

Challenges Faced by IELTS candidates during attaining Reading proficiency and Designing ‘Reading Practice Plan’

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Abstract

IELTS examination is one of the mostly appeared international exam in Pakistan, though failure cases in this exam has always been alarming. In order to help IELTS students overcome the key issues they face in the reading module, the study aims to identify the challenges faced by IELTS candidates, and consequently offer a methodical practice plan. The researchers employed a thorough literature study, selected a representative sample of IELTS candidates, and analyzed information from surveys or interviews to delve into the specific challenges faced. The study concentrates on examining typical problems, including time management, question types, and reading difficulty, in addition to the requirement for efficient scanning and skimming methods. The results show that applicants frequently have trouble controlling the little time they have, comprehending the range of question styles, and processing lengthy and intricate reading passages. The study's suggested practice strategy places a strong emphasis on consistent timed practice, tailored tactics for various question categories, and targeted development of skimming and scanning techniques. The argument concludes by emphasizing that IELTS candidates can greatly increase their reading skills via deliberate and continuous practice. The suggestions include deeper investigation into the requirements of specific candidates, the creation of more individualized practice plans, and the use of feedback systems to efficiently monitor development. The study provides useful tips and techniques for IELTS applicants who want to improve their reading comprehension.

Key words: Reading Skills; Reading Comprehension Problems; IELTS Reading test; Practice plan

1.Introduction

The International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, was a widely accepted test of English language competency that provided millions of people worldwide with access to work, education, and immigration prospects. For many test-takers, especially those who made up a critical demographic, passing the IELTS exam was a substantial problem. Candidates had to overcome challenges in order to advance in that highly technologically advanced era. Every third person aimed to raise their standard of living, while the impoverisher's economic circumstances were made worse by rising inflation. However, this was a challenging goal to accomplish because, as the background indicated, entry into European countries required passing the IELTS test. The International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, was a widely accepted test of English language competency that provided millions of people worldwide with access to work, education, and immigration prospects.

Notwithstanding technical developments, the nation's test-takers encountered challenges in passing the IELTS exam, which was required in order to visit European nations. One in three

Pakistanis tried to raise their standard of living as the country's impoverished people's economic circumstances grew worse due to rising inflation. It was nevertheless difficult to pass the IELTS exam. The goal of this study was to determine the obstacles students had to overcome in order to receive the necessary IELTS scores. It gave a thorough summary of all the challenges they faced, such as linguistic barriers that prevented them from accessing high-quality study materials, cultural differences that hampered language acquisition, and psychological and emotional issues like test anxiety and self-confidence that had a big impact on their performance.

A standardized test called the International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, is used to evaluate non-native English speakers' competency in the language. Worldwide, companies, professional associations, educational institutions, and immigration officials all acknowledge and accept it. The British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge Assessment English jointly administer the exam. The IELTS exam is available in two primary versions: This edition is meant for students who wish to enroll in a postsecondary institution where instruction is offered in English. It evaluates a candidate's readiness to start training or studying in an English-speaking setting. General Training for IELTS: This version is intended for people who want to move to an English-speaking nation, obtain job experience, or pursue non-academic training. It focuses on fundamental survival skills in a variety of social and professional settings. There are four sections in the IELTS exam: Four audio monologues and discussions are included in the reading portion. Among other listening abilities, test takers are evaluated on their capacity to comprehend speakers' viewpoints, attitudes, and key ideas as well as precise information. Three reading passages with a range of questions make up this part. Examinees taking the Academic Edition are required to compose an essay and describe visual data, such as charts and graphs. Tasks in the general training version include composing an essay and a letter on a specified subject. An in-person interview with a trained examiner is taking place here. It consists of three sections: a two-way discussion, a lengthy turn where the candidate talks on a specific topic, and the introduction and interview. The exam lasts for about two hours and forty-five minutes in total. A nine-band scale is used to score the test results; each band represents a different degree of English proficiency, ranging from non-user (band score 1) to expert user (band score 9). IELTS is well known for its impartiality and exacting testing methods, which guarantee reliable and consistent English language assessment.

There are four sections in the IELTS exam: Four taped monologues and discussions are included in this section. Among other listening abilities, test takers are evaluated on their capacity to comprehend speakers' viewpoints, attitudes, and key ideas, as well as precise information. Three reading passages with a range of question styles make up this part. It evaluates abilities including reading for main ideas, reading for details, and reading for the gist. You for a variety of purposes, most commonly connected to work, immigration, and education, people take the IELTS exam: Learning: IELTS scores are sometimes required for admission to many universities and colleges in English-speaking nations in order to guarantee that potential students have the language proficiency needed to succeed in their courses. Employment: IELTS results are frequently required by employers in English-speaking nations to confirm that applicants can communicate successfully in a formal setting. Immigration: IELTS results are used by immigration authorities in the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to evaluate applicants' English language ability and determine whether or not they can assimilate and contribute to society. Certain organizations and professional bodies for certification and licensing requirements also use IELTS results. When the qualitative study offers deeper insights into the behaviors and methods applicants use when reading, the

quantitative analysis exposes particular trends, such as common issues with time management and complex texts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The results are then utilized to create a reading practice plan that is meticulously organized to address the issues found. According to Silverman (2016), the analytical viewpoint highlights the significance of a strong methodology and triangulation in order to produce accurate and legitimate results. Characteristic Perspective The goal of the study, which is aimed at studying the difficulties faced by IELTS applicants in reading competency, is to conduct a descriptive research project (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

1.1 Background of the Study

The widely used International English Language Testing System (IELTS) was a standardized exam designed to evaluate English language ability. Students sometimes need to get a decent IELTS score in order to seek further education or employment prospects abroad. This literature review set out to identify and assess the primary challenges that students needed to overcome in order to prepare for the IELTS exam. An internationally recognized test of English language proficiency was the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Candidates for the IELTS have traditionally encountered a variety of obstacles in their quest for reading proficiency, representing a variety of viewpoints and experiences. Here are some major obstacles and differing viewpoints on the matter: Time Management Challenges for IELTS Candidates: A lot of candidates have trouble making the most of the little amount of time allotted to finish the reading portion. Errors and incomplete responses were frequently the result of the strain to read and comprehend difficult texts rapidly. Vocabulary: A sizable portion of applicants felt intimidated by the extensive vocabulary needed. Their total results suffered as a result of their frequent encounters with foreign words and phrases, which made comprehension challenging.

Question formats: The range of question formats, such as multiple choice, matching headers, and true/false/not given, was difficult for candidates. Different techniques were needed for each category, and the subtle differences between them frequently led to confusion. Reading Speed: One of the biggest challenges for non-native English speakers was reading quickly. One ability that many found difficult to acquire was the need to read rapidly without sacrificing comprehension. Inferential Comprehension: Many applicants found it especially challenging to deduce meanings from the text and to understand suggested meanings. This ability called for more sophisticated linguistic skills as well as critical thinking. Stress and Anxiety: Candidates' performance was adversely affected by stress and anxiety resulting from the high-stakes nature of the IELTS exam. Their total difficulty was increased by the pressure to earn a particular band score. In the past, candidates for the IELTS had a difficult time becoming proficient readers, which affected their performance in general. Time management was a prevalent problem, with many applicants giving hurried and incomplete answers because they could not finish the reading segment in the allocated time. Lack of vocabulary frequently made it difficult to understand because new terms led to misconceptions of important aspects and concepts. Candidates were frequently confused by the range of question formats, which led to erroneous replies and misinterpretations of instructions. Inferential comprehension problems resulted in mistakes in interpreting indicated meanings, and slow reading speeds made it more difficult to understand overall meanings and provide accurate answers to questions. Furthermore, the exam's high stakes caused tension and worry, which further impaired focus and performance. All of these difficulties led to decreased confidence, longer preparation times, and poorer band results.

A thorough practice strategy for preparation was created. Preliminary diagnostic evaluations pinpointed certain deficiencies, allowing customized learning schedules that emphasized personal requirements. Candidates were able to better handle the exam's limits with the use of time management training, which included timed practice sessions and strategies like skimming and scanning. Exercises to increase vocabulary helped people grasp words better and avoid misunderstandings. Accuracy and understanding were enhanced by being familiar with different question types and specialized reading techniques, such as highlighting keywords and summarizing passages. Frequent practice exams helped develop test-taking endurance by simulating exam settings. Candidates who attended stress management courses and learned strategies like deep breathing and positive visualization were able to control their anxiety, which improved their focus and performance. Critical thinking and inferential comprehension were encouraged through interactive reading sessions. Through the implementation of this all-encompassing method, candidates were able to overcome obstacles and improve their reading.

The difficulties that IELTS applicants had in achieving reading proficiency were severe and had far-reaching effects. Many applicants had trouble managing their time, frequently failing to finish the reading portion in the allocated time. As a result, they frequently gave hurried and incomplete responses, which had a detrimental effect on their scores. Their limited vocabulary usually made it difficult for them to comprehend texts, which resulted in misinterpretations of important facts and concepts. Candidates were frequently confused by the range of question formats, which led to erroneous answers and misinterpretations of instructions. Their inability to understand suggested meanings and provide the right answers was hindered by their slow reading rates, and their inability to understand inferential comprehension led to errors in grasping overall meanings. Furthermore, the exam's high stakes caused a great deal of tension and anxiety, which further impaired focus and performance.

These difficulties were significant because they contributed to lower band scores, decreased confidence, and longer preparation times. Many candidates discovered that they needed to dedicate more time to reading section study than they had originally thought, which delayed their readiness for the exam in general and raised preparation expenses. Because applicants frequently did not meet the necessary band scores for university admissions, employment chances, and immigration considerations, lower scores hampered prospects for education and career advancement. This affected not just their short-term objectives but also their jobs and futures in the long run.

Teachers note that deteriorating reading ability among IELTS applicants is a complex problem resulting from a number of variables, including restricted resource availability, vocabulary limitations, and poor reading techniques. Teachers propose implementing focused education that emphasizes vocabulary learning, reading comprehension techniques, and exposure to real reading materials in order to solve this. Candidates' reading abilities can also be efficiently developed by offering them lots of practice and feedback.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the specific difficulties faced by candidates during the preparation for the reading components of the IELTS examination?
2. What challenges did English teachers encounter while teaching reading skills in IELTS classrooms?
3. How can a preparation plan be developed to help IELTS students attain the required reading proficiency skills?

4. What is the impact of the designed preparation plan on students' perspectives regarding their reading proficiency for the IELTS?
5. What is the impact of the designed preparation plan on teachers' perspectives on their effectiveness in teaching reading skills for the IELTS?

1.3 Significance of the study

The study "Challenges Faced by IELTS Candidates During Attaining Reading Proficiency and Designing a Reading Practice Plan" is important since it fills a significant research void on IELTS preparation. Although a lot of study has been done on test-taking strategies and general language acquisition, less attention has been paid to the particular difficulties IELTS applicants encounter in the reading section. The rigorous time constraints, intricate and lengthy reading passages, and diversity of question types—such as multiple choice, matching information, and True/False/Not Given—that call for various approaches make this module especially difficult. Even with a strong command of the English language, many applicants find it difficult to achieve the requirements of this section because they have not used enough preparation techniques that specifically address these issues. This study is noteworthy because it offers a remedy in the shape of a planned and methodical reading practice plan, in addition to identifying the typical challenges encountered by applicants. By providing a focused analysis of the reading hurdles specific to the IELTS exam and by creating a practice plan adapted to these obstacles, the research closes a gap in the literature. The approach includes particular strategies for dealing with various question kinds as well as tactics like skimming and scanning to increase reading speed and comprehension under time constraints. Moreover, the study's conclusions offer educators and IELTS instructors' useful guidance by outlining a precise structure for better preparing students for the reading module. The study offers a workable solution that can assist applicants in enhancing both their reading competence and overall test performance. It also addresses the understudied need for a tailored approach to IELTS reading preparation in the body of current literature. As a result, the importance of this research goes beyond just pointing out issues; it also offers doable fixes to raise the success rate of IELTS applicants and close the knowledge gap between knowing what the test requires and being proficient in the necessary skills.

1.4 Methodological Framework

The study brought together key concepts from reading comprehension, second language acquisition (SLA), and assessment theories to give a comprehensive picture of the challenges IELTS students faced in reaching reading competency. It examined how candidates' prior knowledge and the interaction between the reader and the text affected understanding using ideas from the interactive model of reading and schema theory. SLA theories, such as Krashen's input hypothesis and Long's engagement hypothesis, which emphasized the value of exposure to intelligible material and meaningful interaction, guided the study's approach to reading practice. The observational component was driven by the concepts of communicative language instruction (CLT), with a focus on real-world language use. The concepts of construct validity and the washback effect are two evaluation strategies that ensure reading competency. Examinations, which precisely assessed abilities and had a positive impact on learning strategies.

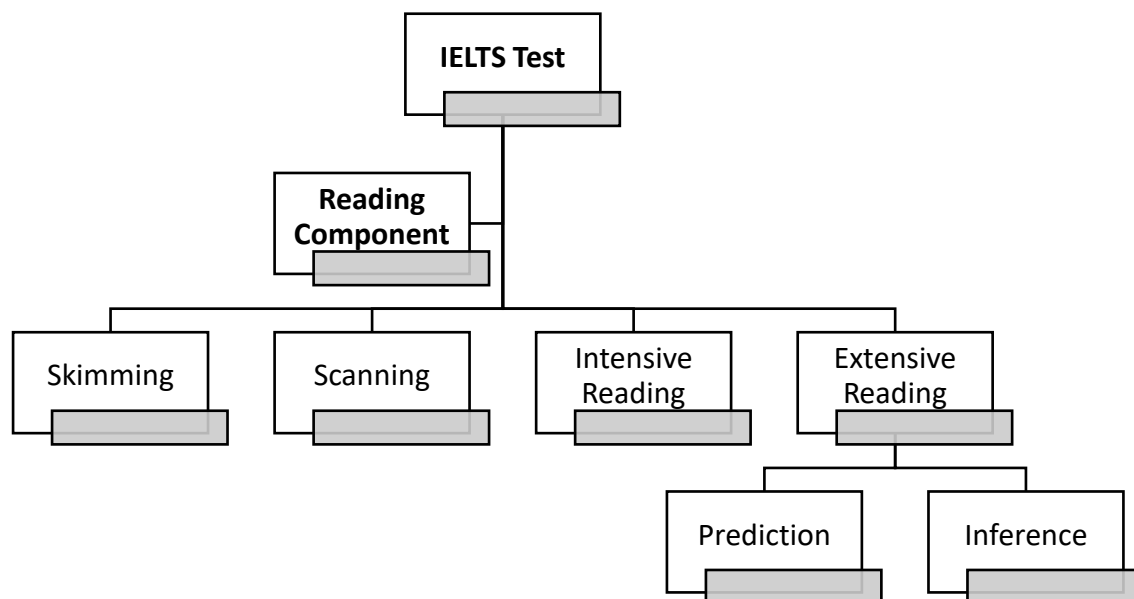


Figure 1: Methodological Framework

2 Review of the Related Literature

The IELTS testing system's subject-specific subtests were replaced with the Academic Reading and Writing modules, any thematic linkages between the modules were removed, and the score was converged to nine bands (Charge & Taylor, 1997). To ensure marking consistency, a system for appeals, validation, security, and computerized administration was also put in place (IELTS, n.d.). The modifications were based on remarks made by administrators and examiners (Charge & Taylor, 1997) as well as research by Caroline Clapham (1993, 1995, 1996) on second language reading and ESP. A single test did not prevent accessibility or discriminate against applicants from different academic fields, according to Clapham's research (Clapham, 1996).

The IELTS testing system was reformed to replace subject-specific subtests with Academic Reading and Writing modules, and a nine-band scoring system. Caroline Clapham's research ensured a single test could assess language proficiency without bias towards specific academic fields. Feedback from administrators and examiners also drove these changes, improving the test's validity and reliability and Taylor (1997) provide additional details regarding these advancements. A popular exam for assessing English language competency, especially for higher education and immigration, is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (British Council, 2022). Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the four sections that make up the test (IDP IELTS, 2022). IELTS comes in two flavors: academic and general training. Academic is intended for students who want to study abroad, while general training is meant for people who want to move or find employment overseas (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2022). IELTS is the most widely used English language test in the world, accepted by more than 12,000 organizations across more than 140 countries (IELTS, 2022).

Reading, along with speaking, listening, and writing, was a major factor in language development (Krashen, 2004). Pupils have access to an abundance of information, which aids in their language development (Grabe, 2009). Reading in the target language allowed students to acquire basic lexical and syntactical information, which served as a foundation for additional language skills (Nation, 2015). At first, reading helped students connect the dots between written language and its sounds (Chall, 1983); eventually, reading became linked to reading comprehension, which needed students to understand and interpret the text's content (Caldwell, 2015). The four components of the IELTS exam—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—assessed students' language competency (IELTS, n.d.). Students' reading comprehension was assessed in terms of gist, key concepts, detail, and recognizing conclusions and other elements (Weir, 2017). Through listening, they were assessed on how well they understood the main ideas, specific details, speakers' opinions, and attitudes (Buckley, 2016).

Table 1. Description of the IELTS examination

Listening	Reading	Writing	speaking
40 questions 30 minutes	40 questions 60 minutes	2 tasks 60 minutes	3 parts 11-14 minutes 30 minutes
Number of sections: 4 Number of questions: 40	Number of sections: 3 Number of questions: 40	Time: 60 minutes Number of tasks: 2 (Task 1: 150 words, Task 2: 250 words)	Format: Face-to-face interview with an examiner Number of sections: 3 (Introduction and interview, long turn, Discussion)

Writing evaluated their comprehension of inferences, their capacity to scan texts for the main ideas, details, and views of writers, as well as their ability to recognize their attitudes and goals (Phakiti, 2014). Speaking involved an in-person interview with a certified examiner to assess the candidate's English communication skills (Farman, 2009). The exam lasted for around two hours and forty-five minutes. The candidate's level of English proficiency was indicated by the results, which were rated on a nine-band scale from 1 (non-user) to 9 (experienced user) (IELTS)

Test-takers for the IELTS reading exam have 60 minutes to read three distinct readings. The passages total between 1,500 and 2,500 words, with a rather equal length (IELTS Handbook, 2007). There are roughly forty questions in the test. Multiple-choice, true/false/not given, matching, categorizing, matching headers, sentence/summary/note/chart completion, matching sentence ends, diagram label completion, and short response questions are common types of questions seen in the IELTS reading exam., according to Loughheed (2016). Regarding text genres, the passages are primarily classified into three major categories: narrative, argumentative, and descriptive, because they are taken from a variety of sources, such as books, magazines, and newspapers. "Reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for details, skimming, understanding the logical argument, and recognizing writers' opinions, attitudes, and purpose" (p. 1623) is how Holi et al. (2020) describe the goal of the IELTS reading tests are just a few of the many reading skills that are tested in the IELTS reading exams.

Numerous studies had been conducted that documented the typical obstacles test-takers encountered and the methods they employed to overcome these hurdles. Text-related issues had been one of the main obstacles. According to Alghail and Mahfood (2016), these included complex sentence patterns, highly specialized vocabulary, and discourse structuring. Another significant issue had been time limits (Chalmers & Walkinshaw, 2014). Chowdhury (2009) had stated that new subjects, cultural disparities, and inadequate preparation were additional challenges that many test-takers had faced. To overcome these challenges, effective tactics and solutions had been employed. Time management had been considered beneficial, and students had been encouraged to move on to answering easier questions rather than lingering on a challenging one. Proficient test-takers had not read every word; instead, they had quickly read the materials and focused on the precise details required for each question (Hughes, 2003). Observing important terms that had emerged in the texts and questions had been an additional suggestion. Reading passages relevant to the reader (such as the introduction, theme sentences, and conclusion); paying close attention to what had been read and reviewing it again; and searching for content that had been marked or indicated had all been strategies that had been recommended (Chalmers & Walkinshaw, 2014). Many studies had been conducted regarding the issues with the IELTS. A large number of them had focused on the opinions of students regarding exams and IELTS preparation courses. Rehman (2021) had examined the challenges that students faced when taking the listening portion of the IELTS exam. The author had claimed that Pakistani students scored poorly on the IELTS Listening exam because they had a low level of motivation, a lack of desire, and limited hearing skills in the English language. Simultaneously, the challenges faced by these students had ultimately stemmed from the teachers' prior IELTS teaching experiences. The TOEFL exam had clearly depended on reading comprehension, particularly on skills with genre-based materials (Mahfud, 2011). IELTS instructors had needed to develop their skills, and completing the text to the best of their ability had been a prerequisite before they could start teaching. Even though Japanese students had been keen to learn English, Takanashi (2004) had claimed that they had struggled to use their language skills in conversation and to find work. Given this, the study had been important because it had shed light on the real difficulties that IELTS instructors encountered. At that time, the study had recognized that IELTS was more frequently utilized in the context of learning English and, as such, had merited greater consideration. Since tests had become a trustworthy means of verifying and assessing students' knowledge, test-taking techniques had gained increasing importance for language learners (Mùi & Quyên, 2021). According to Khoshsima et al. (2018), language proficiency examinations had become widely used instruments for evaluating people's abilities. As a result, for those taking language competence exams, such as the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the results had been crucial (Fitria, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Test-prep classes had become more popular as the expectation on students to perform well on these exams had increased. These preparatory classes, usually short and time-limited, had provided IELTS applicants with test-taking techniques—that is, the skills needed to pass the exam. According to Shirinbakhsh and Saeidi (2018), IELTS had become widely recognized for its results as a benchmark for assessing English language competency. IELTS had been largely regarded as a trustworthy tool for assessing a person's aptitude for learning or training in English, as stated by Binh & Trinh (2019). According to Senevirathne et al. (2020), the IELTS test had been a system that assessed a person's ability to communicate in English, particularly in England or

Commonwealth nations like Australia and New Zealand. It had appeared to be the most demanding evaluation for applicants hoping to pursue advanced degrees or migrate with the intention of relocating (Senevirathne et al., 2020).

There had been four parts to the IELTS exam: speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Ellis et al., 2013). Non-native English speakers' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills had been assessed through IELTS tests, a type of English competency evaluation (Nahampun, 2023). The IELTS goal had been an essay that combined a variety of legal requirements with perceptive data that had been rigorously examined by scientists. Since reading had been a precondition for studying other courses, it had been regarded as the most important skill for students to master in school (William, 2012). This had suggested that a child who excelled in reading would likely find it difficult to acquire other subjects as well. Sadly, a concerning number of people had struggled with reading comprehension, which had impeded their ability to learn. Throughout history, reading had been an essential part of college coursework. In the past, college had been the primary setting for scholarly engagement in a particular subject (Taylor et al., 2012). The ability to understand a particular text had been known as reading comprehension capability. Most reading assessments had measured this proficiency by asking candidates to answer questions based on the provided texts (Zhou, 2011).

Since reading was a requirement for studying other courses, it was the most important ability for a pupil to master in school (William, 2012). This suggested that a child who was exceptionally good at reading would probably have an easier time studying other subjects. Regrettably, a concerning percentage of individuals had inadequate reading comprehension prior to now, which resulted in inadequate learning understanding. Behfrouz and Nahvi (2013) clarified that one skill requiring cognitive processes was reading. Being able to read helped students learn about other people's concepts, compare and contrast ideas, evaluate arguments, interpretations, theories, forecasts, and conclusions; research implications and consequences; and, in the end, de In contrast to linguistic competence, which was not particularly tested, reading comprehension was evaluated on the IELTS in a very different way (Alderson, 2000). Examinees were required to think strategically when allocating their time. When answering the questions from the reading part, the appropriate methodology was required. It was necessary for candidates to read in order to understand specifics, main ideas, the gist, and individual opinions. There were several different assignment kinds in each section, such as matching, completion, paragraph headers, true/false/not given, and multiple-choice questions. Jakeman and Brook-Hart (2012) develop critical thinking abilities. Historically, reading hasn't been thought to be the most difficult IELTS skill (Zarifa, 2023). Pupils had to choose correct answers from pre-prepared texts and tasks; however, some misunderstood the test's objective and placed undue emphasis on word meanings rather than total knowledge. This resulted in a waste of time and hindered the completion process. Further confusing for many students were the technical words included in IELTS books, which are typically from the media, science, or journalism domains. Overall, misinterpreting the goal of the test and running across strange words and idioms were the main causes of the reading section's challenges (Poulkari, 2020).

2.1 Components of Reading

Reading skill involves several components that work together to help readers comprehend and process written information. Here are the key components:

2.1.1 Phonemic Awareness

The comprehension that individual sounds, or phonemes, comprise words was known as phonemic awareness. In spoken language, phonemic awareness refers to the ability to separate, combine, segment, and control these sounds. The ability to associate sounds with letters when reading written words was a prerequisite for learning to read and spell. This was made possible by phonemic awareness. For instance, realizing that the word "cat" was made up of three different sounds: /k/, /a/, and /t/, and being able to modify the first sound to create a new word, such as "bat."

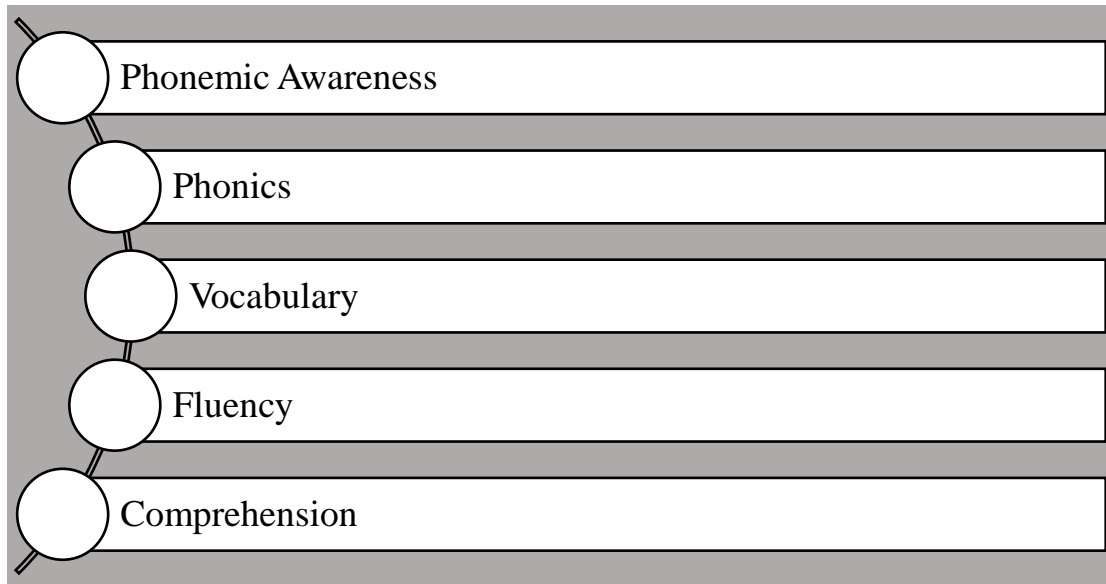


Figure 2: Components of Reading

2.1.2 Phonics

It dealt with the correspondence between graphemes, or letters or groupings of letters that represented sounds, and phonemes, or sounds. By matching letters to their corresponding sounds, it taught readers how to decipher written language. With the use of phonics, readers were able to correctly read and comprehend new words. For beginning readers who had to sound out unfamiliar words, it was crucial. For instance, employing the knowledge that the letter combination "sh" produced the /sh/ sound when reading words like "ship" or "shout."

2.1.3 Vocabulary

The collection of words that a person knew and could use for speaking, listening, reading, and writing was referred to as their vocabulary. A wide vocabulary made it easier for readers to understand writings. It was simpler for them to read more difficult material and comprehend a passage's content the more terms they knew. Two categories existed: Words that were understood when they were read or heard are known as receptive vocabulary. Words that were employed in writing or speaking are known as expressive vocabulary. Understanding terms like "friction" and "gravity" made it easier for a reader to comprehend a science section about physical forces.

2.1.4 Fluency

The capacity to read material rapidly, correctly, and expressively was known as fluency. In order to read more naturally, fluent readers automatically recognize words and put them into sentences.

Because it made it possible for the reader to concentrate on comprehending the text's meaning rather than just decoding words, fluency was crucial. Reading more fluently improved comprehension. Three primary elements comprised fluency: Correct word reading is known as accuracy. Rate: Reading at a comfortable reading Pace. Prosody: Conveying message through expression and appropriate intonation. Something like, a fluent reader would, have read "The dog ran across the field," smoothly, rhythmically, and with the right amount of stress and pauses.

2.1.5 Comprehension:

It was the capacity to decipher, evaluate, and extrapolate meaning from the text. In order to create meaning, it required analyzing words, phrases, sentences, and concepts. The final aim of reading was comprehension. Without it, reading was limited to simply recognizing words. It enabled readers to interact with texts, exercise critical thought, and draw conclusions from what they read. Literal understanding: comprehending the fundamental information provided in the text. Interpreting implicit meaning by reading between the lines is known as inferential understanding. Evaluative understanding is the process of assessing the text's value, meaning, and applicability using critical analysis and past knowledge. For instance, after reading a tale about a character who had to make a decision, the reader can speculate as to the character's thoughts, make predictions about what would happen next, and connect the events to their own experiences. While some of these elements were more important at particular phases of reading development than others, all of these elements contributed to the ability to read effectively overall. For example, phonics and phonemic awareness were important skills for early readers, but vocabulary growth, comprehension, and critical thinking were important skills for more advanced readers.

3. Research Methodology

The present study employed a descriptive research strategy to investigate the challenges encountered by one hundred IELTS applicants in Pakistan and to develop a practical "Preparation Practice Plan." Data has been gathered through semi-structured interviews with IELTS instructors, classroom observations, structured surveys for teachers and students, and analysis of practice tests. Quantitative data has been statistically assessed, while qualitative material from observations and interviews has undergone theme analysis. This study's research methodology employed a descriptive research design to look at the challenges faced by 100 IELTS applicants and provide a helpful "Preparation Practice Plan." Data has been gathered through semi-structured interviews with IELTS instructors, classroom observations, structured surveys for teachers and students, and analysis of practice tests. Research has indicated those numerical figures. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate the research methods used in this study. The intended study was to be "applied in nature." To guarantee more accurate and trustworthy data collection, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was employed. It was of the descriptive research kind and met the requirements for cross-sectional research. The aim was to offer advice and materials to candidates in order to help them pass the IELTS test. The research design was one of the most important elements of the data collection techniques that was beneficial to the study and contributed to the success of the data collection.

3.1 Instrumentation

In this study, questionnaires, observations and pilot testing had been employed as data collection methods. To address the research question, several instruments had been utilized to gather and modify data from multiple sources. The knowledge had been acquired through observation, and

reading techniques for passing the IELTS exam had been devised. The challenges faced by IELTS students and teachers had been made clear by the study of all the data. Data had been collected from students and IELTS curriculum and materials as part of a cross-sectional study by google docs questionnaire. Every important subject required to develop successful reading methods in order to pass the IELTS exam had been covered in the questionnaires. Through questionnaires, observation, interviews, and pilot testing, data from teachers and students had been gathered using data gathering techniques. By the time the study had been completed, all necessary data had been collected and analyzed.

3.2 Framework of analysis

The study "Challenges Faced by IELTS Candidates During Attaining Reading Proficiency and Designing a Reading Practice Plan" employed a methodology for analysis that was designed to methodically investigate the challenges faced by candidates and the efficacy of suggested remedies. First, the study identified the main issues by reviewing the literature and getting input from IELTS candidates. These obstacles included reading passages that required a lot of comprehension, time management issues, and unfamiliarity with various question styles. A mixed-method approach was used to give a thorough grasp of the problems encountered during the reading module by fusing quantitative data from applicant surveys with qualitative insights from interviews. The influence of these hurdles on the candidates' reading ability was the subject of the analysis's subsequent phase. Test results and self-reported challenges from candidates were examined to identify typical areas of difficulty, such as misinterpreting question requirements or not finishing the test in the allocated time. In order to identify any weaknesses in the candidates' present preparation techniques, the investigation also concentrated on evaluating those strategies.

4. Data Analysis

Data collected through both questionnaires consisted of two parts. Students' questionnaire first part related to the demographics and second part related to the information regarding the role of social and linguistics background of learners in their language reading skills. The second part was further divided into 7 parts having 46 statements on IELTS, reading skill and challenges faced by IELTS teachers and students in reading skill. The respondents were given choices in the close ended questionnaire which were framed under the Likert scale and were ranging from with numeric value 5, strongly agree, 4 agree, 3, neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree. Teachers' questionnaire also consisted of two parts. The first part is related to their attitude towards the students with different challenges in IELTS reading skill. The demographic analysis of the study highlights a group of 110 participants that is quite diverse, with 48.1% coming from urban areas and 51.9% from rural ones. Participants are distributed evenly among various age categories (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, and 46+), levels of education (high school, diploma, bachelor's, and master's or higher), job fields (student, employed, self-employed, unemployed), and income brackets (low, medium, high, very high). The responses, examined through different graphical representations, reveal important themes and patterns in the participants' feedback. In the final chapter, these findings will be compared with existing knowledge and theoretical models, considering their implications for practice and potential directions for future research.

5. Justification of research question

5.1 What are the specific difficulties faced by candidates during the preparation for the reading components of the IELTS examination?

The linguistic, cognitive, and test-related obstacles that candidates specifically face when preparing for the reading portion of the IELTS exam are numerous. Candidates may find it difficult to understand reading passages in their entirety because they frequently have trouble grasping sophisticated sentence structures and complex vocabulary. For non-native speakers who might not have had enough exposure to the kinds of texts used in the exam, this is especially difficult. Another significant challenge is time management, since candidates have to respond to 40 questions in 60 minutes. Many applicants struggle to finish the exam in time, which increases pressure and detracts from their performance in general. Confusion can also result from the variety of question formats, including multiple-choice, matching headings, and True/False/Not Given since each call for a distinct approach to responding. Some applicants find it difficult to discern between options that are similar to one another or to grasp the subtleties of the questions. The significance of recognizing and resolving these particular issues justifies the research question. Given the importance of reading for academic and professional goals in English-speaking environments, educators and trainers can create more effective preparation plans by being aware of these obstacles. Instructors can design customized practice plans that concentrate on enhancing vocabulary, time management, and test-taking strategies by pinpointing the precise areas in which candidates find difficulty. This approach can ultimately assist candidates in achieving better scores in the reading component of the IELTS exam.

5.2 What challenges did English teachers encounter while teaching reading skills in IELTS classrooms?

English teachers face a number of difficulties when teaching reading skills in IELTS classrooms, including the diversity of their students, test-specific teaching methods, and limited resources. Teachers in many IELTS classrooms struggle to control students with different learning styles, educational backgrounds, and English proficiency levels. Because of this diversity, teachers must modify their lessons to suit the needs of both more advanced and less advanced students, which can be a challenging and time-consuming task. In addition, certain reading techniques that are essential for success on the test—like skimming, scanning, and efficient time management—are needed for the IELTS. Teaching these strategies in a way that connects with all students, especially those who have difficulty with basic comprehension skills, can be difficult for many teachers. Examining this matter is necessary in order to understanding how well-equipped teachers are to deliver these test-specific techniques and what additional support or resources they may need. Another significant challenge is the limitation of resources, such as teaching materials, classroom time, and access to authentic IELTS reading passages for practice. These constraints can hinder teachers' ability to provide comprehensive and effective instruction. By exploring these challenges, the research seeks to identify ways to improve curriculum design, access to resources, and teacher training, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of IELTS preparation courses and improving student outcomes in the reading component of the exam.

5.3 How can a preparation plan be developed to help IELTS students attain the required reading proficiency skills?

Enhancing students' performance in the reading section of the IELTS exam requires figuring out how to create a plan of preparation that will enable them to acquire the necessary reading proficiency skills. In order to justify this research question, it is important to highlight the necessity of structured, focused assistance that specifically addresses the unique difficulties that students encounter. The identification and remediation of learning gaps are made possible by a well-

organized study plan that concentrates on common challenges like vocabulary acquisition, comprehension of difficult texts, and test-taking techniques. Through the implementation of evidence-based reading strategies such as scanning, skimming, and contextual vocabulary learning, the plan guarantees that students receive instruction that is both systematic and effective, based on their individual needs. It also highlights the significance of consistent, timed practice to replicate actual exam circumstances, assisting students in developing confidence. and improve their time management skills while familiarizing them with the test format. The plan should also include mechanisms for regular feedback and assessment, allowing both students and teachers to monitor progress and adjust learning approaches as necessary. Furthermore, creating a preparation plan not only benefits students but also supports teachers by providing a framework for professional development, equipping them with the tools needed to facilitate learning and enhance student engagement. Ultimately, this research question seeks to explore how a comprehensive preparation plan can effectively support IELTS students in achieving the reading proficiency required for success in the examination.

5.4 What is the impact of the designed preparation plan on students' perspectives regarding their reading proficiency for the IELTS?

An essential question for assessing the efficacy of instructional strategies in language education is how the planned preparation plan affects students' perceptions of their IELTS reading proficiency. Since students' attitudes toward their reading abilities can have a significant impact on their confidence and motivation to engage with the material, it is important to understand how the preparation plan influences students' perceptions. Teachers can learn a great deal about the psychological aspects of learning and how to create a supportive learning environment by looking into this impact. Furthermore, assessing how students' perspectives change allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the preparation plan's effectiveness; if students feel more confident in their reading skills after its implementation, it suggests that the strategies employed are resonating with them. Furthermore, elevated Self-assurance in one's reading skills could inspire more practice and improvement, which would ultimately boost performance in the reading section of the IELTS exam. Additionally, this investigation offers valuable input for improving the lesson plan, enabling teachers to modify their teaching strategies to better suit the needs of their students. In the end, analyzing how it affects students' viewpoints has larger ramifications for language learning, guiding the development of curricula and best practices for instruction in a variety of settings.

5.5 What is the impact of the designed preparation plan on teachers' perspectives on their effectiveness in teaching reading skills for the IELTS?

To comprehend the wider effects of instructional modifications on educators, it is imperative to know how the planned preparation plan affected teachers' perceptions of how well they were able to teach reading skills for the IELTS. The quality of instruction that teachers deliver is greatly influenced by their beliefs about their own efficacy; if a preparation plan boosts their self-esteem, it can result in more enthusiastic and engaging teaching practices that benefit students' outcomes. Additionally, recognizing the ways in which the preparation plan shapes teachers' perspectives can point out areas in which they can improve as professionals. Teachers who feel more capable are more inclined to share best practices, look for opportunities for professional growth, and use reflective teaching techniques. Assessing this effect also yields insightful feedback for enhancing the preparation plan itself, enabling teachers to determine which components are especially helpful

or difficult. Examining this issue further can shed light on the dynamics of teacher collaboration; a common belief in one's own efficacy may promote teamwork, leading to a more unified approach within the IELTS curriculum. Since competent and confident teachers are more likely to foster positive learning environments that support student engagement and success in the IELTS reading component, knowing how teachers view their effectiveness after putting the preparation plan into practice can ultimately have a long-term impact on educational outcomes.

6. Conclusion

The study exploration encompassing the difficulties looked by IELTS up-and-comers in achieving understanding capability, the deterrents experienced by educators in training understanding abilities, the advancement of a successful readiness plan, and the effects of these drives on the two understudies and educators is imperative for improving the general viability of IELTS arrangement programs. The principal research question distinguishes explicit troubles up-and-comers face, for example, jargon challenges, time usage issues, and hardships with different inquiry types. Understanding these obstructions is fundamental for fitting educational techniques and establishing steady learning conditions. The subsequent inquiry investigates the difficulties educators experience in showing understanding abilities, featuring the requirement for proficient turn of events and assets to address the different necessities of understudies really. The third question centers around the plan of a readiness plan that methodically focuses on the recognized difficulties. By coordinating viable understanding procedures, advancing standard practice, and giving systems to criticism, such an arrangement expects to further develop understudies' understanding capability and their trust in taking care of the IELTS understanding part. The fourth question researches the effect of this readiness anticipate understudies' points of view, underscoring how expanded certainty and inspiration can upgrade commitment and execution. At last, the fifth question looks at the impact of the readiness anticipate educators' impression of their adequacy. By cultivating a feeling of capability and empowering proficient development, the arrangement can decidedly influence showing practices and coordinated effort among teachers. Together, these inquiries structure an extensive system for understanding and working on the educating and learning elements in IELTS understanding readiness, at last prompting improved results for the two understudies and educators concerning the IELTS assessment. In conclusion, the issues that teachers encountered were primarily caused by the attitudes of the students, the circumstances of the classroom, and their own concern. Since obtaining the desired scores was the main reason why students studied for the test, the majority of teachers felt that this was the biggest issue of all.

Proposed Practice plan

In the light of the findings obtained from the teachers and students, the proposed practice plan for preparation of the reading component of IELTS is given as under:

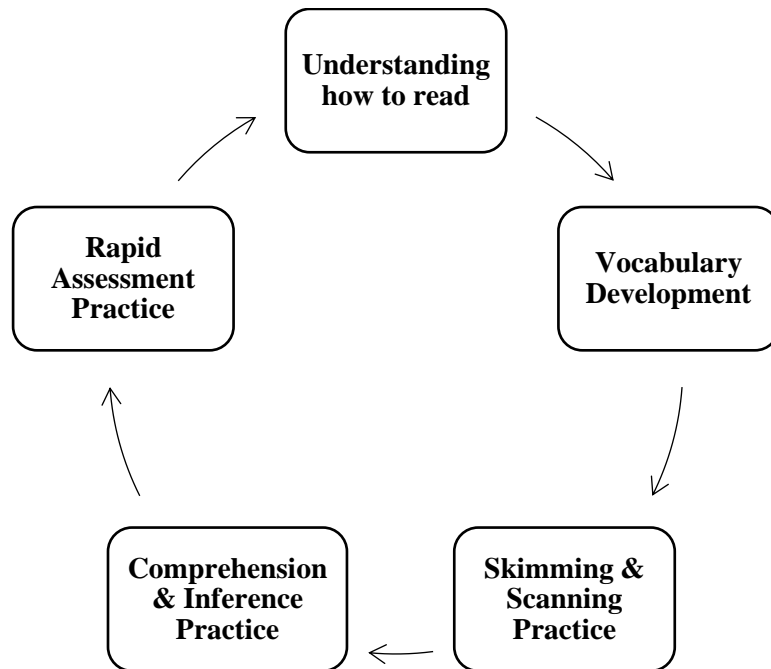


Figure 3: Reading Practice Plan

Week 1 Tasks: Understanding Reading assessment module

With its complex texts, time constraints, and range of question types, the IELTS reading module is frequently one of the hardest parts of the test. It is crucial to adhere to a methodical and comprehensive preparation plan in order to meet these hurdles. Taking a diagnostic exam on Day 1 is the first step in this plan. The full-length, timed IELTS reading test can help you assess your current reading proficiency and identify specific areas of weakness. Exam results should be examined after completion in order to spot patterns of errors, such as trouble answering particular kinds of questions (such as True/False/Not Given), problems with academic terminology, or issues with time management. The basis for the practice that follows is laid by this diagnostic stage. Make a plan by emphasizing the areas that need careful attention.

Week 2 Tasks: Vocabulary Development

The plan's first two weeks are devoted to expanding vocabulary, which is essential for comprehending the vast array of subjects included in IELTS reading passages. Increasing the number of words in your academic and topic-specific vocabulary is crucial since it will make it easier for you to understand difficult concepts and new terms on the test. Reading articles from reliable publications like The Economist, National Geographic, or BBC News is the daily task for these two weeks. These articles often have a wide range of vocabulary and use language similar to those of the IELTS readings. You should also select ten to fifteen new terms from your reading material each week and utilize them in sentences to make sure you comprehend their meanings application. Flashcards are a great resource for helping with the daily review of these terms. It's crucial to review previous reading passages and practice with vocabulary activities tailored to the IELTS exam in addition to reading and expanding one's vocabulary. Pay close attention to new terms that you did not come across in the earlier readings. This will help you to better understand

difficult language that you might find on the test. You should see a noticeable improvement in your comprehension and interaction with IELTS reading texts by the end of this phase.

Week 3-4 Tasks: Skimming and Scanning Techniques

The third and fourth weeks of the IELTS reading practice plan concentrates on developing the reading and scanning strategies that are necessary to effectively complete the reading module. These methods enhance your capacity to find important information in a text fast and without having to read it word for word—a critical skill considering the short amount of time allotted for the test. When reading a passage rapidly to get the gist of it, one is said to be skimming, whereas scanning calls for looking for specific details or keywords, like names, dates, or numbers. Practice on a regular basis is essential to the development of these abilities. To sum up the major points and ideas, spend three to five minutes skimming the texts. Once you have skimmed the text, attempt to sum it up in your own words by highlighting the major ideas and the main issue. To scan get practice identifying specific aspects inside a sentence without having to read the whole thing. To find pertinent information fast, use your ability to recognize keywords in the text and the questions. During these weeks, concentrate on finishing IELTS reading activities that heavily utilize these strategies. For example, "True/False/Not Given" and "Matching Headings" questions require a high level of reading and skimming skills. When answering the "True/False/Not Given" questions, skimming the passage will help you grasp the larger context while rapidly locating the information that is addressed. Likewise, for the "Matching Headings" questions, you can match each paragraph with the correct heading by quickly scanning the material for each paragraph's primary point. Use timed practice to enhance your timing and replicate exam conditions.

Week 5 -6 Tasks: Comprehension and Inference Practice

Week 5-6 of the IELTS reading preparation plan is dedicated to improving comprehension and inferencing skills, which are vital for understanding deeper meanings within texts and handling questions that require more than just surface-level reading. These skills are essential for successfully answering inferential questions, where candidates need to grasp implied meanings, the author's tone, or assumptions within the text rather than just finding explicit information. During this period, you will engage in daily practice by reading one academic article or a short passage each day. After reading, summarize the passage in your own words, ensuring that you capture the main points and essential details. This exercise helps strengthen your ability to understand the overall message and key arguments of a text.

Identifying key points also helps You get experience pulling out essential details, which is helpful for IELTS questions that need careful reading and understanding. Concentrate on answering particular IELTS question categories, such as "Multiple Choice" and "Short Answer" questions, which frequently call for inference, for the daily assignments. Candidates must read the text, find hidden meanings, and determine the author's point of view or intent when answering these kinds of questions. Your ability to read for clear facts and to discern nuances like tone, attitude, and inferred information—all of which are critical for providing appropriate answers to queries of this nature—will be honed through these assignments. Your ability to identify underlying messages in the text will increase with practice answering these kinds of questions. Spend some time on inference exercises by finishing two or three inferencing tasks to improve your inferencing abilities. every day from previous IELTS exams or other pertinent sources. These tasks will assist you in honing the skill of forming inferences from textual data, which is necessary for many of the trickier IELTS reading questions. Pay attention to the reasons behind the inferences that can be

made and the ways in which certain passage features bolster them. Your comprehension of the explicit and implicit elements of reading passages should have significantly improved by the end of Week 6. Additionally, you will be more prepared to confidently respond to inferential questions, which are frequently more difficult but are master able with persistent practice and close attention to detail.

Week 7–8 Tasks: Time Management and Rapid Practice

The IELTS reading preparation plan's weeks 7-8 are dedicated to improving time management abilities, which are essential for finishing the reading module. Developing effective pacing methods is critical since many candidates find it difficult to complete all of the questions in the 60 minutes that are given. The goal of these weeks is to practice reading parts in a timed manner in order to increase speed without compromising accuracy. Practice timed reading sections in your daily activities by allocating 15 to 20 minutes for each passage. Every passage should mimic the format of the IELTS reading test, and you should try to complete all of the questions associated with it in the allotted time. You'll learn to be more conscious of how long it takes to finish a part and where you might need to change the pace with this daily timed practice. You can progressively get more familiarity with time management during the exam by regularly practicing under time limits.

In addition to practicing every day, you have to finish the entire IELTS reading exam in 60 minutes every week. Try out various strategies during this extended practice exam to determine which ones are most effective for you. For example, you might begin by quickly reading the passages to gain a general understanding before beginning to answer the questions, or you could give priority to answering the simpler questions first in order to gain confidence and free up time for the more difficult ones. You can use these strategies to figure out the best way to approach the exam. It is crucial to examine the amount of time spent on each component following each timed exercise. Keep track of the amount of time you spend on each sort of question and each passage. Determine the areas where you tend to waste time, such as lingering over some question types or reading sections again without purpose. Develop time-saving techniques for these areas without sacrificing accuracy. For instance, if you find that you're taking too long on a "Matching Headings" test, work on improving your skimming method to find important concepts faster. Likewise, if answering "true/false/Not given" questions is taking too long, concentrate on honing your scanning techniques.

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