Perceptions of EFL Students toward Academic Reading

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ABSTRACT

In this study, data were collected using a modified version of Mokhtari and Sheorey's (2002) Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS). Results suggest that Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at the graduate level, while engaged in academic reading, are aware of almost all effective reading strategies, though each one is not used individually. Rather, students engage effective reading strategies according to individual preference. The influences of gender, age, and academic discipline on effective reading strategies were investigated and significant differences were evaluated. Suggestions are offered following the summary of results.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a complex information processing skill in which the readers interact with the text in order to create meaningful discourse not just from the words and sentences but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge aroused by those words and sentences (Cziko, Greenleaf, Hurwitz, & Schoenbach, 2000).

Three basic definitions of reading skill have driven literacy programs in the United States (Foertsch, 1998). According to the first definition, learning to read means learning to pronounce words. According to the second definition, learning to read means learning to identify words and get their meaning. According to the third definition, learning to read means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it. The definitions of reading are more than just word recognition and mastery of phonemic decoding. Contemporary definitions include—or can be replaced by—the dynamic, reciprocal interactions among reader, text, and the context of the reader's prior literacy schema (Ulmer, Timothy, Bercaw, Gilbert, Holleman, & Hunting, 2002). Reading is the process through which the dynamic interaction of the reader's background knowledge, the information inferred by the written language, and the reading situation context are constructing meaning (Dutcher, 1990).

Successful reading comprehension is a complete grasp of meaning in a text in which dynamic and growing appreciation of interrelationships in the text is required (Yang, 2002). Furthermore, reading comprehension depends on factors such as the levels of readers' proficiency, types of texts and task demands (Anderson, 1991). With regard to the successful

reading comprehension, Learning and Information Service (2013, p. 1, 2), at the University of Wolverhampton, states that "By reading effectively you will learn to question and survey the text you are reading to gain a better understanding of your subject. By improving your reading skills you can reduce unnecessary reading time and this will enable you to read in a more focused manner."

Irvin (1990) states some characteristics of an effective reader and ineffective reader and divides these characteristics into three groups: Before Reading, During Reading, and After Reading, as do most others scholars and experts.

Table 1. Characteristics of Proficient Readers (Irvin, 1990, p. 29)

Proficient Readers (Good Readers)	Ineffective Readers (Poor Readers)
Before Reading	
• Build up their background knowledge on the subject before they begin to read. • Know their purpose for reading. • Focus their complete attention on reading	• Start reading without thinking about the subject • Do not know why they are reading.
During Reading	
• Give their complete attention to the reading task. • Keep a constant check on their own understanding. • Monitor their reading comprehension and do it so often it becomes automatic. • Stop only to use a fix-up strategy when they do not understand.	• Do not know whether they understand or do not understand. • Do not monitor their own comprehension. • Seldom use any of the fix-up strategies.
After Reading	
• Decide if they have achieved their goal for reading. • Evaluate comprehension of what was read. • Summarize the major ideas. • Seek additional information from outside sources.	• Do not know what they have read. • Do not follow reading with comprehension self-check.

The purpose of this quantitative research is to collect data about the strategies of university-level students during the reading of academic materials in English, in order to measure the types and frequencies of the various reading strategies as well as to determine any differences observed in regard to gender, age, and academic discipline. The data of the study were collected from the students of the School of Foreign Languages at Atatürk University in the 2008-2009 academic year. These learners were Graduate Education students enrolled in each of the skills courses, including writing, speaking, reading, and listening.

The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) was modified and applied as the instrument for data collection. Before data collection, written permission for application of the research was requested from the administration of the School of Foreign Languages. In addition, the participants were given a consent form explaining the purpose of the research and assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses, the use of these responses for solely scientific objectives, and the autonomous nature of participation in the study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. What are the reading strategies of graduate-level EFL learners in academic reading materials?
2. Do these reading strategies vary with regard to the learner's gender, age, and academic discipline?
3. Which of these strategies are of the greatest and least importance?

Materials

A questionnaire comprised of 37 statements was administered to the participants. Out of these 37 several were randomly selected for an interview. For the quantitative data collection, Mokhtari and Sheorey's (2002) SORS instrument was modified and applied.

Instrument Used in the Collection of the Quantitative Data

The use of a questionnaire in data-collection offers several advantages. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1990), these include:

> a) They are self-administered and can be given to a large group of subjects at the same time. They are therefore less expensive to administer than other procedures, such as interviews. b) When anonymity is assured, subjects tend to share information of a sensitive nature more easily. c) Since the same questionnaire is given to all subjects, the data are more uniform and standard.
> d) Since they are usually given to all subjects of the research at exactly the same time, the data are more accurate (p. 172).

Observing these benefits, the questionnaire was used in the collection of data. The statements were designed to elicit participants' agreement or disagreement. Participants responded according to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = I strongly disagree; 2 = I disagree; 3 = I have no idea; 4 = I agree; 5 = I strongly agree). Participants were instructed to circle the response that best corresponded to their level of agreement per each statement. For the collection of data, the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) was modified and applied. For the adaption and direct use of this survey, permissions were obtained from the researchers who designed it.

Mokhtari and Sheorey's (2002) SORS is used in measuring the frequencies of reading strategies that EFL learners apply while reading academic materials in English. SORS is fairly easy to read and administer (Flesch reading Ease= 34.7; Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Equivalent= 4.5-6.0). It consists of 30 statements, classified into "Global Reading Strategies," "Problem Solving Strategies," and "Support Strategies." In the version of the questionnaire modified for this study, 26 of these statements were used, and no distinction was maintained between the classifications. A short background questionnaire including age, gender, and academic discipline was administered along with the survey.

Reliability of the Instrument in the Quantitative Research

Having collected the data, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire (37 items) was 0.89, a value considered as a high level of reliability (Mueller, 1986). The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for SORS was found to be 0.93.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 69 male and 75 female graduate students, numbering 144 in all and consisting of six fewer males than females. Demographic information of the participants is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Participants

		f	p	vp	cp
Valid	Male	69	47.9	47.9	47.9
	Female	75	52.1	52.1	100.0
	Total	144	100.0	100.0	

Note f=frequency   p=percent   vp=valid percent   cp=cumulative percent

Participants of this study are from the School of Foreign Languages of Atatürk University, located in the east part of Turkey. The School of Foreign Languages provides dual education (day-time and night-time) for approximately 1,000 students. Additionally, as determined by the University Senate, the school provides a full-time preparatory class lasting one year for two-year degree undergraduate and graduate departments. The class is voluntary, except for students of those departments that teach only in English. If students of the preparatory class fail to pass the class after two years, they are de-admitted from the university.

English preparatory classes attended by these students are based on the four skills of language: writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Within this regard, the lessons comprise grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking, and listening, ranging from 20-28 hours per week and varying according to the level of the students' proficiency. The number of English instructors is 30 in the School of Foreign Languages. Students take four visa exams during the year and a final exam at the end of the second semester. Non-compulsory students who score more than 60 points are presented a preparatory class proficiency certificate. Students for which the class is required receive a preparatory class proficiency certificate if they achieve the same score and are also admitted as freshmen. Otherwise, they are required to take the preparatory class again or have to pass the make-up exams during the following year.

Access to graduate education at university is dependent on a certain set of prerequisites. Graduate-level students must graduate with a successful grade point average and must enter The Academic Personnel and Entrance Examination for Graduate Studies (ALES) in order to be accepted into graduate studies. They must score at least 55 points from the Inter-University Foreign Language Examination (ÜDS), as well.

In this study, the age of participants varies. The distribution had the greatest density between ages 21 and 30. The number of the participants between 21 and 25 was 87, while 49 participants were between the ages of 26 and 30. Age frequencies are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants by Age

		f	p	vp	cp
Valid	17 – 20	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	21 – 25	87	60.4	60.4	61.8
	26 – 30	49	34	34	95.8
	31 – 35	3	2.1	2.1	97.9
	36 – 40	2	1.4	1.4	99.3
	Over 40	1	0.7	0.7	100
	Total	144	100	100	

Although meaningful significance was found among the age groups, the groups were relabeled due to significant differences between the second group (21-25) and the last group (over 40) in terms of the number, resulting in the following new grouping. Groups 1 (17-20) and 2 (21-25) were relabeled as Group 1 (17-25); Groups 3 (26-30) and 4 (31-35) were relabeled as Group 2 (26-35); and Groups 5 (36-40) and 6 (over 40) were relabeled as Group 3 (over 36). Age frequencies according to this grouping of participants in the study are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Participants by Age

		f	P	vp	cp
Valid	17 – 25	89	61.8	61.8	61.8
	26 – 35	52	36.1	36.1	97.9
	Over36	3	2.1	2.1	100
	Total	144	100	100	

The students also represented a range of different academic disciplines: 60 from Natural and Applied Sciences, 58 from Social Sciences, and 26 from Health Sciences (see Table 5). Considering the average levels of these mean scores, it can be inferred that there were different frequency levels among the target groups.

Table 5. Participants by Academic Discipline

		F	p	vp	cp
Valid	Natural and applied sciences	60	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Social sciences	58	40.3	40.3	81.9
	Health sciences	26	18.1	18.1	100
	Total	144	100	100	

In a cross tabulation of gender and age, the distribution's density is between 21-25 (male 38, female 49). The cross tabulations of age, gender and academic discipline are given in Tables 6 and 7.

As seen in Table 6, the density in terms of age in the target table is between 21 and 30. The number of male participants between 21 and 25 was 38 and between 26 and 30 was 27. While the number of female participants between 21 and 25 was 49, the number between 26 and 30 was 22.

Table 6. Age and Gender Cross Tabulation

		Gender		
		M	F	Total
Age	17 - 20	1	1	2
	21 - 25	38	49	87
	26 - 30	27	22	49
	30 - 35	2	1	3
	35 - 40	0	2	2
	Over 40	1	0	1
	Total	69	75	144

Note. M=Male, F=Female

Table 7. Academic Discipline and Gender Cross Tabulation

	Gender		Total
Academic Discipline	M	F	
Natural and applied sciences	32	28	60
Social sciences	28	30	58
Health sciences	9	17	26
Total	69	75	144

Differences were observed in the distribution of target groups when test scores are assessed according to gender.

Data Collection Procedure

The data of the study were collected from graduate-level students at Atatürk University. Their areas vary, including Natural and Applied Sciences, Social Sciences and Health Sciences. Preceding data collection required written permission was obtained from the director of the School of Foreign Languages. More importantly, the necessary explanations were made at the beginning of the survey and participants were told that their participation was on a voluntary basis.

Scoring the survey was quite simple and in fact could have been done by the students themselves. Participants specified their gender, age, and academic discipline on a background information section attached to the survey. Participants were given 35-40 minutes to complete the survey, although some were allowed to complete the survey at home.

Data Analysis

The methodology of the study has been explained in detail in the previous sections. The participants, procedures, and the instrument of the research were explained in detail, and several tables related to the participants, their ages and their academic disciplines were also provided.

All statistical calculations in this research were performed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows 15.00. A Chi-Square Test was used for the statistical calculations in the analysis of the data collected in this research and dependability of the variables (age, gender, and academic discipline) was determined. Significance was considered at the level of $p < 0.05$. Means for each item, their sub-dimensions, and the

descriptive statistics (descriptives, frequencies, cross-tabulation, etc.) were calculated. Correlation analyses between the means of the scores were also performed.

The questionnaire aimed to determine the reading strategies of Turkish EFL learners in academic reading materials and variances in regard to gender, age and academic discipline and to identify strategies with the highest and lowest scores.

RESULTS

Findings from the Analysis of the Quantitative Data

In this section, the findings attained through the quantitative data collection procedure will be presented. They will be discussed with regard to the answer supplied to the three research questions of the study.

What are the Reading Strategies of Graduate-Level EFL Learners in Academic Reading Materials?

With regard to the first research question, the most scored and the least scored reading strategies were computed as the seventh item ("While reading, I try to find out the main ideas.") and the tenth question ("I break long texts into segments. I read 10 pages, and then do something else. Later, I read the next 10 pages and so on."), respectively. The mean for the seventh question is 4.3056 whereas the mean for the tenth question is 2.8611. The means of all strategies are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. The Descriptive Statistics of Reading Strategies by Means

		min.	max.	m.	sd
1.	When I read, I keep paper and pen within reach.	1	5	4.0278	1.03061
2.	Before reading, I do skimming.	1	5	3.8056	0.94815
3.	Before reading, I do predicting by looking at the title.	1	5	3.8403	0.94361
4.	While reading, I do scanning.	1	5	3.6111	1.00426
5.	While reading, I do skimming.	1	5	3.5278	1.064
6.	When text becomes difficult, I do read too slowly for my study needs.	1	5	4.1597	0.94361
7.	While reading, I try to find out the main ideas.	1	5	4.3056	0.778
8.	I have a purpose in mind while reading.	1	5	3.8681	0.94792
9.	I read the introduction and conclusion, then go back and read the whole assignment.	1	5	3.1736	1.30266
10.	I break long texts into segments. I read 10 pages, and then do something else. Later, I read the next 10 pages and so on.	1	5	2.8611	1.19211
11.	I take marginal notes to help me understand what I read.	1	5	3.6806	1.07517
12.	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	5	3.9722	0.96036
13.	When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	1	5	2.9583	1.28398
14.	I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	5	3.3889	1.12263
15.	I try to get back to trace when I lose concentration.	1	5	4.0833	0.9644
16.	I highlight the text to help me what I read.	1	5	4.0208	0.94216
17.	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	5	3.6944	1.07922
18.	When reading I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	5	3.5208	1.09013
19.	I use reference materials (e.g. dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	1	5	4.0347	1.0801
20.	I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	1	5	3.4306	1.22704
21.	I stop from time to time and think what I am reading.	1	5	3.6389	1.02152
22.	I use context clues to help me better understand what I read.	1	5	3.9097	0.86026

23.	I paraphrase (restate ideas on my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	5	3.4861	1.19431
24.	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	1	5	3.2361	1.21175
25.	I use typographical features like bold face italics to identify key information.	1	5	3.3958	1.20151
26.	I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	5	3.6944	0.99142
27.	I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	5	3.7708	0.91391
28.	I check my understanding when I come across new information.	1	5	3.9375	0.92531
29.	When the text becomes difficult, I reread it to increase my understanding.	1	5	4.1111	0.9245
30.	I do sometimes read aloud to increase my understanding.	1	5	3.125	1.26201
31.	I ask dense questions that I like to have answered in the text.	1	5	3.3542	1.11862
32.	I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	5	3.8681	0.91029
33.	When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	5	3.9236	0.97579
34.	When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	1	5	4.0972	0.98463
35.	When reading, I think about the information in both English and my mother tongue.	1	5	3.7431	1.13277
36.	I do also read for pleasure to improve my reading skills.	1	5	3.5278	1.1823
37.	I follow some special techniques such as QAP (Question – answer – Relationships: right there questions, think and search, author and you, on my own), reciprocal teaching (predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarizing).	1	5	3.4167	1.16174
	Valid Number = 144				

Note min=Minimum   max=Maximum   m=Mean   sd=standard deviation

Table 8 indicates that the majority of Turkish graduate-level learners of English search for the main ideas in academic reading materials. Since the reading material is academic, students may be expected to focus on the major concepts. In addition to this, they have to enter the Interuniversity Foreign Language Examination (ÜDS), an exam in which most of the questions are reading-based. On the other hand, students do not appear to break the long academic materials into small segments, which shows that once they start to read, they want to finish it immediately instead of taking any breaks, perhaps because they may think that if they were to take a break, they may forget and miss the point.

Secondary to the highest and lowest scored reading strategies are the sixth ("When text becomes difficult, I do read too slowly for my study needs.") and the thirteenth ("When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.") statements, respectively. The mean score for the sixth item is 4.15 and for the thirteenth item is 2.96. The mean score of the sixth statement shows that Turkish graduate-level learners of English prefer reading slowly when the text becomes difficult. As most of the academic materials include some scientific facts, they should be read more carefully than other texts. As for the thirteenth item, the participants seem to prefer silent over out-loud reading.

In light of these findings, participants report that they use most of the reading strategies mentioned on the survey. As graduate-level learners of English, effective reading is essential for improvement in their areas of study, as most academic materials throughout the world are presented in English. The highest and lowest scored strategies were presented above, but will be more thoroughly discussed as conclusions in regard to the other two research questions.

In short, all participants were found to use various strategies according to their perceptions and needs. Some strategies are used more and others less. The variance of these strategies with regard to the age, gender, and academic discipline of the learners is to be discussed in the following section.

Do Reading Strategies Vary with Regard to the Learner's Gender, Age, and Academic Discipline?

A Chi-Square Test was used for the statistical calculations in the analysis of the data collected in this research to find answers to this research question, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The data collected through the survey demonstrates that the learners in this study use reading strategies according to their background knowledge, which allows us to discuss the variances by gender, age and academic discipline.

As mentioned in the data analysis section, significance by gender was found in just one statement "I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose." Based on the data, it can be said that male learners think about whether the content of the text fits their reading purposes more than the female learners (Table 9). Yet, no difference was found among the participants by gender with regard to their perceptions toward effective reading strategies in academic reading, suggesting that both genders prefer similar reading strategies.

Table 9. The Chi-square Analysis on the Item of the Questionnaire by Learner Gender "I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose."

Sex		SD	D	NI	A	SA	Total
				S14			Total
Male	Count	6	10	11	35	7	69
	% within gender	8.7%	14.5%	15.9%	50.7%	10.1%	100.0%
Female	Count	7	5	27	24	12	75
	% within gender	9.3%	6.7%	36.0%	32.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	13	15	38	59	19	144
	% within gender						100.0%

D.f.= 4 χ^2=11.617   p=.020

As for the age variable, four statements showed differences satisfying the significance level of $p < 0.05$, meaning that learners' answers differed according to age in these four instances. Based upon the data obtained from SPSS for the second statement "Before reading, I do skimming," learners between the ages of 17 and 25 skim the text before reading less so than the other age groups. As for the forth statement, "While reading, I do scanning," the learners between the ages of 26 and 35 appear to scan the text while reading less so than the other groups. For the ninth statement, "I read the introduction and conclusion, then go back and read the whole assignment," learners above 36 years-old tend to read the introduction and conclusion before going back to read the whole assignment much more than the other groups. Finally, learners 36 and above additionally think about whether the content of the text fits their reading purposes to a greater extent than the other two groups.

Finally, academic discipline showed a significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in three of the statements on the questionnaire. By academic discipline, participants from the Natural and Applied Sciences reported the strategy of scanning while reading much more than the other groups, whereas participants from Health Sciences think about what they know to help them understand what they read much more than the other groups. Furthermore, according to the responses in this study, students of Health Sciences try to picture or visualize information to help them remember what they read to a greater extent than participants from other disciplines.

In conclusion, all the EFL learners in the study reported the use of at least one of the reading strategies common in academic reading. The quantitative research revealed differences among the learners' perceptions toward effective reading strategies regarding gender, age and academic discipline.

Which of These Strategies are of the Greatest and Least Importance?

In the light of the findings discussed, the highest scored reading strategy was the seventh statement "While reading, I try to find out the main ideas," while the least scored item was the tenth "I break long texts into segments. I read 10 pages, and then do something else." The means for the seventh and tenth statements were 4.03 and 2.87, respectively.

As understood from these findings, Turkish graduate-level EFL learners use the strategy of finding the main idea most. This may be because they are doing graduate studies and they have to focus on the main ideas. This may also be because they have to achieve at least 55 points on the Interuniversity Foreign Language Examination (ÜDS) in order to continue their doctoral studies. This exam focuses primarily on reading skills and forms questions that ask primarily about the main ideas of a text, meaning that success in the ÜDS depends on the identification of primary concepts while reading.

The least scored strategy was the tenth statement "I break long texts into segments. I read 10 pages, and then do something else. Later, I read the next 10 pages and so on," with a mean of 2.87. This suggests that Turkish EFL learners prefer reading the material as a whole rather than breaking it into small sections, despite the length. They may fear a loss of concentration if they take breaks, and it may require reading the previous sections over again In fact, most of the scholars and guidelines suggest readers to break long texts into segments. For example, The University of Iowa suggests that "Break reading assignments up into manageable parts." (http://www.uiowa.edu/web/advisingcenter/reading_strategies.htm). However, the length of a text varies from person to person and also the difficulty of a text is a variance for each individual.

The nearest highest and lowest scored strategies are the sixth ("When text becomes difficult, I do read too slowly for my study needs") and the thirteenth ("When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read"), with means of 4.16 and 2.96, respectively. Based on these findings, Turkish graduate-level EFL learners prefer reading slowly when the text becomes difficult. As most of the academic materials include some scientific facts, reading must be done more carefully. In addition, many of the learners keep marginal notes while reading to aid understanding of the texts. The eleventh statement, "I take marginal notes to help me understand what I read," had a mean of 3.68. The mean for this item also adds to our understanding of the seventh statement "While reading, I try to find out the main ideas." As for the thirteenth item, "When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read," the participants prefer not reading aloud. They prefer reading silently and focusing on the main ideas. Perhaps reading aloud could lead to a loss of concentration during the reading of academic materials.

In conclusion, based on the data obtained through this study, some strategies stand out as more popular than others, such as "While reading, I try to find out the main ideas" and "I ask dense questions that I like to have answered in the text." Yet, the results also support the idea that graduate-level EFL learners engage many reading strategies in order to save time and better understand academic materials.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine Turkish graduate-level EFL learners' perceptions towards effective reading strategies. This study also aimed to explore other factors such as gender, age, and academic discipline that might affect learners' reading strategies. The data were collected through a questionnaire completed by 144 Turkish

graduate-level EFL learners of the School of Foreign Languages of Atatürk University. The results of the study suggest that Turkish graduate-level EFL learners are experienced readers.

Reading is a crucial phenomenon for the graduate learners of EFL. An effective grasp of academic texts requires an essential effort by the reader. A considerable amount of research has been performed to investigate the processes that contribute to reading comprehension. Researchers have focused on nearly all aspects of reading such as reading comprehension, reading anxiety, reading problems, reading strategies, and so on throughout the world. Alsamadani (2009) conducted a research called "The relationship between Saudi EFL college-level students' use of reading strategies and their EFL reading comprehension." Alsamadani (2009) found out that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia used more planning strategies than attending strategies and evaluating strategies. Alsamadani also pointed out that the environment affected the learners' reading comprehension, but there was no significant relationship between the learners' comprehension level and their use of reading strategies. Reading in academic education is regarded as the most needed skill for EFL learners as their inability to read L2 texts may impede academic and professional development of those whose academic programs require information from the target language (Alderson, 1984). It is, therefore, important for graduate EFL programs in Turkey to design reading courses for their students to improve their reading ability.

With regard to the first research question of the quantitative research, "What are the reading strategies of graduate-level EFL learners in academic reading materials?", the data obtained from this research show that Turkish graduate-level EFL learners are aware of most of the reading strategies provided in the survey. As the questionnaire results indicate, some of these reading strategies are used much more than others, though these reading strategies sometimes vary from learner to learner. However, quantitative data revealed that Turkish graduate-level EFL learners perceive some strategies as more important than others. For instance, the highest scored statement was "While reading, I try to find out the main ideas" whereas the lowest scored was "I break long texts into segments. I read 10 pages, and then do something else." These findings suggest that learners read for a purpose, which corroborates one of the other reading strategies stated in the questionnaire "I have a purpose in mind while reading." Few if any of the students could be said to read aimlessly; the results suggest that learners all have a purpose in mind before reading. Additionally, learners make it a priority to maintain concentration while reading. They feel that when they start reading, they should finish it completely instead of breaking it into small units. The findings also revealed that learners perceived a range of reading strategies: before, during and after.

With regard to the second research question "Do these reading strategies vary with regard to the learners' gender, age and academic discipline?", the data collected through the survey showed that the graduate-level EFL learners use reading strategies with regard to their background knowledge, which allows us to discuss the variances by gender, age and academic discipline. These factors, in particular for some reading strategies, affect the selection perceptions of learners towards effective reading. The quantitative data revealed that male learners think about whether the content of the text fits their reading purposes more than female learners. Despite these differences, in the majority of the cases male and female participants prefer similar strategies.

The breakdown of ages and reading strategies discussed above suggests a number of facts about how age might affect reading habits. For example, younger readers (17-25) skim over material less than other readers, readers in the next category (26-35) tend to scan materials less while reading, though the oldest category (36 and above) have a habit of reading the introduction and conclusion before reading the text straight through. Additionally, the results reveal that this same age group considers whether the content of the text fits their

reading purpose more than younger readers. These results could show that older learners are more experienced readers than their younger peers.

As discussed above, with regard to academic discipline, survey responses showed that learners of Natural and Applied Sciences do scanning while reading much more than the other groups, whereas the learners of Health Sciences think about what they know to help them understand what they read much more than the other groups. These findings also revealed that the learners of Health Sciences try to picture or visualize information to help them remember what they read much more than the other groups.

With regard to the third research question, "Which strategies are of most and least importance to learners?", the analysis earlier pointed out strategies scored higher and lower, suggesting information about EFL learners' perceptions towards effective reading. Learners tended to be active in the reading strategy, such as keeping a pen and paper nearby while reading. The data revealed that Turkish graduate-level EFL learners perceive some reading strategies more effective than the others, indicating their personal choice.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that all of the EFL learners perceived some reading strategies as more important than others in academic reading and that there are some differences among the EFL learners' perceptions towards effective reading strategies by gender, age and academic discipline.

1. Each student has different approaches to reading, though commonalities exist across all learners.
2. Academic reading is significant for each individual.
3. Turkish graduate-level EFL learners are aware of almost all reading strategies examined in this study, but emphasized their perception of strategies that best fit them.
4. Turkish graduate-level EFL learners perceived greater the strategy of using the "before, during, and after" phases of reading.
5. The quantitative data revealed that some Turkish graduate-level EFL learners read for pleasure while others do not.
6. Differences were found between the learners' perceptions toward effective reading strategies by gender, age, and academic discipline.
7. A large percentage of Turkish graduate-level EFL learners reported the same reading strategies.
8. The quantitative data revealed that EFL learners know the importance of having a purpose in mind before reading.
9. The data revealed that a great majority of the Turkish graduate-level EFL learners do use dictionaries. In particular, the data revealed that some of the EFL learners use online dictionaries in order to save time.
10. The findings revealed an uncertainty over many of the statements in the survey regarding reading strategies (a rate of over 30%). In these instances, the participants had no idea about the reading strategy listed nor have they tested the method for themselves.

Pedagogical Implications

This study has pedagogical implications for teaching reading to Turkish graduate-level EFL learners in Turkey. Firstly, these findings can be helpful for teachers to guide learners to the reading strategies that suit them individually. This study shows that graduate EFL learners have different approaches to reading. In other words, reading strategies change from person to person. Although they know almost all the reading strategies, they just use the

ones they think essential. This is why learners should be considered with regard to their individual approaches to reading. Teachers should take the learners' individual experiences and approaches into account while teaching reading.

Secondly, the implications of this study are useful for students who seek to increase their perception of reading strategies. Instruction in this regard can help all learners become more active readers. Additionally, the findings revealed differences among reading strategy selections according to gender, age, and academic discipline. In other words, gender may affect learners' perceptions toward effective reading strategies and, accordingly, gender should be taken into consideration when teaching reading and other language skills.

Age was also shown to be a factor in the selection of reading habits. As such, reading instructors should also pay attention to the age factor. Learners may be classified according to their ages during classes and also during the implementation of related research.

Academic discipline is also an important factor that affects learners' selection of reading strategies. In this study, the variable regarding area of study is significant, as the participants are all graduate students and thus must read for academic purposes. The results regarding the differences in reading strategies among disciplines have implications for education. For example, scheduling for English preparatory classes should be prepared according to discipline. Students of the Social Sciences, for example, can deal with social issues, whereas the other students can be taught according to their own disciplines.

In conclusion, it would be beneficial for EFL learners, whether proficient in reading the target language or not, to be aware of the strategies that proficient readers have. Accordingly, three concrete recommendations can be made here:

1. Turkish graduate-level learners should practice other reading strategies to improve their reading strategies.
2. Teachers should know how to instruct reading.
3. Teachers should also take the certain variables (age, gender, academic discipline, etc.) into account when teaching reading.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study presents the general types of reading strategies that EFL graduate learners have when confronting academic texts. It provides insights for educators regarding how different groups of learners perceive effective reading strategies and how they approach academic reading individually.

The major strength of this study lies in the setting. The participants were all from the School of Foreign Languages at Atatürk University in Erzurum, Turkey. The findings reveal the reading strategies of graduate students at Atatürk University, providing a considerable picture of all learners' reading strategies in the School of Foreign Languages at Atatürk University. This study also gives general information about foreign language teaching at Atatürk University.

A second strength of this study lies in the population. This study focused on the reading strategies of graduate EFL students. Academic reading is more sophisticated than any other reading since comprehending the texts is crucial for academic success. Reading is not a generic skill and improves when the one practices it. These EFL learners have difficulties in almost every skill of language learning. Graduate learners have their own ideas when they start their academic education. This study gives a picture of the graduate learners' strategies.

This study also has some limitations related to the participants, research design, data collection procedures and instruments. Firstly, the population of the study is made up of Turkish graduate-level EFL learners and is limited to students enrolled in reading courses at

the School of Foreign Languages of Atatürk University. As for the data collection, a questionnaire was applied in this study. In the future, graduate-level EFL learners' perceptions toward effective reading strategies could be investigated through different research designs and data collection procedures and instruments, and with the inclusion of more participants.

Further Research and Outcomes

The following are suggested for further studies:

1. The instrument used in the current study has significant reliability (Cronbach's alpha is 0.89). It is recommended that this questionnaire be used for the different levels of EFL learners.
2. It is recommended that more studies be done investigating student perceptions of effective reading strategies.
3. Additional variables could be tested in regard to the selection of the reading strategies, such as the English proficiency of the learner.
4. Further studies should investigate the aspects of teaching reading.
5. Related to all language skills, variables such as age, gender, and academic disciplines should be further investigated in order to understand the ways in which different learners approach language learning.
6. Learners' uncertainty or lack of knowledge toward reading strategies could be the subject of further exploration.

This study attempted to investigate the perceptions of Turkish graduate-level learners toward effective reading strategies. The study found that Turkish graduate-level learners are largely aware of the reading strategies provided in the study and that they use some reading strategies more than others. Furthermore, the study revealed that certain factors, such as gender, age, and academic discipline, affect Turkish graduate-level learners' perceptions of reading strategies. The findings also revealed a significant uncertainty or lack of knowledge regarding reading strategies. Over 30 percent of responses came back uncertain, which means regarding these statements learners either have no idea or are not sure about the use of that item. In these instances, the participant is unsure as to whether the reading strategy would be effective or not. In other words, it might be concluded that the learner has little or no practice with the reading strategy as stated. Thus, while each reading strategy is a strategy common to all learners, individuals must practice them often in order to make them their own strategies.

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