (148 participants), the highest percentage was observed in the "IR-B1" (29.7%), followed by"BR-A2" (27.7%). The data reflects that a majority of students' RCA level fell into the upper basic level (BR-A2) and lower independent level (IR –B1), with the highest percentage in BR-A2 (35.1%). It also shows that females, on average, have a slightly higher representation in higher RCA levels. In comparison, males have a slightly higher representation in the lowest RCA level in non-fiction texts.

Table 3

Reading Comprehension Ability Level of Students across Gender in English Non-Fiction Texts

	Value	Df	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	15.453[a]	4	.004
Likelihood Ratio	15.450	4	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.821	1	.093
N of Valid Cases	342		

Table 3 presents the results of statistical tests that analyze the relationship between RCA and gender in English non-fiction texts among the students. The Pearson Chi-Square value obtained was 15.453 with 4 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value was found to be .004, which is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the p-value indicates a statistically significant association between RCA and gender in non-fiction texts.

Table 4

Reading Comprehension Ability Level of Students across Gender in Fiction Texts

RCA across Gender		RCA level in Fiction English Texts					Total
		BR-A1	BR-A2	IR-B1	IR-B2	PR-C1	
Gender	Male	35	63	64	31	1	194
		18.0%	32.5%	33.0%	16.0%	0.5%	100 %
	Female	23	51	57	17	0	148
		15.5%	34.5%	38.5%	11.5%	0.0%	100 %
Total		58	114	121	48	1	342
		17.0%	33.3%	35.4%	14.0%	0.3%	100 %

Table 4 presents the results of a crosstab analysis examining the relationship between the RCA levels of the students across genders in English fiction texts. Among male students (194 participants), the majority of them were found to be in the "IR-B1" (33.0%), followed by "BR-A2" (32.5%). On the other hand, among female students (148 participants), the highest percentage was observed in the "IR-B1" (38.5%), followed by "BR-A2" (34.5%). The data reflects that a majority of students' RCA level fell into the lower independent level (IR –B1) and upper basic level (BR-A2), with the highest percentage in IR-A1 (35.4%). In comparison, males have a slightly higher representation in the lowest level RCA in non-fiction texts.

Table 5

Reading Comprehension Ability Regarding Gender in English Fiction Texts

	Value	Df	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	3.103[a]	4	.541
Likelihood Ratio	3.495	4	.479
Linear-by-Linear Association	.059	1	.808
No. of Valid Cases	342		

Table 5 presents the results of the Pearson Chi-Square value obtained was 3.103 with 4 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value was .541, higher than the conventional alpha level 0.05 having no statistically significant association between RCA and gender among students. It suggests that gender does not significantly determine RCA among students when reading English fiction texts.

Table 6 presents the results of statistical tests to analyze the relationship between RCA and gender in English texts among the students. Levene's test indicates an F-value of 0.704 with a p-value of 0.402. The p-value was greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicating no statistically significant difference in the variances of RCA between male and female students. Likewise, the t-test was performed with the assumption of equal variances, and it showed a t-value of -0.789 and a two-tailed p-value of 0.431. The p-value was greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicating no statistically significant difference in RCA between male and female students when assuming equal

variances.

Table 6

Reading Comprehension Ability of Students in English Texts across Gender

RCA	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% CI of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.704	.402	-.789	340	.431	-1.036	.443

Table 7

Gender-wise Reading Comprehension Ability Level of Students across Academic Programs

Program of the Study	Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	p-value
GSM (BBS)		.127	.724	-1.008	48	.318
GSE (B Ed)		1.2.89	.261	.524	60	.602
GSER (BE)		0.023	.880	-0.842	58	.403
GSHS (BA)		0.023	.879	1.485	48	.144
GSL (BALLB)		.001	.969	-1.041	57	.302
GSST (BSc)		4.193	.045	-1.260	59	.213

Table 7 presents the data on gender-wise RCA among students in English texts across different academic programs. According to the above data, the p-value for Levene's test was 0.724, suggesting that variances are not significantly different between genders. The t-test p-value was 0.318, indicating no significant difference in RCA between male and female students in the GSM (BBS) program. Similar to the GSM (BBS) program, the variances were insignificant (p = 0.261). The t-test also shows no significant difference in RCA between genders (p = 0.602) in the GSE (BEd) program. Again, Levene's test indicates similar variances (p = 0.880), and the t-test finds no significant difference in RCA (p = 0.403) between male and female students in the GSER (BE) program. Levene's test indicates no notable distinction in variances (p = 0.879). Nevertheless, the t-test p-value (p = 0.144) shows a significant difference in RCA level between genders in the GSHS (BA) program. On the contrary, both Levene's test (p = 0.969) and the t-test (p = 0.302) suggest that there was no significant variation in RCA between male and female students of the GSL (BALLB) program. Lastly, Levene's test points to a meaningful distinction in variances (p = 0.045), but the t-test also implies that there was no substantial difference in RCA between genders (p = 0.213) in the GSST (BSc) program.

Based on the above analysis of the data, for the majority of the academic programs (GSM, GSE, GSER, GSL), there is no significant difference in RCA between male and female students. Howerver, although there is a significant difference in the GSHS (BA) program, the evidence is not strong. Although there are variances in the GSST (BSc) program, there is still no significant difference in RCA between genders.

Gender-wise Aggregate RCA in English Texts

Understanding gender-based variations in reading comprehension ability (RCA) is essential for fostering equitable learning outcomes. While global studies often report minimal differences between male and female students' reading abilities, localized contexts like Nepal present unique socio-cultural and educational dynamics that may influence RCA.

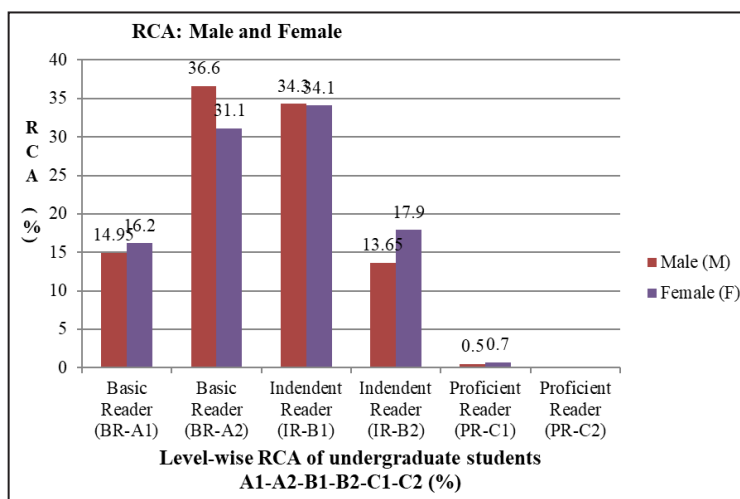*Figure 1.* Gender-wise Aggregate RCA in English Texts

Figure 1 presents the crosstab analysis of students' aggregate reading RCA in English reading text across the genders. More than one third male students were found to be in the upper basic level (A2: 36.6%), having approximately an equal percentage of female students (A2: 31.1%). On the other hand, more than one third female students were found to be at a lower independent level (B1: 34.1%). In comparison, approximately an equal percentage of male students were also found at a lower independent level (B1: 34.3%) in reading English texts. The data reflects that majority male and female students were found to be into the upper BR (A2) and lower IR (B2) levels, indicating a moderate to good understanding of English reading texts.

Discussion

The gender-wise RCA of students in English reading text revealed that the majority of male students were in the upper basic level (A2: 36.6%), having approximately an equal percentage of female students (A2: 31.1%). On the other hand, most female students were found to be at a lower independent level (B1: 34.1%). In comparison, approximately an equal percentage of male students were also found at lower independent levels (B1: 34.3%) reading English texts. The findings are supported by Sajid et al. (2019), and Logan and Johnston (2009) as they claim that despite the classroom dominance of male students, research indicates that female students tend to excel in reading more than males. In aligned with the findings, Sajid et al. (2019) also found that multiple studies demonstrating female superiority in language comprehension. Additionally, Logan and Johnston (2009) highlight that girls perform better in reading comprehension tests, engage in reading more frequently, and hold

more positive attitudes towards reading. The findings reflect that most male and female students fall into the upper BR (A2) and lower IR (B2) levels, indicating a moderate to good understanding of English reading texts. In this respect, the findings proved that gender is not the determinant factor in terms of the ability to read, however, the opportunity and access to receive quality education lacks to the female compared to male students in the contexts of Nepal as claimed by the global studies reveal that significant disparities remain in many educational systems (Cascella et al., 2022; Deng, 2021).

Regarding the findings of the RCA of students in English texts across genders, the results of t-test showed that there was no significant difference in mean scores between male and female students ($t = -0.941$, $p > 0.05$). Likewise, the findings concerning gender-specific RCA across a program of the study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the variances of RCA between male and female students within the GSM-BBS program (t-value of -1.008 and p-value of 0.318); GSE-BED program (t-value of 0.524 and p-value of 0.602); GSER-BE program (t-value -0.842 and p-value of 0.403); GSHS-BA program (t-value of 1.485 and p-value of 0.144); GSL-BALLB program (t-value of -1.041 and p-value of 0.302) and GSST-BSC program (t-value of -1.260 and p-value of 0.213). Thus, the findings indicated no statistically significant difference in RCA between male and female students in English texts in RCA and across the academic programs. In this regard, Rianto (2021) found no significant gender differences in self-assessed online reading ability and English proficiency, although female students had slightly higher mean scores. This aligns with the current findings, suggesting minimal gender differences in RCA. Likewise, Studies in Iran found that female learners outperformed male learners, but both groups had many learners below the B1 level (Duncan et al., 2016; Taghizadeh & Kazemzadeh, 2019). This indicates lower overall proficiency compared to the Nepali context, where gender does not significantly influence RCA.

The use of reading strategies also matters in terms of the achievement of RCA as Altalhab (2019) found no significant gender differences in reading strategy utilization among Saudi EFL university students, suggesting a universal approach to strategy adoption. Al-Mekhlafi (2018) reported high overall reading strategy use among Omani EFL learners, with varying patterns observed across genders. The strategies employed by males and females in reading comprehension differ significantly. Oxford (1994) posits that males are more analytical in language learning, whereas females adopt a more global approach. Additionally, males follow rules strictly, while females are more attuned to cultural nuances. While both genders use an equal number of strategies, females reportedly apply these strategies with greater qualitative effectiveness. Uniformity in educational practices ensures that neither gender is at a disadvantage. The findings indicate no significant differences between male and female student which suggest that both genders have similar educational opportunities, societal influences, and motivation levels, contributing to comparable reading comprehension abilities. Although there are arguments regarding gender discrimination in education, the findings do not support in terms of the ability to read English texts as opposed to claim that gender disparities persist in study choices, with fewer girls pursuing STEM fields linked to higher-paying careers and fewer boys entering "soft" fields like education and care professions (Gerber & Cheung, 2008; OECD, 2019, 2022, as cited in Van Houtte, 2024). The findings highlight the effectiveness of inclusive educational practices and the importance of maintaining gender-neutral policies and support systems.

The study findings highlight no significant gender difference in reading comprehension abilities

among students, with both male and female students demonstrating moderate to good understanding of English texts. Despite the overall lack of significant gender differences, individual variations within each gender were observed. These variations could be attributed to factors such as personal motivation, exposure to English texts, and individual learning strategies, which can influence RCA irrespective of gender. Focusing on personalized learning strategies that cater to individual needs and preferences can help enhance reading comprehension skills.

Conclusion and Implications

Gender is a social construct that encompasses a range of identities and expressions, reflecting the social, cultural, and psychological characteristics that societies attribute to individuals based on their assigned sex. In the context of language learning, gender influences reading strategies and academic outcomes, highlighting issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The findings of this study reveal no significant gender differences in reading comprehension ability (RCA) among undergraduate students in English texts at Mid-West University, Nepal. Both male and female students predominantly demonstrated proficiency at the upper basic (A2) and lower independent (B1) levels, with individual variations attributed to personal motivation, exposure to English, and learning strategies rather than gender. Statistical analyses further confirmed that RCA scores across various academic programs showed no significant gender-based disparities.

These results align with global research indicating minimal gender differences in language comprehension and support the premise that gender-neutral educational policies can foster equitable literacy outcomes. However, they also underscore the need for personalized interventions tailored to individual learning needs to enhance RCA for all learners. By focusing on inclusive teaching practices and equitable access to quality education, this study emphasizes the importance of addressing contextual challenges to ensure that all students, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to develop their reading skills effectively.

The findings of this study suggest several pedagogical and research implications regarding gender and reading comprehension abilities (RCA). First, the lack of significant gender differences in RCA highlights the importance of providing equal educational opportunities for both male and female students. It emphasizes the need for gender-neutral policies in the classroom and the use of inclusive teaching strategies to ensure that all students, regardless of gender, have access to high-quality education and resources. Moreover, the observed individual variations within genders suggest that personalized learning approaches, focusing on students' unique motivations and strategies, could be more effective in enhancing reading comprehension. For future research, it would be valuable to explore how external factors, such as socio-cultural influences and exposure to English reading materials, further impact RCA across different genders, as well as examining how specific learning strategies can be tailored to maximize performance for both male and female students.

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